

Young People - Escape the Trap by Planning your Career

Young people of God's church, what do you want out of life? What do *you* want for *your* future?

Perhaps you want hobbies, recreation, concerts, sports, dates, and travel? Looking farther into the future, perhaps you look forward to a dependable car, true romance (sounds like a magazine title!), marriage, your own home, and even children... perish the thought right now, eh?

Of course, money is required for most of these - especially for children!

However, I'm sure you know that there doesn't seem to be much money in skateboarding these days, there's only a slim chance of you becoming a successful rock star, and your chances of winning a big lottery prize is about the same as the chances of you being struck by lightning. So if I hear of one of you being struck by lightning, that will be the day that I start buying lottery tickets.

No, there is not much in the way of easy money out there. For the vast majority of us mere mortals, to have a reasonably adequate amount of money, we need a good job. And in this twenty-first century, to have a good job in the future, you really need to be planning your career. And you need to be planning it NOW!

We have targeted the subject matter of this article at our young people. Still, if, like me, you cannot include yourself in that age group any more, and if, *unlike* me, you have not yet found your niche in life, maybe you too can use some of these concepts to your advantage. I ask all others who are not, and are not likely to be, in the job market to continue to read so that you may more effectively encourage those who are.

Every teen in God's Church must start thinking about this NOW. In a career preparation presentation my wife and I attended, the expert presenter stated that the young people who start early on their career planning and preparations have a definite edge in the job market.

The purpose of this article is to urge you young people to "escape the trap" by planning your career.

Trap? What trap are we talking about here? We're talking about the miserable trap of repeated periods of unemployment, boring jobs, a wasted life, and years of regrets - perhaps a lifetime of regrets. Many do spend their whole lives trapped in jobs they don't like. I was in that kind of trap with two consecutive dead-end jobs for five years after I left school.

Young people can feel trapped at school with its seemingly endless schedules, discipline, obligations, routines and assignments. Sometimes, it seems like someone is always telling you what to do. If you think that school life is a trap, consider this undesirable scenario:

You're a young man pumping gas for minimum wages because you didn't have the education to go for anything better. You get a girl pregnant and you have to get married. Guess what you're going to be doing for a very long time? Right on! You're going to be pumping gas... and changing diapers... and flipping hamburgers as a second job in order to put food on the table.

If this happens (it shouldn't, but please don't think it can't), it won't matter about all the career books you have sitting on your bookshelf waiting to be read and acted upon. You won't have any spare time to be able to prepare yourself for a better job. The preparation and planning have to be done NOW! The right time for your education and career planning is NOW!

This fact is amazing but true: Most people find themselves doing the job they're doing because their FRIENDS said they should. Please don't you fall for this. Take control of your own future - with God as your Leader and Partner.

Youth experts and researchers have found that most teens really do have great and lofty goals. Teens want to become surgeons, lawyers and even the legendary rocket scientists. Nevertheless, these same experts have also found that, although most teens have wonderful goals, few have taken any practical steps toward the fulfillment of those goals.

It is not the purpose of this article to scare you. But if you want to escape "the trap," you must start somewhere; and if you are a teenager, that somewhere is right here and right now!

Focus on One Thing you Enjoy

What are your natural, God-given talents and abilities? God created you and He wants you to tap into your talents and to develop your skills. The more you apply yourself, the more He will help you and bless your efforts... if you put Him first and do it His way.

Find out what you really enjoy doing.

Here are some brief quotes from careers expert, David Campbell's book, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else":

Be intense in one area. Focus strongly on one thing... hobby or group activity. Be good at one thing. Take quiet pride in knowing that you can do one thing well. Dedication, determination and persistence are required. Good things will happen if the right area is picked.

Solomon taught these very same wise concepts thousands of years ago when he wrote:

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (*the grave*) to which you are going. (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

You can only do one thing at a time. Find that one thing. Do it well and give it your all.

Here is another quote, this one from Brian Tracy, a human resources director and author of "The Universal Laws of Success and Achievement":

Every successful man or woman who has ever made a contribution to the world in any way has found their area of excellence and channeled all their time and talent and ability and energy into becoming outstanding in at least one area. There are no exceptions to that anywhere.

This is good advice; but do make sure your priorities are right. Remember what Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:31-33:

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Examine the Career Potential of the Things you Enjoy

Another quote from the wise King Solomon:

Do you see a man skilful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men." (Proverbs 22:29)

The Living Bible renders this verse as follows:

Do you know a hard working man? He shall be successful and stand before kings!

Here is a way to discover what your marketable, God-given talents and interests are:

1. Think about five things you really like to do.
2. Write them down.
3. Think about how those interests might relate to possible jobs.
4. Write down those job possibilities.
5. Home in on the best one... with lots of thought and council with your parents, teachers and school counselors.
6. Work on that one thing with all your might.

Let's go over these six points again. Start with the things you like to do. Not the things that your friends might expect you to like to do! Not the things that are looked upon as "cool" in the eyes of your friends! I have found by long experience that, in many or even most cases, school-age friends are "here today and gone tomorrow." Please remember that you need to take control of your own life.

What do YOU really like to do? Playing around with computers? Reading? Moulding clay? Growing plants? Tinkering with cars? Electronics? Calculus? (Huh? Really?) It really does help to write them down.

Now, think how each might relate to one or more job possibilities. Aim high! Lofty goals don't mean you'll get there right at the beginning; but nobody ever got to the top with a set of mediocre objectives.

Do you like shopping? I don't! Like many men, I hate shopping, unless it's for CDs or computer accessories. But even the enjoyment of shopping has some career possibilities. You might consider a successful career as a boutique owner, a fashion consultant, a purchasing agent, a cosmetician, or even a model... if you behave yourself and know where to draw the line.

Maybe you're an avid sports fan. Maybe you're crazy about hockey, soccer, baseball, athletics, or some other sport. Although professional participation in most sports is usually very short-term, related long-term careers may include coaching, sports medicine or teaching sports to Special Needs children.

Maybe you just love talking to your friends on the phone! You may very well have a strength for working with people which might lead to a career as a counselor, a therapist or a social worker. These are just a few suggestions that come instantly to my mind. You can probably think of many more and better ones.

What Else?

Yes, what else can you do to prepare for your career? You can read books like the ones I have already quoted from; also the well-known and regularly updated "What Colour is your Parachute?" by Richard Bolles. You can talk to your career counselors at school.

You can talk to your family: your parents, your grandparents, aunts and uncles, older brothers and sisters. They can often help you increase your skills, your motivation and your education. Is your Mom good with computers, office skills, cooking or crafts? Is your Dad handy with car engines, electronics, plumbing or heavy machinery? Is your Grandma good at piano, sewing, macramé or knitting? Does your Grandpa understand the workings of the stock market or the insurance business? You may have great resources for career planning right there in your own family!

Are you thinking, "Nah! Not in my family!" Don't be so sure! Guess who freed me from my "trap" back in 1970? Guess who delivered me from my dead-end jobs? Of course, I give God the credit for the way it all worked out; but it was my Mum and Dad who gave me the idea. One morning, when I had returned home from another long and boring graveyard shift at the Ford car factory near Liverpool, my Mum asked me a simple question but one which set me on the path to a successful career: "Have you ever thought of doing what your Dad does?" It was my Dad who initially sparked my interest in telecommunications as a career, who put me in touch with the right people and who got me started on the right road. I'm not saying that you necessarily have to pursue the same career as one of your parents, but you certainly can tap into their experience and skills.

But again, the main thing is this: If you have reached high school age, it is time for you to start zeroing in on that one thing! So what are you waiting for? Go ahead, choose one thing! Work at it! Excel at it! Don't be afraid. No one can run your life except you. God is always there for you. He won't forsake you. He wants you to excel and to succeed.

Just one more thing. And this is very important. When choosing your career, keep the Kingdom of God in mind. Choose a vocation that is required for today, tomorrow, and right on into the World Tomorrow! There are certain careers that may be popular and high-profile today, but which will be totally obsolete in the World Tomorrow. Some examples of these soon-to-be-obsolete fields include politics, policing and crime-fighting, disease control and, of course the military. No one knows when Jesus Christ will return. There is every probability that, when He returns, you will be a baptized adult. If that is the case, you will be changed from human to a spirit-born child of God. But there is also some possibility that, when Jesus returns, you will still be an unbaptized young person. If that is the case you will be taking you physical career over into a brand new society - the Kingdom of God.

Elbert Hubbard once said, "There are two kinds of people in the world - those who are always getting ready to do something, and those who go ahead and do it."

Go ahead and do it! Escape the trap!

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