

rB Who Controls Career? | Rod Brace

<http://rodbrace.com/article/career>

Having gray hair attracts questions about career. I don't mind the what should I do aspect of the conversation, but I tread carefully when asked. The questions generally revolve around what should I do to get ahead in my career. The short answer, do excellent work, generally rings hollow with them. They want the three step process to reaching the pinnacle of career. Sadly, they have bought the notion that they are in control.

I am careful with my answers because I know I have a rather unusual take on career compared to our culture. Errors exist, I'm sure, in my perspective, but I've tried to base it on biblical truth. My experience has been that my career showed up when I did the same. Most to whom I share my perspectives conclude that I'm simply apathetic about career planning. I guess it simply depends on one's perspective. Caution is warranted on my part and theirs, because it is a far bigger question than just career; it is the question of God's sovereignty over life.

My gray hair has led me to conclude that we are all created by God with a specific interest, aptitude and predisposition to a talent or skill. We tend to think God has called us to a pinpoint on a map when in fact He's open to us picking from a larger region.

If God calls me to a particular interest or passion in life, He allows me to choose from many options, all of which fit neatly within His overall will for my life. God, in my mind, is not concerned so much as to the precise place that I serve, but rather than I serve in whatever place I find myself that day. His calling is more generic in regards to the precise position and more specific to a manner of excellence and service to others.

Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men. – Proverbs 22:29

Daily excellence, committed to God's purpose, will place us before influential leaders who can influence our career advancement. These leaders are subject to God's influence on our behalf making God's will the determining factor of our success.

When we depend on God to place us in the best suited role and geographic location for that season in our life, we can focus more on the work and less on the unfolding future. I've known those who incessantly plan and worry about their 5-year, 10-year, 50-year plan. The distraction of moving a career forward becomes a distraction from doing excellent work. Showing up and demonstrating excellence relieves us of the burden of controlling a future that is out of our reach.

A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way? - Proverbs 20:24

There are thousands of books available on how to make, seize, create, conquer your career.

Yet, many scriptures indicate that we do not in fact control our future. God is clearly in control of our life whether we acknowledge that truth or not. The stress of impatient corporate ladder climbing causes undue emotional and spiritual pain. A promotion or the prospect of a new job will come through God's sovereign influence over the people involved.

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. - Proverbs 21:1

If God can control the heart/actions of the most powerful and seemingly free humans in history, kings, we must conclude that he has the same sway over the CEOs of companies, Dean's of universities, mayors of cities, church board members or whoever has organizational influence over our position now and in the future. It is God's sovereign duty to fashion the free will of man to serve His purpose through your career. Any effort on your part to influence that dynamic, outside the will of God, is futile and potentially devastating.

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord. - Proverbs 21:30

Sadly, we are a people of self-promotion with a pride that fuels a desire for control. We want to choose when and where we will receive a promotion. We insist that our needs and timeline must meet our specifications. We chase an ever escalating career path of upward mobility. Yet, we miss the present moments set before us by God. It is in those moments that we learn who we are in God's kingdom. While scanning for tomorrow's gains we fail to experience the joy of contentment in the day.

When self-promotion becomes our persona we accomplish just that, promotion of self. In that role we ironically become less promotable. A self-promoting person is less attractive and fitting for meaningful work. Their focus continues to be mis-placed on actions unrelated to the work at hand.

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among great men; it is better for him to say to you, Come up here, than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman. - Proverbs 25:6-7

Let your aptitude warrant an invitation to advance. Prevent the desire for more and the fuel of pride from putting you in a self-promoted place for which you are not prepared to excel. Allow the slow progress of years of experience to prepare you for a God sanctioned impact in the future. Give the stress to succeed over to the drive to excel. Live in the day, focused on the task at hand, not worrying about tomorrow.

Our career is only one part of the person God calls us to be. Don't over emphasize and dwell on its importance. God's vision for our life is that of a personal journey of discovery to find who we are and who He is in the midst of the daily movements of life, including career. Don't miss the intent of your career by missing God at work in the details. We can never know or plan the marvelous journey He has prepared for us. We can, however, pursue our own path apart from God

accepting a small substitute for what He called us to be. Be a part of something far greater than what you have dreamed for yourself. Patiently trust in Him.

All a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart. - Proverbs 21:2