

## Calling vs. Occupation: Six Ideas to Help You in a Difficult Job

Blog / Produced by *The High Calling*



So, it's another Monday, and as you hit the snooze button for the second time, you find it hard to get out of bed again to go to an occupation that you find mundane and a waste of your gifts and talents. In this economy, it's all you could get, and you need to put food on the table (let alone pay for health insurance and pay off the school loan!). You want more than a "job"; you want a "calling." Your desire is for your work to glorify God, to serve people, and, honestly, to be something for which you gladly get out of bed.

Well, that is not always the case. Some occupations are simply not lined up with your true vocation. That's the honest truth. But is there a way to understand your present work situation in order to live more abundantly in God's will? Here are six ideas about calling as it relates to occupation.

**1. Our primary calling is to follow Christ.** This means doing what he calls us to do in the world. As his image-bearers, we are to represent God in all of life, as Christ followers, we are to promote the Kingdom of God, as relational beings, we are to bring about Shalom flourishing, as biblical Christians, we are to live out the Great Commandment—to love God and love our neighbors—as well as the Great Commission—to make disciples as we go about our lives.

**2. Our secondary calling flows out of that:** What *specific* things has God called *me* to do to fulfill that primary calling? In my particular situation, how can I, in tangible ways, do those things that a Christ-follower is supposed to do? This actually has less to do with a *feeling* of satisfaction in my work and more to do with doing God's will *within my work context*. I waited tables while attending college. It was never my calling to be a waiter. But I represented God in that restaurant. I did what I could to create a culture in which relationships grew and people worked as a team. Even though I never intended to be a "professional waiter," I was promoted to co-head waiter. I was able to lead our restaurant's wait staff in a way that service was always excellent. I found satisfaction not in feeling like I was doing my ultimate vocation, but in the joy of attempting, every day, to make our business the best it could be.

**3. In particular seasons of our lives, we have various occupations.** Think about it: an occupation is simply a place we "occupy" in order to fulfill our callings. The occupation does not define the calling; the calling defines *what we do* in the occupation. In other words, the fact that you are in an occupation that you are not passionate about at this present time does not negate that in this particular place and time, you need to fulfill your primary calling. I did not intend to be a waiter forever, but that did not stop what I was called to do.

**4. No matter what occupation you have, you will always have the calling to serve people because you are a follower of Christ.** I remember being miserable in a sales job I had. It was hard work—cold calling businesses in order to sell uniform services. My boss was an ex-Marine who thought that the best way to motivate the sales force was to yell at us. I thought, "How could this be what God has called me to do?" Needless to say, the motivation to perform in this job was close to nil. But then I remembered what Paul wrote to the bond-servants in Colossae: "Obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as

working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” ([Colossians 3:22-24](#)).

**5. In a perfect world (which is not what we live in, we must remember!), your occupation would be directly connected to your calling.** Your gifts, skills, passions, joy, and fulfillment of meaning in all that you do would be expressed in the work you do. This is something for which we all should strive. It is that “sweet spot” in which we can best glorify God. But it is not always available to us at certain times in our lives. Sometimes, we have to make sacrifices because of the situation we are in or the issues that surround us. The fallen nature of the world causes the Christian to make sacrifices that he or she would not have to make if the world was the way it was intended to be. Work satisfaction is a wonderful thing, don’t get me wrong. But a feeling of satisfaction for a Christian is meant to come from things that are deeper than having everything just the way we want them. This is a hard pill to swallow, but when we signed up to be Christ-followers, Jesus told us that we’d have to bear our crosses. Christians learn that a deeper satisfaction is experienced when we sacrifice, when we do the right thing in order to glorify God and serve others.

**6. The primary calling does not change, but it manifests itself in different ways in different times and places in which God places us.** God knew you’d be employed where you are now employed. He knows that this is not your ultimate destination to fulfill your calling. He also knows that there are things he is calling you to do in order to glorify Him at this particular time and place, and he also knows how this experience is preparing you for what he has in store for you in the future. Ironically, when I look back, all the jobs I’ve had throughout my life—all those occupations that I thought at the time were meaningless—have actually provided valuable experiences that prepared me to fulfill my calling later in life. Don’t ever underestimate the sovereignty of God! It is like the parable of the Talents. Are we being faithful with what God has given us to do today so that we are ready for the larger responsibility in the future?