

How to Decide About Your Next Job

In 1997 I put a list of Bible texts together to help folks think through what job to pursue. Below I have taken that list and added comments to flesh out more specifically what I had in mind.

My prayer is that these thoughts will help saturate your mind with the centrality of Christ in all of life. He made you to work. And He cares about what you do with the half of your waking life called “vocation.” He wants you to rejoice in it. And He wants to be glorified in it.

May the Lord position you strategically in the workplace, as only he can when his people care deeply about these kinds of questions.

12 Questions to Consider

1. Can you earnestly do all the parts of this job “to the glory of God,” that is, in a way that highlights His superior value over all other things?

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31, ESV).

It almost goes without saying that a job that requires you to sin will not be done to the glory of God. Sin is any feeling, word or action that implies the glory of God is not supremely valuable. So you can’t sin to the glory of God. But things are often not that clear. A job may involve me in questionable practices that are not clearly sin. Then the question becomes: Is my conscience clear? And the crucial text becomes Rom. 14:23, “But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

2. Is taking this job part of a strategy to grow in personal holiness?

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3).

When Paul says, “Pursue righteousness” (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22), he does not mean: Do so at church and home but not at work. Our work is about half our waking life. If personal holiness in all of life is our calling, then how this happens at work matters. God will be pleased if you ask the question: How does this job fit into the overall strategy of my pursuit of Christ-like character?

3. Will this job help or hinder your progress in esteeming the value of knowing Christ Jesus your Lord?

“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8).

Think through the demands of this job and how it may affect your pursuit of knowing and treasuring Jesus. For example, will it require you to choose between excellence in work and faithfulness in corporate worship? Will it present you with sinful images or offers, to which you are most vulnerable—that is, which lure you to treasuring this world more than Christ?

4. Will this job result in inappropriate pressures on you to think or feel or act against your King, Jesus?

“You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men” (1 Cor. 7:23).

The point here is bondage. All jobs constrain behavior. We must show up. We must produce these outcomes. We must follow these procedures. Constraints are not bondage if we joyfully affirm their wisdom. Will this job pressure you in ways that are in fact unduly oppressive and enslaving?

5. Will this job help establish an overall life pattern that

will yield a significant involvement in fulfilling God's great purpose of exalting Christ among all the unreached peoples of the world?

"Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matt. 28:18–20).

I assume every one is a goer, sender or disobedient when it comes to the Great Commission. There's no neutral zone. We don't all go. But we all care that there be goers. We are all world-Christians. We are all burdened by how many unreached peoples there are. And we are all thrilled with news of gospel spreading.

Some jobs may advance this life-goal significantly by involving travel or multi-ethnic interactions. Other jobs may seem unrelated. But are they? Workplaces are the source of income for giving to the cause of Christ. Workplaces are places of conversion and recruitment for the global mission. Workplaces are places of training for the kinds of things one could do for a living in another country with few Christians. Workplaces are places for speaking intelligently and wisely about the peoples of the world.

6. Will this job be worthy of your best energies?

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccl. 9:10).

Nothing is to be done half-heartedly. This means that things that are not worth doing wholeheartedly should drop away from your life. Tasks don't have to be high impact to be worthy of high effort. Most of the things we do in any given day are relatively low impact. Working on an assembly line means doing hundreds of times a task that in itself seems low impact. But

if the product or the service is valuable, the cumulative effect of thousands of low-impact tasks is huge. These tasks can be transposed by an act of faith into worship. That is what it means to do them with your might and for the glory of God.

7. Will the activities and environment of this job tend to shape you, or will you be able to shape it for the Christ-magnifying purposes of God?

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

Know yourself. We are all more or less vulnerable to different temptations. Christians are to be shapers of the world rather than being shaped *by* the world. Yes, it is true that we are all shaped by our culture (language, dress, etc.). But God means for this to be reciprocal. We share the culture of this world in order to communicate that we live for a treasure beyond this world. Does this job hold out hope for that? Or, realistically, is it too resistant?

8. Will this job provide an occasion for you to be radically Christian so as to let your light shine for your Father’s sake, or will your participation in the vision of the business tend by definition to snuff your wick?

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

There are companies—increasingly so—whose policies and procedures would muzzle your voice so seriously, you would not be able to speak with truth and love without being fired. Is the acceptance of this job the acceptance of that muzzle? If so, is that God’s will for you?

9. Does the aim of this job cohere with a growing intensity in

your life to be radically, publicly, fruitfully devoted to Christ at any cost?

“If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

If you are in a season of serious spiritual growth, ask how a new job will affect that. There are kinds of tasks, kinds of people, kinds of pressures, kinds of schedules, that may bring that growth to a screeching halt. Is this new level of love to Christ precious enough that you will prioritize it, if necessary, above the new job?

10. Will the job feel like a good investment of your life when these “two seconds” of preparation for eternity are over?

“You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

God says that there is a wisdom that comes when we consider the number of our days (Psalm 90:12). Therefore, it will serve your wise choice of a new job to ask how it relates to the brevity of life. When the Lord calls for us or comes for us, we want to be found doing what pleases Him. And we want to feel good that we made a wise choice in view of how short and vulnerable life is.

11. Does this job fit with why you believe you were created and purchased by Christ?

“Everyone who is called by my name ... I have created for my glory” (Is. 43:6–7). “You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:20).

You are unique. That is amazing and true. I often marvel in a crowded airport that the thousands of people all look human, and they all look different. How can there be so many differences in this one kind of being? But there are. And none of them is an accident. God designed them all like unique

prisms that refract his glory as only this prism can. The question is: Will this job conceal the uniquenesses of your prism? Or will it give you space to shine?

12. Does this job fit together with the ultimate truth that all things exist for Christ?

“For by him all ... have been created by [Christ] and for him” (Col. 1:16).

If all things exist for Christ, can there be any wrong jobs? Yes. Because humans try to use things for purposes other than the glory of Christ. Everything God made is good. It exists to communicate something of His greatness and beauty. Will this job free you to take what He has made and turn it for uses that honor Him?

I hope you can tell from this that there are few easy answers when asking about what job to pursue. The aim here is not to make it easy but to make it Christ-centered, Christ-exalting, and Christ-empowered. If your heart is right on these kinds of questions, God will guide you. Seek Him supremely in these ways, and let your heart be your guide.

John Piper is founder and teacher of and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis. He is author of more than 50 books.