

Starting or Changing a Career or Job

Opening Prayer

O God, thank you for the job before me today. May I find joy and satisfaction in its toil and difficulty, its pleasure and success, even in its failure and sorrow. May I always look away from myself, and look toward you and your goodness. Amen.

Scripture Theme

I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19).

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 a new job or a career change may be just what God has in mind for you. It doesn't necessarily mean that your previous or current job or career was the wrong choice, but it might mean that you are now being called into something new. Pay attention to this inkling, this potential call, as it may allow you to further align the work that you do in the world with God's work in the world. And that is the essence of responding to God's call.

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 contemplate a call to change or start a new work experience, allow these questions, and others like them to percolate in your mind and heart. They likely represent the Holy Spirit moving in and through you. Pay attention even if answers are not swift and clear in coming.

- ◆ What is my true heart's desire?
- ◆ What labor breathes life into me? What seems to take life away?

- ◆ Who do I know who really comes to life through their work? What can I learn from them?
- ◆ How can my work contribute to the good of others?
- ◆ What is God doing in my life through my work now?

It's certainly normal to have some anxiety at this point. Take a breath. 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 means change, yes? Change is seldom easy, but it can be fruitful. 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

Watch the five-minute video of Tim Suttle reflecting on [Vocation: Learning to Count the Right Things](#).

Write and/or Discuss

At this point in your life, what do you think needs to change or shift in order for your vocation to transcend your career, and in order for your career to image God in that place?

Take a few moments to reflect on this question. Jot down your responses, or discuss them with your group.

Reflect

"Most of us will spend somewhere around 65% of our waking hours working. If work is not seen as a holy thing, if work is not counted as an essential aspect of our contribution to the mission of God, then no wonder our work isn't fulfilling. No wonder it feels like toil" (Tim Suttle, [Work as Mission: Vocation and Learning What to Count](#)).

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

Take Heart

"Here I am, for you called me . . . Speak, Lord, for your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:8, 10).

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.

Read

Let's focus on the first bullet point: lead to happiness in the long run. Take a look at the article [Here is what makes workers the happiest at every age](#) by Valentina Sanchez. She quotes a CNBC/Survey Monkey survey showing that the majority of workers consider the "meaning" of their work to be the most significant contributor to their overall workplace happiness. From a faith perspective, we might equate "meaning" with "calling" or "vocation." So, if you are tapped into the meaningfulness of your work, particularly for the sake of others, you are likely a) responding to a call, and b) happy. That is, perhaps, exactly God's idea for you.

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ In what ways is "meaning" important to your work satisfaction and happiness?
- ◆ What's the relationship between your work and your faith? How is that relationship expressed?

Take Heart

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10).

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 *Lives Explored: Francois* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=285&v=uqSRYLI8UK0&feature=emb_logo). As a new immigrant in New York City, Francois found himself in crisis, wondering what God wanted from him. Discover how a career he never expected brought him deep joy.

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ In what ways does Francois' story inspire you?
- ◆ Francois calls himself a "baker and a lover." What would you call yourself?
- ◆ Francois said, "You are the story you tell yourself. Make sure to tell yourself great stories." What does this mean to you? What stories do you tell yourself?

Consider

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

- ✦ *When work replaces the church: The disaster of misplaced worship* by Matt Rusten (<http://bit.ly/2F98qA2>). Work has become more than a job that provides material needs or a career that offers stability and meaning. For many, it now functions in place of spirituality.
- ✦ *Work as Mission: Vocation and Learning What to Count* by Tim Suttle (<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/paperbacktheology/2013/01/work-as-mission-vocation-and-learning-what-to-count.html>). Work is one of the most significant ways a human being can participate in the mission of God. Our vocation—our job—is to image God to all creation in every aspect of our lives including work.
- ✦ *God Couture* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dXMCMKDwDU>) (video). 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>) (video). Kimberly Renner, owner of The Renner Project, explains how she views her work in construction.
- ✦ *Here's what makes workers happiest at every age* by Valentina Sanchez (<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/07/16/here-is-what-makes-workers-the-happiest-at-every-age.html>). The majority of workers (35%) rank meaningfulness No. 1 in contribution to on-the-job happiness.
- ✦ Lives Explored Video Project: Stories of vocation, a video storytelling project on vocation. 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/>.
- ✦ *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

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:5).

Blessing for Workers

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

Introduction

Today, these women and men before us seek to align their work in the world with God's work in the world. And they seek our support and blessing as they strive to respond to God's call. Please extend your hands over them.

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God,
we see the fruits of your labor all around us.
We open the Scriptures and immediately see
how you have always been at work in the world.
Bless us as we strive to work like you do.

All: Amen.

Look with favor on these women and men,
whom you have blessed with skill and talent,
as they seek to emulate you in their careers and jobs,
and be inspired by the Holy spirit.

All: Amen.

We pray that in good times as well as hard times
they will continue to grow in their understanding of you;
and that they will be strong and sure witnesses
of faith in the work setting.

All: Amen.

O God, in their struggles
let them rejoice that you are near to help them.

All: Amen.

In their needs
let them know that you are there to rescue them.

All: Amen.

In their joys
let them see that you are the source and completion of every happiness.

All: Amen.

We pray all this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

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 shore 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.