

# Prepare for Honorable Employment

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This morning we have heard many important things about preparing ourselves, our families, our wards, indeed, the Church to meet the challenges of these times. One of those aspects of preparation, as Bishop Brown and his counselors explained in their discussions of family preparedness, is employment and career development. I should like to discuss this in more detail, because it is so important to most of us, who as leaders, give assistance to others.

It is interesting that the first recorded instruction given to Adam after the Fall, dealt with the eternal principle of work. The Lord said: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” (Gen. 3:19.) Our Heavenly Father loves us so completely that he has given us a commandment to work. This is one of the keys to eternal life. He knows that we will learn more, grow more, achieve more, serve more, and benefit more from a life of industry than from a life of ease.

There are several principles which undergird the significance of work in the Lord’s plan. First, as the covenant people we must be as self-sufficient as possible. We are to be free from dependence upon a dole or any program that might endanger our free agency. Second, we must work to support the families with which the Lord has blessed us. Every true son of God wants to care for his own, and many a noble mother, from whom a husband has been taken, struggles to support her children, both as a breadwinner and a single parent. Finally, we work so that we may have the necessities of life, conserving time and energy left over for service in the Lord’s work. Sometimes it seems that the men who work the hardest at their occupations are the men most willing to devote time to church service.

Now, may we refer specifically to vocational work or employment. The employment we choose should be honorable and challenging. Ideally, we need to seek that work to which we are suited by interest, by aptitude, and by training. A man’s work should do more than provide adequate income; it should provide him with a sense of self-worth and be a pleasure—something he looks forward to each day.

May I suggest a definition of “honorable employment.” Honorable employment is honest employment. Fair value is given and there is no defrauding, cheating, or deceit. Its product or service is of high quality, and the employer, customer, client, or patient receives more than he or she expected. Honorable employment is moral. It involves nothing that would undermine public good or morality. For example, it does not involve traffic in liquor, illicit narcotics, or gambling. Honorable employment is useful. It provides goods or services which make the world a better place in which to live. Honorable employment is also remunerative. It provides enough income so that we may be self-sufficient and able to support our families, while leaving us enough time free to be good fathers and church workers.

It is necessary to say a word about what is “enough income.” This is a materialistic world, and Latter-day Saints must be careful not to confuse luxuries with necessities. An adequate income allows us to provide for the basic requirements of life. There are some who unwisely aspire to self-indulgent luxuries that often lead them away from complete commitment to the gospel of our Savior.

May I offer to the youth—these young people we want to help—for their consideration, four steps which are important in obtaining the right employment. They are: first, to invite the Lord's help in this important search; second, to plan ahead carefully; third, to gather all possible necessary information; and fourth, proper vocation or education preparation.

The first step, prayer, must continue throughout the entire process. As we gather facts, make decisions, gain the appropriate training and experience, and then seek jobs, it is essential that we combine our self-reliant efforts with a humble, prayerful attitude. The decision is ours to make, but the Lord will increase our wisdom if we seek him earnestly.

Planning ahead for a vocation is a very important second step. The sooner a young man can begin the planning, the sooner he will begin to acquire the skills of that vocation. Parents have an important responsibility to teach and guide children in thinking seriously about their future in the working world. Of course, parents must exercise wisdom, being careful to counsel rather than pressure children as they make their own decisions about careers.

The third step, gathering facts, involves many people and resources. Youth and parents should be able to draw upon the ward welfare services employment resource person, school counselors, and others. Interviews with potential employers, visits to occupational locations, and actually working at different jobs will greatly broaden career perspective.

Effective fact gathering includes a search to learn which vocations are in demand now and which will be in the future. We need college-trained people, but many have gone to a university and have become trained for jobs that do not exist in the marketplace. In addition to those trained in colleges, we need young men who are trained in other fields—carpenters, farmers, auto mechanics, and other skills.

As the final step, when the decision has been made and the young person feels right about the decision, the preparation process should begin in earnest. Whether the training involved is an apprenticeship, university education, or a trade school, it is often an advantage to have formal, recognized training for a vocation. The best positions and the highest pay go to those who have adequately prepared themselves.

The realities of life often cause people to seek any employment to provide income to meet their obligations. This happened to many during the great depression in the early 1930s. It is happening today to a lesser extent. It is important that a man be engaged in employment of his own choosing, where he is happy in his work and where he feels he is making a contribution. If he is not entirely satisfied with his success in what he is presently doing, it may not be too late to prayerfully consider making a change by planning, gathering facts, and making adequate preparation.

May I say a word here about Church employment centers and the responsibility of the priesthood quorums. Speed is crucial when a job opening occurs. A person who needs a job must hear of it as soon as possible and apply immediately. It is for this purpose that we have employment centers established by the Church. The key to success for this system lies not with the few full-time staff, but with the ward Welfare Services Committees and the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums.

It is through the priesthood network that openings and applicant information should flow. Our quorums should identify those who need work or who need to upgrade work, and then do all they can to help their members find

employment opportunities. Every ward Welfare Services Committee should have an employment resource person called and functioning. This person should be well-acquainted with all the career planning resources of the Church and community, in order to assist adults and youth to obtain the very best employment.

In a personal way, I recall the experiences my dear wife and I went through after deciding the course I should take for my life's work. I had taken some courses in pharmacy with the plan in mind of converting to a career in medicine. As many of us do, I changed my mind and engaged in another business, banking. We were blessed with steady employment, but I felt attracted toward the profession of law. This was a serious decision because I was married and had a family to support but after fasting and prayer and obtaining the facts as to the best way to proceed, I completed my undergraduate work and entered law school. I took classes at night because it was necessary to be employed during the daytime. These were not easy years for us, but desires are usually accomplished if we are willing to make a determined effort. Needless to say, I had the help and support of my wife. She remained a homemaker and cared for our children. What she gave in love, encouragement, frugality, and companionship was far in excess of any material contribution she might have made by taking employment.

Our wives deserve great credit for the heavy work load they carry day in and day out within our homes. No one expends more energy than a devoted mother and wife. In the usual arrangement of things, however, it is the man to whom the Lord has assigned the breadwinner's role.

There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts.

Brothers and Sisters, we need to do everything necessary to adequately prepare ourselves for employment or careers. We owe it to ourselves to do our best, and we owe our best in providing for our families. In addition to preparing ourselves for success, we need to help others. This is the spirit of our priesthood responsibility.

I am grateful for my membership in a church that has this concern for its members, and for my association with brethren who have a concern for each other's welfare. This is the Lord's church. This is his work led by his prophet. May we follow the counsel given for preparedness, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.