



Lively Stones | PETER 2:5

Holding forth the word of life

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MAKING CAREER DECISIONS WITHIN GOD'S WILL

As Christians, we need to be prudent to learn to discern God's will for our lives, including our vocational and emotional lives (Eph 5:16,17). The Psalmist asks the Lord to lead him to the right paths and we need that as well (Ps 25:1-5). Are you wrestling with a career decision, not sure which path to take? Are you wondering which direction the Lord desires you to go? Many Christians struggle with making career decisions at various points in their lives. Let us discuss and consider a few biblical precepts and practices in this crucial matter of our lives. Ps 25:3,4 say, *Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.*

It is important that we are genuinely seeking God's will and not just going to God to get divine assent when we have already made up our minds. As Christians, we desire to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. We want to do His will in all aspects of our lives; in the daily choices we make that govern our actions in life decisions (Ps 25; 3-5, Ps 37:5-7, Prov 3:5-7). The Scripture gave us clear guidance regarding the moral choices we are to make as God's sons and daughters, as in the Ten Commandments and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. 1 Thes 4:3 says *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.*

The Bible gives us instruction as to

how we are to live our lives, to be salt and light in this world, glorifying God (Matt 5:16). The Bible does not, however, give specific guidance about various types of life's decisions, including making career choices. Nowhere in Scripture will you find a verse that will specify whether you should become an accountant or an engineer. Nor will you find detailed instructions on how to choose a career when confronted with multiple possibilities but there are generic guidelines and precepts that will help us towards this end. Career decisions may seem overwhelming because of the sheer number of options that are available today. We long to make the "right" decision, the choice that proves to be good for us and not regret later. So what can we do to make wise career decisions that are within the will of God for our lives? Although the Bible is not a manual on career planning and decision-making, it does teach some important principles that can assist us in becoming a wise and God-centred decision maker. These principles will guide in our career planning, as well as our career counselling, as we seek God and consult godly men for help in career decision-making process.

PRINCIPLE 1: Our first priority in life must always be to develop an increasingly intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35).

In our society, many are concerned with just worldly accomplishments: what we do, how we perform, how

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**By
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much we produce, what position we hold, etc. Some may judge the fruitfulness of a church's ministry, for example, by the size of the church, the number of services or the presence of a television ministry, etc. Yet Jesus said that all of these do not matter unless the person is intimately connected to Him: He is the vine and we are the branches, unless we remain in Him and He in us, we would not bear much fruit; for **apart from Him we can do nothing** (John 15:5-6). This is the open secret to success in our work or ministry, characterised by fervent prayer and the meditation of this Word (Col 4:2; 2 Tim 2:15). **We are to put Christ and His kingdom first** and these things will be added unto us (Col 3:1,2).

PRINCIPLE 1:

Our first priority in life must always be to develop an increasingly intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35).

PRINCIPLE 2:

God has given us the aptitude for particular skills, abilities and with the inclination toward particular interests. Your God-given gifts and talents are an important factor to consider in making career decisions (Eph 4:11-14).

Seeking God's will requires **constant communion with the Lord** and not any haphazard transitory thought nor a hurried request only. Remember that Christ calls us to "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33, Col 3:1); not to seek what we can do for selfish reasons. **Being rooted in Christ** is a fundamental "pre-requisite" to finding God's will for your career. You will not be ready to find the right career path He has designed for you unless you seek Him first (Matt 7:7). He calls you to love Him with all your heart,

mind, soul and strength and to love others as you love yourself (Matt 22:37-39). The more passionately you seek God first, the better equipped you will be able to hear His voice and to be the person God wants you to be (i.e. not seeking to be a millionaire for the sake of being one). We need to **be sensitive and attentive when God speaks** and that is paramount. Samuel learnt that when God speaks to him (1 Sam 3:9).

Also, a believer needs to be aware of some of the warning signs that **your career (or prospective career) may interfere with your relationship with Christ**. For example, does your job require you to act in unethical or immoral ways (i.e. working in a drinking pub or casino or night spot)? Does your work require so much time at work that you have little time for your family, prayer, your quiet time with the Lord, church, stewardship, Sabbath worship, fellowship etc? Does it tempt you to become proud, cunning, greedy, manipulative, etc? In other words, is your work leading you away from Christ, rather than leading you to become more Christ-like? If so, ask the Lord if this is a career path the Lord would have you to pursue. As Jesus says, *What does it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world, and loses his own soul* (Matt 16:26), we need to get our focus and priorities right first (Tit 2:13-15; Col 3:1,2). **A working knowledge of the Scriptures** is important here (2 Tim 2:15).

PRINCIPLE 2: God has given us the aptitude for particular skills, abilities and with the inclination toward particular interests. Your God-given gifts and talents are an important factor to consider in making career decisions (Eph 4:11-14).

We are God's handiwork. He created our inmost being, made and called us in our mother's womb. (Jer 1:5) We are fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:13-14). **We have been given work-related gifts chosen specifically** (Rom 12:6-8). God desires for us to use the gifts and talents He has given to develop them fully, to serve others effectively, which will bring glory to our Designer. Not all of us can be a lawyer or engineer or doctor or even an accountant but we may be better at certain jobs or vocations. To make good career decisions, one should strive to have a thorough knowledge and objective assessment of our calling, skills and abilities, interests, Christian values and be close to God. Without this knowledge, we may not be

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fully equipped to make good career decisions.

PRINCIPLE 3: *It is our duty to use our God-given sanctified mind, submitted to Christ to make good career decisions (Col 4:5, 2 Tim 1:7) with the knowledge of God's Word and Prayer.*

If you wanted to buy a computer, most likely you would not just walk into a computer super-store and see which computer you felt "led" to buy! Most people would agree that to do so would be foolish. Instead, most people would agree that it's best to research information about the different computers on the market, identify their specific needs, investigate prices of different stores for the best computers and then make a purchase. **Certainly prayer should be a part of the process** but God expects us to do our part in making wise decisions, as well and seek out factual information about the company, obey Him in intercession and wait upon Him (Ps 27:14).

Learning how to make decisions is a part of **developing biblical wisdom and maturity**, which begins with the fear of God (Prov 9:10). The book of Proverbs is full of admonitions about the importance of **gaining wisdom through the fear of God**, thus pleasing God. Proverbs are given to us to attain wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of wisdom; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life... (Prov 1:1-3). God desires for us to have not only spiritual maturity and wisdom but also wisdom that relates to making crucial decisions in this life when we **read, understand and apply the Word of God daily** (Eph 5:16,17).

Making career decisions by ourselves only are often difficult for most people. **It is prudent to talk to your pastor, elder and parents and asks them for their views as well.** There may be more than one good option and we may not know all the answers. Unfortunately, some young Christians avoid this and insist on their own will and decision often. **Circumstances or/and people may be God's way of sharing His will for us.** For example, would it be wise to set up a new company now in Iran or Iraq in the midst of the unrest and instability? It may be prudent to wait upon the Lord first and not rush into it or not even do it at all. But these external events are not foolproof as well (i.e. Jonah was running away from

God but he found a ship waiting for him at the harbour). If you want to do something and your godly parents think otherwise or the pastor or elder disapproves of a certain vocation (i.e. working in a brewery or tobacco company), **pray, be careful and think again** (1 Cor 6:12).

While God can lead through circumstances (and they are not absolute), it does not bypass our wrestling and waiting upon Him in making difficult decisions in partnership with Him. The Apostle Paul speaks of the logical, sanctified thinking mind (2 Tim 1:7 a sound mind) combined with prayer to determine his direction, subject to God's will. Consider Paul in Rom 15:18-24 as one such instance. Learn to say like Paul in Rom 1:10, *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you* and 1 Cor 16:7 *For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.*

Just as you would check with computer magazines, knowledgeable computer users and computer professionals to decide and search for the best laptop or PDA, there are biblical resources available to assist one in learning how to make good career planning and

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PRINCIPLE 4:

Living out God's will for your career and life may require some sacrifices and self denial (Luke 9:23, Prov 3:5-7).

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decisions. Check out the following verses. 1 Thes 5:4; 1 Cor 6:9-12, 8:9, 10:23,31; Eph 5:15-17. God does guide us; He does, however, expect us to take responsibility for using **the sanctified minds He has given us**, to the best of our ability (Phil 4:8,9; 2 Cor 10:5) and the **peace in our hearts** (Phil 4:7).

PRINCIPLE 4: Living out God's will for your career and life may require some sacrifices and self denial (Luke 9:23, Prov 3:5-7).

One aspect of decision-making is actually self-denial, sacrifice and the walk of faith. We need to develop our "faith muscles" as we trust the Lord Jesus, by our **taking up the cross, denying of self and following Him**. They had no idea what was in store for them! When Jesus called Saul (Paul), He did not reveal to him all that his ministry would entail or require from him. We are to be mentally prepared to honour God at the expense of self (i.e. rejecting a good paying job or promotion).

In our ministry, the work place or market place or business environment, we need a sense of call or vision although they may not be specific and not accompanied with detailed directions or guarantees, which are to be followed by our faith in God. **God's guidance is given one step at a time** and often requires that we **take some steps of faith or deny self in the process. Diligence and human responsibility are necessary** in actively seeking for employment too. The point is often missed; that the first two servants were not told what to do with the talents entrusted to them (Matt 25:18-30). The first servant who went at once and put his money to work, gained five more talents." He used his own reasoning powers to decide how best to work with the talents he had been given. He puts in effort diligently and that is the will of God as well. **The industrious ant, not the indolent pig is our role model in the work place** (Prov 6:1-6).

Learning to take up the cross and deny self (Luke 9:23) is an essential part of following God and living out His will for our lives. We are to commit our ways to Him and let Him decide and not vice versa (Ps 37:1-6). Without sacrifice and God-centredness, a person's life becomes a process of digging an ever-deeper rut in the world with selfish gains and he may be cut off from all

that God intends him to be. Remember **faith is trusting God** and having the conviction of what we hope for and be assured of what we do not see (Heb 11:1,6). We know that as God's sons and daughters, we are victors with Christ's power and strength! God calls us to live courageously for Him; to be salt and light to this depraved world (Jas 1:9, Matt 5:16). We have to **live for Christ and not for self!** That makes a world of a difference in decision-making in our career or relationships!

Conclusion

Our chief end in life is to **glorify God and to enjoy Him forever** (and not to multiply wealth or fame and enjoy it forever). When you **get your job, remember to thank and praise the Lord and give Him glory in all that we do** in the end. God wants the best for us and He is ever ready and available to lead and guide us, provided we seek and ask Him first. Eph 5:16, 17 say, *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* Finally, what is the chief end of men? Ecc 12:13 says, *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.***

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Eph 3:20-21).

**19th Mar
Exco Meeting**

**26th Mar
Junior Department
Promotional Sunday**

Announcements