

Career – Job – Work

Opening Prayer

O God, out of your love, care, and concern for all of creation, I believe you are active in the world. Help me to align my labor in the world with your work in the world. Amen.

Scripture Theme

I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all one's toil—this is God's gift to all (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13).

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for others (Colossians 3:23).

Introduction

At certain times in your life you may have carried the assumption that God calls you *once*, for just one purpose. Don't miss the call, or you might spend the remainder of your days in meaningless mediocrity. In reality, it is safe to say that God calls us many times throughout the seasons of our lives, and each call challenges us to stretch further than we might have anticipated or imagined.

The call to career and work is much more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.

Work should be the setting for rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. . . . We were created with a vocation to work. . . . Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, nos. 127-28).

When work becomes a window for the worship of God and an avenue to love our neighbor, it reclaims its proper, dignified place (Matt Rusten, [The Altar of Work](#)).

As you reflect on this call to be a co-creator with God through your work, it's quite logical to seek deeper meaning from it. It will surely raise some questions.

- ◆ How do I align my work with God's work?
- ◆ How do I make sure my work is conducted with integrity, justice, and mercy for all?
- ◆ How does my work affect the important relationships in my life?
- ◆ Can my work be an expression of prayer and praise to God?
- ◆ When it comes to the vocational call to work, who is my role model?
- ◆ What is God doing in my life through my work?

Whether you are entering into the world of work for the first time or transitioning to a new job or launching a new venture or discovering a whole new skill or profession, you likely have a bit of anxiety, and a whole lot of wonderment for how this is going to go. One thing is certain. As you respond to this call, you will discover an aspect of God that you have not seen or experienced before. Place your trust in God, say 'yes' to the call as best you can, and give it your all.

What's Changing?

This call likely means a change in your life. In his book, *Managing Transitions*, William Bridges writes that transitions always start with an ending. Seems odd, yes, but he maintains that the first step toward a life change is identifying what you are losing and learning how to manage the losses.

View

Michele Van Fossen is not a counselor, a therapist, a pastor, or a priest. Not in the traditional sense of those words. Michele is a hairstylist, and she sees her everyday job as a vehicle for healing the people who sit in her chair. Watch this video where Michele tells about her work, *What Am I Here For?* (<https://vimeo.com/146417905>). In what ways do you see yourself in this video? In what ways is your work situation unique?

Write and/or Discuss

At this point in your life, what do you think needs to change or shift in order for your work to be an authentic response to God's call for you? Take a few moments to reflect on this question. Jot down your response, or discuss them with your group.

Reflect

"For many of us who work, there exists an exasperating discontinuity between how we see ourselves as persons and how we see ourselves as workers. We need to eliminate that sense of discontinuity and to restore a sense of coherence in our lives. Work should be and can be rewarding, meaningful and maturing, enriching and fulfilling, healing and joyful. Work is one of our greatest privileges. Work can even be poetic" (Max De Pree in *Leadership is An Art*).

Is your work rewarding and meaningful or an experience of exasperating discontinuity?

Take Heart

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long (Psalm 25:4-5).

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works (Psalm 107:28-31).

What's Emerging in My Life?

Let's consider what might be emerging in your life as a result of these changes. As we do so, let us remember a few things that others have discovered about God's callings in their lives. We can say that responding to God's call will likely . . .

- ◆ Lead to happiness in the long run. If it makes you depressed, it's likely not God's call. Although it won't make you immune to all other emotions such as sadness, frustration, resentment, guilt, etc. But if there is no happiness whatsoever, somehow you are not aligned with God's desire.
- ◆ Not be easy. It will probably stretch you toward something you never thought you could do or be. But you can do it, especially if you have some help.
- ◆ Benefit others besides yourself. If it only involves you, it's not God's call. This is baked-in to caregiving.
- ◆ Not be overly complicated. You'll be able to explain it to others in just a few words.

View

Let's focus on the third bullet point: responding to God's call will benefit others besides yourself. Watch these two short videos:

- ◆ *God Couture* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dXMCMKDwDU>) A young woman moves to New York to work in the fashion industry. Is she moving into a world of moral compromise, long hours keeping her away from God, and meaningless casual relationships? Not on your life. Like Jesus, she finds that her business is all about people; people she loves.
- ◆ *Is Your Work a Higher Calling* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSqTuHDusTw>) Kimberly Renner, owner of The Renner Project, explains how she views her work in construction.

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ In what ways do you relate to these videos? In what ways is your situation different?
- ◆ What's the relationship between your work and your faith? How is that relationship expressed?

Take Heart

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:10-14).

How Should I Live?

Now we seek to turn the corner and fully embrace the call to work. We seek to develop fruitful patterns of behavior and action that can sustain us for the long haul.

View

Watch the video *Work as Worship* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m06DYIAeCtU>). We spend half our lives involved with work. Yet, we often dismiss work in God's economy, focusing on more "holy" or "spiritual" matters, neglecting the divine intersection of our jobs and worship.

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ In what ways do you resonate with the message in this video?
- ◆ What do you do on the days when your work lacks meaning for you, and you're just going through the motions?
- ◆ How is your work a reflection of the God to whom you have given your heart, your allegiance, your talents?

Consider

Here are links to helpful practices and strategies for sustaining your response to the call of work and labor.

- ◆ "God's Good Idea: Work" (devotional) <https://www.theologyofwork.org/devotions/gods-good-idea-work-devotional>.
- ◆ "10 Key Points About Work in the Bible That Every Christian Should Know" by Andy Mills <https://www.theologyofwork.org/resources/what-does-the-bible-say-about-work>.
- ◆ "Redemptive Entrepreneur," the story of Meghan Easley, from the Fuller Studio Theology and Work website, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/redemptive-entrepreneur/>.
- ◆ "Marketplace Missiology, Resisting a Compartmentalized Life," the story of Christeen Rico's ministry in the marketplace <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/marketplace-missiology/>.
- ◆ Lives Explored Video Project. We ask everyday Christians how they see God at work in their lives. Watch how their struggles, joys, and questions capture what calling means today <https://collegevilleinstitute.org/vocation-projects/resources-for-congregations/lives-explored/>.
- ◆ "Designed to Work: Made in God's Image," Blog produced by The High Calling, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/blog/designed-work-made-gods-image>.
- ◆ The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers (<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/the-dignity-of-work-and-the-rights-of-workers.cfm>). Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.

Take Heart

Blessed is the one who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but delights in the law of the LORD, and meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers (Psalm 1:1-3).

Blessing for Workers

This blessing may be used with a small group or with the entire congregation.

Dear workers, we thank you for responding to God's call through your work, your labor, your career. Through your work, you show us the face of God, and you contribute to the good of society. Today we bless you, and we pledge our prayers and support for you.

To the Community gathered:

In the words of Matt Rustin, "When work becomes a window for the worship of God and an avenue to love our neighbor, it reclaims its proper, dignified place." Please extend your hand in blessing over our workers.

Today we bless the workers among us. Please respond with "Amen" to each blessing.

To all Workers:

As you respond to God's call in your work, may you also experience the blessing of inner growth and understanding.

All: Amen.

As you encounter struggles and challenges in this call, may you be open to the Spirit's guidance as you do everything for the Glory of God.

All: Amen.

As you minister to God's people in the context of your labor, may you be blessed with good health and sustained energy.

All: Amen.

May God be a refuge to you at the end of your day's work. May God give you rest and rejuvenation, so that you can eagerly respond to God's call again tomorrow and each and every day.

All: Amen.

May you always serve God's people with compassion and humility.

All: Amen.

May God bless you with every heavenly blessing, and keep you safe and strong. Know that we carry you in our hearts each and every day. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.