



LOOKING AT LIFE

Where's My Dream Job?



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LIONEL HAD JUST GRADUATED WITH A GENERAL ARTS DEGREE. He wasn't particularly ambitious, but he did want a job that was fulfilling and meaningful. A big salary wasn't necessary, but of course it wouldn't hurt. What was important was that he should enjoy this job—except that Lionel had no idea what he wanted to do. None of the vacancies advertised looked inspiring. Somewhere out there, he thought, was his dream job. He just didn't know what it was.

Suyin was more certain. She had an eye for taking photos, and was working as a photographer in a local newspaper. But it was dreadfully dull—most of her assignments involved covering boring community events—and her bosses weren't giving her opportunities to grow. Should she quit and strike out on her own? She wanted to travel around the region to highlight the plight of poorly-treated migrant workers. That

was her dream. But money would be tough. Who would pay her?

Narit, meanwhile, had found his dream job. He had always wanted to be an aircraft engineer, as he loved planes and tinkering with engines. So he studied hard, did well at aeronautical engineering in university, and got exactly what he wanted: a well-paying job repairing high-tech jet engines. A few months later, however, Narit discovered that all the fun had been killed by unending paperwork and tight deadlines that saw him working many late nights and weekends. So much for a dream job, he thought.

Careers: A Lifelong Pursuit

DO THESE STORIES SOUND FAMILIAR?

They are all real, and they speak about something many of us want: a fulfilling career. Many of us search for a dream job after finishing school, and hold hopes of doing something satisfying and meaningful. We then spend a big part of the rest of our lives pursuing this goal.

Some of us may aim to become a top executive, with a generous salary and lots of leadership challenges. Some of us dream of becoming a famous artist

or musician. Others want to achieve something significant, like creating a new lifesaving drug or technology. And yet others want to spend their lives on something they believe passionately in, like helping homeless people or preserving the environment.

While a rare few will be successful in their search, most of us will more than likely find ourselves in perpetual pursuit of the perfect career. We will agonise over which job to take, and then worry about whether we made the right decision. We will toil long hours, hoping to be recognised and rewarded for our hard work. Some of us may even change our plans for marriage and children, sacrifice time with family and friends, or give up our hobbies and interests for the sake of our career.

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Some people end up making their careers the focus of their existence.

They spend much of their lives pursuing their goal, and are willing to give up everything for it. Sometimes, it costs them their mental, emotional, and physical health, or results in broken or distant relationships with their families and friends.

Why do our careers mean so much to us? Why do we spend so much time and effort pursuing our dream jobs, and why are we always looking for something better?

What We Really Want

MONEY AND SUCCESS ARE NOT THE ONLY THINGS WE SEEK. When we pursue a career, we are looking for important things like opportunities to use our talents and skills, challenges that excite us, recognition and reward for our hard work, and the chance to influence people and change things.

There is nothing wrong with these goals, of course. They are part of human ambition, and they motivate us to work hard and improve ourselves. Unfortunately, these goals can put great pressure on us to perform at work or to find the perfect job. Yet we are unlikely to find a career—or even a job—that can satisfy all our desires and wishes perfectly.

Indeed, many people are not only unhappy at work, but also dissatisfied with their career. A 2014 survey found that in some Asian countries, half the workers were unhappy with their jobs, and two-thirds said they would readily quit if they could find something with higher pay or better prospects.

Our search for a good career doesn't end when we land our first job. Many of us go through life always searching for something better. We often wonder whether there is a better job out there, or whether we can be more successful in what we do. Our job chasing never seems to end.

Some people do find their dream jobs, of course. But some discover that they have to make big sacrifices to get what they want. Others, like Narit, find that their dreams are a lot less wonderful than they had imagined. Yet others find what seem like promising or high-paying careers, only

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to give it all up to do something “crazy” like travel the world or start a charity.

Why would such people give up so much for something that seems to promise so little? Perhaps

it is because a career, no matter how successful, ultimately cannot meet our deepest needs.

Our Deepest Needs

THINK A BIT ABOUT WHAT REALLY DRIVES PEOPLE in their career search, and you might find some common elements. Behind the long list of wants, is a much shorter list of needs:

SATISFACTION: We all have dreams of being happy. We want to spend our time and effort engaged in work that we like and which makes us feel good. It could be doing something that brings us enjoyment, pursuing a cause we believe in, or achieving a personal challenge.

SIGNIFICANCE: We want to find meaning in our jobs because ultimately, we want to find a purpose in our lives.

We want to understand why we exist and what we can do, and be recognized and rewarded for our talents, skills, and efforts. Some of us seek work that makes a difference in the lives of others: we get a sense of fulfilment when others recognise our contributions.

SECURITY: We want a career that will last. If our job has good prospects and the industry we work in is flourishing, it gives us the confidence to work hard, knowing that we too can continue to grow and succeed. Most importantly, we can rest assured that we and our family will be well-provided for.

These needs are not just physical in nature—they strike at the heart of who we are and want to be. Many people try to find an answer to these needs in their careers. Yet few jobs or careers meet these requirements perfectly. Instead, we often find ourselves restless, constantly looking for something better. Why?

Our careers cannot provide all the satisfaction, significance, and security we need because they depend on many factors beyond our control. Economic downturns, corporate restructuring, and constant technological and social change mean that even the best jobs

can disappear overnight. Ultimately, careers and jobs are temporal.

So, like Lionel, Suyin, and Narit, many of us inevitably find our career search fraught with uncertainty and disappointment. We seek satisfaction

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and fulfilment, but end up frustrated and unhappy. Some people find a good career, but still feel something is missing. Others give up everything for theirs, only to find that it isn't worth it. Why?

Are we looking for fulfilment in the wrong place? Is there an alternative that can truly meet our deepest needs?

Searching for Alternatives

OF COURSE, people have turned to many things other than their careers to meet such fundamental needs, but the best solution is found in someone, rather than something. Not just anyone, but someone who possesses a few necessary

qualities for meeting our needs perfectly:

ALL-KNOWING: To be able to understand what can satisfy our deepest needs completely, this someone must have the wisdom to guide us properly. This someone must have our best interests at heart, and want to help us make the right decisions and moves, so that we will find true satisfaction in what we do.

ALL-LOVING: To help us find significance, this all-knowing someone must first truly love and value us, giving us a sense of purpose and identity—just like how a loving parent gives a child a sense of belonging and assurance.

ETERNAL: To provide us with security, this someone must be completely reliable, such that he can fulfil the first two requirements all the time, and for all time. We must have the assurance that this someone will always be around and will always have our welfare at heart, no matter what happens.

Who would meet all these requirements? Clearly, the answer cannot be someone weak, fallible, or mortal. That someone has to be special.

Consider the Creator God—only He qualifies.

Paul, a follower of God, describes the Creator this way: “[God] made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:24-28).

Because God created the universe, He has absolute knowledge of everything, including us. He knows us intimately; He knows what makes us tick, what we need, and what will help us find true fulfilment.

And, as our Creator, He cherishes every single one of us and desires to help us. He is all-loving and is deeply concerned about our individual lives and what happens to us. He knows our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions.

Moreover, God is eternal and unchanging, and will never let us down. Unlike a human, He will not change His mind or break His promises. He said, “I am the Lord, and I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). So we can always be assured of His presence, and can always trust and rely on Him.

If God possesses all these qualities, then He cannot be a distant supernatural being, uncaring and aloof. We can have a close relationship with Him in the same way we relate to a parent or friend. Will you consider accepting His love?

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What Really Matters

OUR PURSUIT OF A CAREER can be frustrating because ultimately, we are seeking something that is temporal; it might even seem like we are chasing after the wind. We can sacrifice all our time and effort to find the right job, and even do well in it, but remain unfulfilled.

God offers us a different perspective: while a career has a proper place in our lives, it is not the only thing that matters, and certainly not the most important. We no longer have to worry about sacrificing everything for our dream job, only to be disappointed. Instead, we will know how to fit it into the “bigger picture” of life, and learn how to make the right decisions whether we are just starting our career, dealing with the challenges of our first job, or finding our purpose at work and in life.

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Will you turn to God?

If you want to find out more about God, one way is to make contact with a local church, where someone can help

you address any questions you might have. Another way is to get hold of a Bible, which will tell you about God and how He will give you the satisfaction, significance, and security you need.

We at Our Daily Bread Ministries would also like to help. Simply use the attached form to request for related biblical materials.

You can also check us out online at **www.odb.org** to see the many other printed and digital resources available.



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