



**RONKELLEHER**  
*Equipping, Enabling, and Encouraging Marketplace Leaders*

## Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, It's Off to Work We Go!

Anyone who has ever seen the Walt Disney classic *Snow White* can picture the seven dwarfs singing and whistling as they march off, tools in hand, to spend their day working in the mine. Walt Disney made this epic film shortly after the great depression when people were thrilled to have jobs, it meant they could feed and clothe their families without taking government handouts.

That was then. Today's bumper sticker reads, "*I-owe, I-owe, so it's off to work I go.*" We get up before dawn to join the freeway demolition derby, arrive at work stressed out, grit our teeth through another day at the salt mines, and then clench our teeth as we battle the traffic back home. We endure all this so that we can pay our mortgages, save up a little for vacation, and maybe put a bit away for a rainy day.

What has happened to us? Why aren't we thrilled with our jobs? Why aren't we going off to work singing and whistling like the seven dwarfs?

Perhaps you are so far gone that you think the only reason the seven dwarfs were singing is because they were strung out on mega-doses of antidepressants prescribed by over indulgent doctors, who were in cahoots with Simon Legree who really owned the mine!

Some people think that work is a curse that God put on man *after* he sinned. But in reviewing Genesis 1, we find that God *first* blessed Adam and Eve, and *then* gave them the command to rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and every other living creature that moves on the ground; to work.

Long before the first sin, work was part of the plan even in paradise. So if work is part of the plan God has for our lives, and God blessed Adam and Eve before He gave them the command to work, then our attitude toward work should have us singing "Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho," not the familiar Johnny Paycheck song, "Take This Job and Shove It!"



By understanding the plan God has for our lives we can improve our attitudes, and find new motivation for our work. The Scottish philosopher Thomas Chalmers said, “The grand essentials of happiness are: something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.” Incorporate these essentials into your life and you may even find yourself whistling while you work!

## Something to Do

The first step to understanding God’s plan for our work is to understand that there is a difference between our vocation and our occupation.

In Peter’s letter to the Christians in Asia Minor, he said, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you might declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his beautiful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

The Latin word *vocare* is the root of the English word *vocation*, which is the same Greek word translated as *called* in Peter’s letter. Put simply, your vocation *is* your calling. Your vocation, your calling, is to declare the praises of Him who called you. According to Peter, we are God’s chosen people, a royal priesthood.

Our occupation is what we do to provide for ourselves and our families. Some people have many occupations during their lifetimes; paper boys, waiters, secretaries, supervisors, managers, executives, business owners, professionals, etc.

Speaking to the Corinthians, Paul said, “*Nevertheless, each one of you should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him*” (1 Corinthians 7:17). Paul goes on to say, “*Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you – although if you can gain your freedom, do so*” (1 Corinthians 7:20-21).

Paul is saying that we should be content in whatever our stations are in life. But he also says that if we can improve ourselves we should do so. The phrase, “Don’t let it trouble you” is key. We should not let worrying about the status of our jobs or our positions in life foreshadow our true calling to be God’s servants.

So what if you hate your job as a waiter? If you get a chance to change jobs, fine, but don’t lose sight of your calling. The most important thing to remember is that in God’s eye we are all equal, we were all bought at a price.

When John Wanamaker was Postmaster General, someone asked him how he found the time to also run the Sunday school at his church. Mr. Wanamaker replied, “Why, the Sunday school is my business! All other things are just things.” Despite the enormous responsibility of his job, he



recognized the difference between his vocation and his occupation and put the priority on the vocation.

The Bible also provides us direction regarding how we are to work at our occupations. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul exhorts them, “*Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence to the Lord*” (Colossians 3:22). The instruction is clear; we are to work hard whether we are being watched or not.

Paul goes on saying, “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as a reward*” (Colossians 3:23-24).

In Paul’s letter to Titus he says, “*Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive*” (Titus 2:9-10).

Whether we are sweeping floors or running companies we are to work not because we have an earthly boss, but as though working for the Lord.

Solomon also commands us to work hard. “*Lazy hands make a man poor but diligent hands bring wealth*” (Proverbs 10:4). Later Solomon says, “*Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor*” (Proverbs 12:27), and “*The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied*” (Proverbs 13:4). Solomon refers to the diligent worker over and over. A diligent worker is one who works hard, energetically, painstakingly, trying to do the best job possible.

Summarizing, strive to be content in your work, putting a priority on your vocation, not your occupation, and be obedient to your boss as you work diligently.

## **Something to Love**

Is it Biblical to love your work? Absolutely! How could you possibly be “a light unto the world” if you do not love your work? Do you think God would want you to work “as unto Him” and not love your work? Absolutely not! Because if you do not love your work how can you reflect God’s love to those who work around you? The question then is “How can I love my work?”

The first step is to have the right work, the right occupation. You have talents that God gave you and to not use those talents would be a waste of your purpose in life.



Discover your God-given talents and find work that uses them. This does not necessarily mean leaving your current job. It might be as simple as understanding your talents and applying them to your current job.

Take, for example, the tile setter who was frustrated in his job because he was very artistic and felt that his talents were not being used. The problem was solved when he increased his skills as a tile setter by learning how to work with unusual tiles in ways never done before. Soon he was the most sought after tile setter in the region known for the beautiful creations that only he could create.

Others may be in positions that do not use their talents and there is no way to apply them in their current jobs. An example might be someone with a talent for working with people working in a research job that keeps them trapped in the basement of a library working alone. The solution here may be to transfer to another job in the company, or if necessary, find a job that uses your talents in a new company.

Remember, you cannot eat eight hours a day. You cannot run eight hours a day. Work is the only thing you can do eight hours a day, five days a week, all year long. It just doesn't make sense in light of our vocations to spend half of our waking hours in a job that causes us not to be a light unto the world!

## Something to Hope For

Without something to hope for, something to do and something to love is meaningless. Something to hope for gives us the drive and determination to see the race through to the end. Hope makes it possible to persevere even under the most difficult circumstances in the most boring job.

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 gives us a picture of what awaits us if we work "as unto the Lord." The master gives each of three men money to hold for him while he is away on a journey. To the man who was given the five talents and had earned five more the master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant." There will be a time at the end of life's road when we will all want to hear from God, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author teaches the principle of something to hope for with the example of the ancients: "*All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not see the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance*" (Hebrews 11:13). These men and women lived by faith. Even though they did not see the fulfillment of "the things promised" they continued to live a life of faith, hoping for the things promised.



Hebrews goes on to describe the importance of being sure of what we hope for, “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*” (Hebrews 11:1).

It would be difficult indeed to maintain faith if we are not sure of even what we hope for. For if we do not fully believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died and rose again, how can we have a confident hope? If we do not believe that Jesus died for our sins, how can we have hope? It is in this promise of salvation that we can be sure of what we hope for, even though we do not see.

Author, Rubem Alves, defined hope as, “Hearing the melody of the future” and hope as “dancing to it in the present.” As believers, we hear the melody of the promise of salvation and that promise gives us the ability to dance in our work today.

## Getting Started

Something to do, something to love, something to hope for. If we cannot find a way to live this part of our lives that are our occupations Biblically then we shall have empty, unfulfilled lives. Here are five steps to get you whistling while you work:

### Attitude

Remember Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 7:17) to be content in their stations. The one with the most toys is not the winner!

Your occupation is secondary to the fulfillment of your vocation; to be a servant of God, a light unto the world. Forget what the “world” says. It really doesn’t matter whether you are the janitor or the president as long as you do the best work possible as unto the Lord.

So the first step is to adjust your attitude to reflect your vocation while you’re working at your occupation.

### Diligence

It is not honoring to the Lord if your coworkers can accuse you, a Christian, of being a sluggard. So work as Solomon said with diligent hands. That way no one will be able to say behind your back that Christians are a lazy bunch who don’t carry their fair share of the load.

### Passion

If you do not have passion for your work it is a clear signal that you do not love your work. Perhaps it is because you do not have a job that makes use of your talents, or perhaps it is



because you are focused on your occupation rather than your vocation. Take steps to either work in your job with passion, or find a job in which you can!

## Perseverance

Life is not as they say “A bowl full of cherries.” Often times life is more like just the pits. Paul was shipwrecked, stoned, flogged, and put in prison. Yet he counts these difficult times as “light and momentary afflictions.” Paul’s passion and his sheer determination kept him from being defeated by the difficulties that he encountered.

If he can count his tribulations as light, what are ours in comparison? Is it really that important to get mad at the fool who cut you off on the freeway, or take personally a comment that a coworker made about your department? Or are these things the really “light and momentary” afflictions? For goodness sake, do not let the light and momentary take precedence over the eternal implications of your vocation to serve God.

## Hope

We are, all of us, nothing but flesh and blood. And with that frailty comes the knowledge that eventually, no matter how loud we whistle, we will fall short. When this day happens, remember to hear the melody of the future and dance to it today. Our melody is the knowledge of our salvation through Christ. We may not be able to physically see Him with our eyes, but we can certainly hear His melody in our hearts.

## One Final Thought

Every morning when you get up, you have a very important choice to make. “Shall I live this day as though tomorrow will never come, and work as though God were standing beside me?” Or “I will live this day for myself, tomorrow is always another day”?

James writes, “*Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year here or there, carry on business and make money.’ Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ Anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins*” (James 4:13-15, 17).

Spend a few minutes every morning in quiet prayer seeking God’s direction for your life. It is all a gift from Him! You’ll be amazed at the results. You might even find yourself singing “Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho” as you drive the freeway to work!