Career Advice from Church Leaders

President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“Choose a vocation where you will be happy. You will spend eight and more hours a day at it through all the foreseeable future. Choose something that you enjoy doing. Income is important, but you do not need to be a multimillionaire to be happy. In fact, you are more likely to be unhappy if wealth becomes your only objective. You will become a slave to it. It will color all your decisions. You need enough to get along on. You need enough to provide well for your family. It will be better if the husband becomes the provider and the wife does not work when children come. That situation may be necessary in some cases, but if you choose wisely now, it is not likely to become a requirement.

Choose a field in which you can grow. You need the stimulation of new effort and new ambitions, of new discoveries and new challenges.

Get all the schooling you can to qualify yourselves in your chosen vocations. In this world, competition is terrible. It eats up people. It destroys many. But it must be faced; it is something with which we have to deal.

Choose something that will be stimulating and thought-provoking and that will carry with it the day-to-day opportunity to do something to improve the society of which you will become a part.

These are the great days of your preparation for your future work. Do not waste them. Take advantage of them. Cram your heads full of knowledge. Assimilate it. Think about it. Let it become a part of you.

But with all of this, in choosing a vocation you should bear in mind that there are other things in life that are of tremendous importance also. The greatest task of all, the greatest challenge, and the greatest satisfaction lie in the rearing of a good family. There must also be time for service in the Church. Otherwise these very important dimensions of your life will be relegated to a back burner.

Life has a way of moving us in our vocational work from one thing to another. This likely will happen more in the future. The education you receive can become a solid foundation on which to build a career that may cover many fields of endeavor.” (Gordon B. Hinckley, Life’s Obligations, Ensign, February, 1999, p.2)

Mark E. Peterson (Apostle)

“I would like you to believe in God so much that you will believe that promise—if you will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all the other things that pertain to food and clothing and raiment and shelter will be added unto you. It is the gilt-edged promise and pledge of Almighty God.

Will you put God first in your lives, then, and seek him and realize that a career becomes a means to an end and not the end itself? Those words teach, don't they, that if we seek first God and his work, he will help us in all these other things—our careers and everything that is related to them?

Now I would not have you misunderstand me. I would not have you think because I speak like this that you can drop your careers or not be bothered about them or not be very good in them. If we seek to be as perfect as God is perfect, in other things, then we must seek perfection also in our careers.

If we plan to be school teachers, we must be the very best kind of school teachers. If we plan to be engineers, or physicians, we must excel in these lines. Anything less than excellence would leave us short of our goal to be perfect like God. But in doing this, I repeat, we must keep the career in its proper place as a means to an end and not allow it to displace or supplant our religious life, which is the real means of achieving our great goal—eventually to become perfect like God.

We must remember always that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment. Our careers may provide the meat and the raiment, but it is the gospel which nourishes the soul.
With this in mind if I were now preparing for a career, I would choose a line of employment which would not require any Sunday labor, nor much night work, nor one which would require me to be away from home and family to any great extent, nor which would throw me into questionable or undesirable environments, nor which would force me to choose close associates who lack proper standards of decency and right, nor which would uproot my home and disturb my family routine through frequent transfers from one city to another.

I would choose a career which would be uplifting to my mind and soul.

I would seek one with intellectual challenge. I would seek a job in which I could feel I was making a contribution to the welfare of my fellow men as well as to my family and close associates. I would choose a type of work of which my family would be proud and which would reflect honor upon my family, one which would allow a child of mine to say, "I am proud of my dad. See what he is doing."

I would choose an occupation which would not interfere with the living of my religion, nor with my full participation in Church activities. I would want the kind of a daily job which would be compatible with my becoming a bishop or a member of a stake presidency in case I were called to such a position.

I would choose the kind of work which would permit me to have a normal family life with time for companionship with wife and children. I would remember that good family life, based on a good marriage, is essential to the ultimate end of my existence, and that therefore my job must never be permitted to interfere with my family life and relationships.

I would want the kind of job which would be compatible with my living a clean life and having a prayer in my heart each hour of the day. I would choose the kind of job in which I could be honest and fair, and in which I could close each day's dealings with a clear conscience, knowing that I have done unto others as I would be done by. In other words, my job would be my servant and not my boss. It would contribute to my objective in life—not interfere with it.

I think I am practical about these things. I think I am a rather practical man. I have lived in industry all of my life, and I have had to fight for a living at times. But I know in the midst of it all that a man and a woman can choose the kind of job I have been telling you of. I think as a Latter-day Saint it is required of you to so plan your employment life that it will contribute to your religious life and help you to so live that you will keep the commandment to be perfect, even as God is perfect." (Mark E. Petersen, BYU Speeches, January 17, 1962, pp. 5-6)

**Elder F. Burton Howard**

So learn to differentiate between what is important and what isn’t. Choose your life’s work carefully. Select work that will bring out the best in you, work that will cause growth and require effort and permit you to maintain integrity. Choose work that will allow time for family and service in the church and your community and you will discover happiness.

You will then be able to make your contributions to life. If you are fortunate, you will leave the world a little richer and a little better than it would have been had you not lived. You cannot expect much more than this from your life. (F. Burton Howard, LDS Business College Commencement Address, May 9, 2002, p. 6)

**President Joseph F. Smith**

Let the parents in Zion give their children something to do that they may be taught the arts of industry, and equipped to carry responsibility when it is thrust upon them. Train them in some useful vocation that their living may be assured when they commence in life for themselves. Remember, the Lord has said that "the idler shall not eat the bread of the laborer," but all in Zion should be industrious. (Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, p.296)
Eldred G. Smith, Church Patriarch

In seeking education, one should seek to develop those talents that he has that would make him most serviceable to his fellowmen. Therefore, learn to do that which you enjoy doing, the thing you are happiest at doing. People like doing that which they do well.

Give only secondary thought to the monetary advantage of your chosen vocation. As you serve others, your joy in serving increases.

Einstein said: "It's high time that the ideal of success should be replaced by the ideal of service." (Eldred G. Smith, Conference Report, April 1967, p.77)

Elder Hugh B. Brown:
The final decision, however, is up to you. You may consult with other people, examine your tests and grade-point averages, and get a better understanding of yourself and your possibilities, but you must evaluate all that is available, create an appetite for the best, and then with ambition on fire and with undiscourageable pluck, continue to make the final irrevocable decision. Remember, the most important thing is not what you do but that you qualify to do it with excellence as you progressively find the activity which provides a continuing challenge and inspiration. (Hugh B. Brown, Conference Report, April 1968, p.103)

Elder Hugh B. Brown:
When you are doing the lower when the higher is possible,
When you are not a cleaner, finer, larger man on account of your work,
When you live only to eat and drink, have a good time, and accumulate money, then success is a failure.
When you do not carry a higher wealth in your character than in your pocketbook,
When the attainment of your ambition has blighted the aspirations and crushed the hopes of others,
When hunger for more money, more land, more houses and bonds has grown to be your dominant passion,
When your profession has made you a physical wreck -- a victim of `nerves' and moods,
When your absorption in your work has made you practically a stranger to your family,
When your greed for money has darkened and cramped your wife's life, and deprived her of self-expression, of needed rest and recreation, of amusement of any kind,
When all sympathy and fellowship have been crushed out of your life by selfish devotion to your vocation,
When you do not overtop your vocation, when you are not greater as a man than as a lawyer, a merchant, a physician or a scientist,
When you plead that you have never had time to cultivate your friendships, your politeness, or your good manners,
When you have lost on your way your self-respect, your courage, your self-control, or any other quality of manhood, then success has been a failure." (Hugh B. Brown, Conference Report, April 1969, p.113)
Ask my clerks and my closest associates if they ever hear me mention my individual property unless somebody speaks about it. I own property, and I employ the best men I can find to look after it. If God does not give it to me, I do not want it; if he does I will do the very best I can with it; but as for spending my own time in doing it, or letting my own mind dwell upon the affairs of this world, I will not do it. I have no heart to look after my own individual advantage, I never have had; my heart is not upon the things of this world.

Excuse me for referring to myself. But I know that there is no man on this earth who can call around him property, be he a merchant, tradesman, or farmer, with his mind continually occupied with: "How shall I get this or that; how rich can I get; or, how much can I get out of this brother o from that brother?" and dicker and work, and take advantage here and there--no such man ever can magnify the priesthood nor enter the celestial kingdom. Now, remember, they will not enter that kingdom; (Journal of Discourses, Vol.11, p.297, Brigham Young, February 3, 1867)