

## Pursue Opportunities

I have been making improvements to the Stewardship Curriculum while following my schedule to read through the Bible in a year. I got a little behind this summer and was listening to Ecclesiastes in the car. I enjoy listening to a whole book because it gives me a new perspective on the content instead of reading one or two chapters daily.

As I listened to Solomon share his observations of life, I noticed that several times he talked about finding joy in your work. Here are two examples:

“There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God.” (Ecclesiastes 2:24)

“People should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.” (Ecclesiastes 3:13)

As I pondered his advice, I thought about the advice that is frequently given to young people as they ponder their career choices. Often we encourage them to follow their passion, for as Confucius is reported to have said, “Choose a job you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life.”

### Dirty Jobs

However I recently began rethinking this advice as I watched Mike Rowe a five minute video on PragerU.

Later I read an article by Mike about the same topic. His advice is very different from this accepted maxim of Confucius. Here are four excerpts from the article that capture the essence of his experience:

“The idea of following your passion may sound romantic, but it usually doesn’t work out the way you think it will.”

“Too many people spend too much time and money chasing their passion when seizing opportunity is a better bet.”

Reflecting on the many successful entrepreneurs he has interacted with:

“They simply...learned a skill that was in demand. Then they got hired applying that skill.

Then they figured out how to get really, really good at it. And then they figured out how to love it.”

His advice to those looking for work opportunities:

“Try doing what you can to be great at a skill that is in demand. And then [do] what you can to love it.”

### My Early Job Experiences

As I pondered Mike Rowe’s advice to seek opportunities instead of looking to satisfy a mystical passion, I recognized that I had followed a similar track. My first real summer job was working construction for minimum wage. The week before I was headed to college, I was asked to do some painting on a man’s home, that was high. I worked off a ladder for five hours and made double what I had made working as a carpenter’s helper. My Dad told me later that I could have charge a lot more because that kind of work pays even better than I thought. Then the neighbor saw me and asked me to paint his high trim, and I made even more money. I saw an opportunity and became a painter for the next seven summers!

When I was in search of a job many years later, I learned that math teachers were in demand. I walked into this opportunity and did very well as a math teacher, later a math tutor, and finally as a writer of math curriculum. I never had a passion to be a house painter, nor a math teacher, but both occupations served me, and my family well.

As I listened to Ecclesiastes and thought about a Christian approach to finding an occupation and preparing for the future, several Scriptures came together in my mind. As you read through them, notice how different they are from the current thinking in our society.

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5)

“Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.” (1 Timothy 6:6–8)

“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11–13)

“Be content with your wages.” (Luke 3:14)

“We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

“Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:20)

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

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

I have watched many young adults drift from job to job looking for the “perfect fit.” But now I wonder if there is a perfect job. Perhaps our focus should be to ask God to help change us instead of our occupation. If we were to learn to be content, and grateful, and work heartily for the Lord, and do whatever our hand finds to do with our might, I believe we will be learning what Paul learned. As we recognize and embrace God’s goodness and sovereignty that He is alive and working all things for our good, we too can learn to be content, work hard, and be able to give thanks, even for tough job experiences. As we learn these lessons about our attitude, perhaps we will be helped to not change jobs every six months following our illusive passion.

#### Applying this Principle in Other Areas of Life

Not only are we encouraged to move from job to job looking for the ideal boss, cooperative coworkers, a high salary and perfect work condition, we are also being fed the myth that we need to find the perfect spouse. Sadly those who swallow this lie are forever dating, but rarely committing. And if they do take their vows, too often choose divorce instead of working to make their current marriage a success. May God save us from this false marketing.

The message of the world, the flesh, and the devil, is that work cannot be redeemed, neither can our marriage, and our car is too old! Whereas Paul, in the Spirit, exhorts us to

learn, as he did, to give thanks in all circumstances, labor for God and not men, and be content in all circumstances.

All Scripture is inspired and profitable, not only for how to find eternal life, but how to live in this present world. God's word is indeed living, active, and practical. Let me close with an encouraging exhortation which Paul wrote to Titus. "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works." (Titus 2:11-14)