

ON CHOOSING A CAREER PATH



matt violassi

On Finding/Choosing A Career Path & Enjoying Our Work

Bottom Line: *If you are a young adult and have made some kind of commitment to God, but yet feel frustrated and stymied in finding your job/career path, make sure you have dedicated your life completely to God. Make sure you have given Him your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. (The First & Greatest Commandment).*

God might be hindering you in your career journey until you have done this. He loves you, and doesn't want to lose you. He did this to me. Otherwise, you might go-off and enjoy yourself, and never talk to Him again! And truly, from heaven's perspective – you would have wasted your life!

Finding my career path was one of the hardest trials of my life. I tried different jobs. I diligently tried to identify any strong God-given skill-sets I might have. I inventoried my weaknesses. I was in-and-out of different college degree programs, at my own expense, seeking a believable job path. I researched different jobs and fields that might be suited to me and have believable employment opportunities. (This was coupled with the false notion that most people intrinsically “knew” what they wanted to be . . . “What do you want to be when you grow up?”) Most don't know what they want to be.

I was above-average in art, and above-average in science. Usually people are just good at one or the other. Medical illustrators needed to be somewhat good at art and somewhat good in science. I attended the University of Michigan with a plan to get into a master's degree program in medical & biological illustration. (Someone had to take all the blood and guts out of a hospital operation and translate this pictorially into medical student textbooks.) There were only 3-4 institutions in North America with such a program – each only training only 3-4 people a year. It was a good plan. The problem was - I hated illustration. I was decent at it, but it was very tedious and depressing.

I tried social work. You know, do something good for humanity. Help disadvantaged kids from bad homes get a life. Make the world a better place. This seemed like such noble work. Then I found out that many of the professionals seemed to have little or no

hope for change in the human heart of these young men and women. The people I dealt with (some had very advanced educational degrees) seemed merely doing their time until retirement or something better came along. One even confided in me that she believed all these kids should just be just killed because they were all incorrigible - having no chance of changing. (This was at a youth government prison for youth whom had done things like shooting their parents, raping sisters, and other similar horrible crimes.) I was done with professional "social work."

Jesus Christ changes hearts in people to **want to do good and be good**, versus trying to just change external human behaviors. Christ removes other sin and sinful behaviors, too, if we comply with Him. **The ultimate social work!** *(Now, this is a great career for us all!)*

After several other career sojourns, I landed in Landscape Architecture. Paint with God's plants. Make the world a more beautiful place. Design and install plants, trees, and flowers that would bloom and color in different seasons.

After my partner and I just finished tearing-out an almost perfectly maintenance-free landscape around a wealthy couple's house, and replacing it with a very expensive and intensely maintenance-*dependent* landscape (complete with boulder walls, flowering bushes & trees, concrete pathways, plants that bloomed at different times and seasons, and weed-loving peat beds), I had a profound experience.

Standing back to enjoy my work, I felt I had just finished adorning a rich man's idol – his house. I knew at that moment I did not want to be part of this kind of work – at least on a residential level. It was back-breaking, hard work, too.

Looking up to heaven, I asked God why my job/career has never worked-out like everyone else's seemed to. Instantly and clearly, God communicated to me almost audibly, **"Because you never gave your life to me."**

For the next several seconds a bunch of small movie clips went through my mind of all the Born-Againers who had tried to convince me to obey the First Commandment, to love God with one's whole heart, soul, mind, and strength - and give my life to Him.

I grew up Catholic, and looked down upon the rest of the denominations. We were brainwashed that Catholicism was the FIRST and BEST religion – and all the other denominations chose second best. What blind heresy. (It can take God years to remove our various religious brainwashing.) My Catholic church taught us subtly, that all you had to do was go to church once a week (most services were usually only an hour; this one priest was known to have you out of there in 35 minutes!), put a \$5 or \$10 bill in the offering basket, and be nice to people (the second of the 2 Greatest Commandments – **"Love your neighbor as yourself."**) - **to go/get to heaven**. *What a*

great and easy way to go to heaven! Too bad it's not true! No wonder the Catholic Church seems to hate Born-Againers - we're wrecking a good deal!

I then realized that I had been actually running from God for a long time – and did not realize it! I figured, this is a tough lifestyle – this resisting God . . . / **SURRENDERED!** Fighting and resisting God is stupid! I dedicated my life to God right there - Him and I - on that job site! I mean, I HAD BELIEVED in God. I would pray to Him. ***I Believed in Him.*** I experienced His help so many, many times in life - beyond statistical coincidence - that you could never convince me that God was not real and alive and that He didn't answer prayer. ***I would even try to get others to believe in God when it came up in a discussion! And I had not even yet dedicated my life to Him fully!*** This is why I try to convince many people of different denominations that being "Saved" and going to heaven is not synonymous with the spiritual stage of fully serving God. You can be saved, and not yet obeying the Greatest Command! I would have gone to heaven if I had died in any of those previous years!

But when I was about 8-10 years old, I remember hearing in that Catholic service when the gospel was being read aloud, ***"If any man come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me."*** I clearly understood, even as a little boy, if we were going to follow Jesus - it meant you had to follow him with that cross on your back and head up Hill Calvary . . . and you would probably be tortured and martyred - just like Him. I thought, *I mean, who in their logical right mind would volunteer to follow a leader or person to be one day tortured and then crucified or martyred horribly?* I believe this is where the running began . . .

Somehow, years later, by God's work in our lives – dying for Him is not a big deal. This process took a number of years (from believing in Christ – to seeing the cost – to then agreeing to follow Him anyway.)

I have great grace for people who are now in this interim stage. *Again, who in their normal, logical, right mind would voluntarily sign up for a life of sacrifice, rejection, loneliness, and then probably get tortured and killed?* We just weren't made for this! We were made for love . . . and having fun! But as the years go by and we find out how much God loves us, suffers for us, is so nice to us, and what a nice and great person He is . . . and how short this life is and how long heaven is . . . following Him . . . even if unto death . . . is not that big of a deal. I am still going to ask and trust Him that I might not have to drink from the cup of a tortuous death. I suspect a lot of youth who were raised in full-gospel churches are in this stage I was then.

Within a relatively short time after my profound God dedication event, I was on a job and career path that has lasted to the present day – doing it for around 38 years as a pinstripe installer to auto dealers. And I still really like it! I did not even know a job or trade or business like this even existed! It was a God-deal. I never could have found it on my own! And I still plan on doing it until I die! (Retirement is over-rated. I believe we are made to work and produce and try to make the world a better place through bringing God’s Kingdom from heaven to earth as best we can, and bringing glory to him.) (I have met many retired people who gave their whole life to saving money for retirement so they could do whatever they want and not have to work anymore – only to realize they can only golf and spend time on themselves for so long before they feel the emptiness, the depressions, and the death that comes from not serving God. Here, at the end of their lives, they are faced with the same old issue of needing to get-up and serve God every day. They have never done it. They have been living for something else. “Saving for retirement” can be a very dangerous potential trap that can pull us away from serving God every day!

I have also come to realize several things. Most jobs are mundane. Most, however, are meeting some kind of really meaningful need in society. We can find joy in this fact that **they are important**. Being on a city truck picking up people’s trash every day is very needed and honorable work. Don’t think so? If I paid you \$1,000 a day to do it, you would probably LOVE this job and be quite passionate about it . . . **it might even be your new dream job!** Your friends might even think you are some kind of celebrity! Money can really make a lowly job or a job that is looked-down-upon suddenly quit great! Our perspective is quite warped it seems. (What we really need – *is enough money.*)

Most jobs are mundane in comparison to becoming the next great Rock Star, Inventor that Cured Cancer, Great World Leader, Ground-Breaking Scientist, Training for the Olympics, or First Person on Mars. Most normal jobs usually fulfill some very good basic societal need. We can be content in this knowledge when we work one of these jobs, if we want to.

A good friend of mine, in his mid-fifties, has enjoyed good success in his corporate sales career. Recently, he has had a job “that was the most fun he has ever had in his life.” He was also making huge money. He was traveling the country, involved in the sales and education of ground-breaking technologies and working with some very important people. Then, he got a new boss. She was so mean, ignorant, rude, hostile, incompetent, and crazy – it forced him to quit that job. How sad. Even a great job that we love - that pays great – can turn to hell-on-earth in a moment, depending on the

people we have to work with or work for. It can all go away. It's about learning to be content.

But if we are getting up every day and serving God – it doesn't matter. All that matters is that we are *where we are supposed to be every day and doing what we are supposed to be doing every day.* The type of job doesn't really matter.

Ultimately, our Father in heaven wants all of His children to grow up and be spiritually mature, and help Him in His work of getting others in relationship with Him and them going to heaven, and going to heaven well. This is the most profound work and calling we could ever do – help someone get to heaven. It is 99.999% of life. What good is a person's life if they don't get their ticket or passport to heaven? Everything else would be vain and useless. We commonly ooh and ahh and herald and adore celebrities and the world's rich and famous. We should be wondering . . . are they really that great? ***Do they even have their ticket to heaven?*** If not, this is very sad. Why would I think they are so great? (Jesus said we have our passage into heaven if we repent of all our sins, and believe in Him and His payment *for* our sins by His atoning sacrifice for all sins through His death on the cross. He is then to be both our Savior and Lord)

We are called to help our Father in His work. This work can take place on any job we have – lowly or not. This is the most important work anyone could ever be involved in. We should be doing this work every day on any job we have- as best we can.

Many young Christians, however, first need to learn **and do** a lot of the work basics while being employed: show up for work *on-time*, be thankful we have a job, be content with the wages we agreed upon being paid, work hard with our whole heart (like it was our own business), do whatever the boss wants with a joyful, positive attitude, honor the boss and other authorities and never speak against them behind their back, come to work smiling, joyful and pleasant, **work with the attitude we are working for God Himself**, don't steal in any way, never be lazy, treat other employees with all honor and respect, help the other employees, don't cause any unnecessary drama or spread any unnecessary drama, don't cause unnecessary problems . . . **Be the Model Employee** . . . **Try to win heaven's "Employee of the Year" Award - every year** . . . (while rejoicing if/when someone else wins it)

Working this way probably does a ton more for God's Kingdom and His Reputation than most things we might say!

matt violassi 2019