



# Biblical Foundations

## Work as Ministry

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*Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. Serve the Lord Christ..*

— Colossians 3:23-24 (NET)

Are you involved in full-time Christian ministry?

The church I grew up in strongly encouraged me to pursue “full-time Christian ministry.” What they meant by that was vocational ministry. They taught that it was mandatory, not optional.

Should every Christian enter vocational ministry?

Allow me to share my journey of discovery.

As a teenager, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Let’s face it: how many eighteen-year-olds really know what they’re good at or where they might excel in the business arena? I read books, asked for advice, and prayed a lot, but I had no sense of direction. The only thing I could do was make the best decisions I could at the time.

My first big question after high school was this: Where should I go to college? The options seemed endless. I sought input from my parents, teachers, pastors, and others, and I asked God for wisdom and guidance. I decided to go to a Bible college.

Next question: What about my major? I chose a double major—Bible and pastoral studies—even though I did not sense God leading me to become a pastor. In addition, I spent the summers during my college years interning at my home church.



After college came seminary. I still lacked direction, but it seemed to be the right next step. My studies involved more theology, languages, counseling, preaching, administration, and pastoral training. Still, I had no plans to become a pastor.

Then came one of the most challenging decisions of my life. Bible college was behind me. I had just finished seminary. I got married three months later and moved out of my parents' home. The part-time job stocking shelves at a grocery store would not be enough to support a new family. I needed a real job.

My father invited me to work with him in his insurance agency. That seemed to be my best option at the time, so I secured my insurance and securities licenses and began what I thought would be a short-term career in financial services.

Then I discovered that I loved the field. I really enjoyed some elements of the field, including meeting people, educating and counseling them regarding finances, and exploring various options for achieving financial objectives. The work moved from auto insurance sales and service to financial planning and later to employee benefits. I enjoyed the work, but I had a sense that I was missing God's ideal plan for my life. I believed God had graciously provided me with a Bible education so that I could use my training in my vocational work.

But I had no idea what that role was. I only knew that as I counseled people about temporal issues with short-term implications; I really wanted to be involved in something that mattered for eternity.

So I prayed, and I prayed. For years I prayed. I asked God to show me what I could do for him. I asked God to write it in the sky if necessary, because I was willing to do whatever he wanted—I just didn't know what that was.

Then one day, God answered my prayer as clear as day.

In 1997, at my best friend's wedding, I struck up a conversation with my friend's brother-in-law. He asked me how things were going with work, and that's when I shared with him my struggle.



His response changed my life. As the president of In Touch Foundation, he asked me to consider coming to work for him as a Planned Giving Officer. He told me that the two primary qualifications they sought were pastoral training and financial planning. They considered their representatives to be financial pastors.

After a bit of discussion and clarification, I accepted his offer. God's message to me was clear. Without my realizing it, he had prepared me for this unique role through training and experience in two seemingly unrelated fields. His answer to my prayer was just as plain as if he had written it in the sky. God had prepared me for exactly this field. And in this field I have found great joy and fulfillment. This has been my career for the past twenty-six years.

Could my role be considered vocational ministry? Some would say so, and others might disagree. But is it full-time Christian ministry? Yes!

In my pursuit of a more meaningful vocation, I discovered what makes the work "ministry" is not the vocation—it's the way in which we do our work, regardless of the vocation.

Though I didn't realize it at the time, I could have instilled ministry into my role as a financial planner. I didn't need to change roles to bring ministry into my work; I just needed to change my thinking. Granted, my current role has enabled greater expression of my quest to focus on eternal impact. But bringing ministry to our work does not require moving to a new role.

Paul instructed the Colossians in this way: "Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. Serve the Lord Christ." This means our work, whatever it is, can and should be done for the Lord. And we can view it as service to the Lord.

Are you involved in full-time Christian ministry? Whether you realize it or not, you are. Lean into your work with enthusiasm. Consider what you can do to use your current role to impact others for good and to share the truth and love of Jesus Christ with others. As you do so, you will be serving the Lord Christ. And that brings true fulfillment.