Jobs That Christians Should Not Do

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I'm sure every Christian would agree that there are some jobs that a Christian should just never do. Robbing banks, selling drugs and human trafficking would all fall under this heading. But what about other vocations that are not as clear-cut? What about owning a bottle store, for example? Is this inappropriate for a Christian? In order to answer this question (and many others like it), we need to get a biblical perspective on what Christianity looks like in the world of work. What did Jesus have to say that impacts directly on where we work and how we work?

Capitalism vs God's Economy

Most of us reading this article will be working within a capitalist, free market economy, where the principles of God's Kingdom have the greatest potential to shine because they are so starkly counter-cultural. Obviously I am not advocating for a Communist system, but I'm simply suggesting that the kind of market in which most of us operate has the tendency to bring out the worst in humans. For example, when Jesus spoke on humility, he said: 'The greatest among you shall be your servant' (Matthew 23:11). Contrast this with the way things work in the capitalist system, where it is not the servant or the 'labour force' which are considered the greatest, but the owner of the capital. When considering these things, we need to make sure that our thinking conforms to the Kingdom of God, even while we are immersed in a very different culture in our

day-to-day business.

How We Work

Before we can answer the question, 'Which jobs are appropriate for Christians?', we need to come to terms with the way in which Jesus called us to work. The love Jesus modelled and taught was an others-centered love, which never seeks to benefit myself to the detriment of others (Philippians 2:3,4). Our aim as Christians is not to accumulate as much wealth as possible by any means necessary. This puts us at odds with much of capitalist culture.

Which Jobs To Avoid

Knowing how we are to work directly impacts which kinds of work we do.

1. Profiting from the Economic Exploitation of People

There are some vocations which are irredeemable simply because they operate purely on the basis of profiting from the misery of others. Some industries intentionally exploit certain sectors of society. An example of this kind of economic exploitation is the manner in which some money lenders keep those who are already impoverished in cycles of poverty by promising an unrealistic standard of luxury through easily-accessible loans or lay-bys. As I have already mentioned, there are some vocations which clearly operate on this basis, but I would challenge you to ask the tough questions when it comes to your own line of work, such as, 'Does my work profit from the economic exploitation of others?'

2. Encouraging a Destructive or Sinful Lifestyle

It is not only economic exploitation that should concern us, though. There are some jobs that directly foster and encourage social ills (and sins) that offend God and unravel the fabric of a healthy society. Jesus is clear on this: if our actions cause our brother to sin, we will invoke the fierce judgement of God! (Matthew 18:6) This has a direct bearing on our work-life. Does your job empower or entice others to sin? Obviously, there are some services which might indirectly encourage or enable sin if people misuse the products or services we provide. For example, people might over-eat and make themselves sick, but does this make the sale of food wrong? I am referring to those industries that directly reinforce destructive or sinful behaviour. The question to ask then is, 'Does your work encourage a destructive or sinful lifestyle in others that will invoke God's judgement?'

When examining the morality of our work or the industry we are in, we need to be careful of

justifying our actions in the way the world does. For example, you will often hear wealthy capitalists defending their trade of a product that is well known to cause harm by saying, 'We are not forcing people to do x, ultimately each individual must make their own responsible choices.' Satan does not force us to sin either, but he is no less culpable for tempting us into it!

Cigarette producers have perhaps fallen into this kind of justification by making the warning labels bigger and bigger on their products, to warn the very customers they are peddling their wares to (and profiting from) of their destructive habit. Maybe you are not obliged by law to put a warning label on the products or services that your business sells, but if they need a label, should you be selling it?

Ask the Lord

We are living in a 'dog eat dog' world, it is true. But in this world, we are tasked with demonstrating another kingdom which is run according to very different principles. The kingdom of heaven is one in which the others-centred love of Christ is the driving motivation behind every thought and action. I encourage you to grow into the image of God's firstborn Son by allowing the Spirit of God to convict, lead and empower you to love others in the workplace in the same way you have received love.

Maybe this article has raised more questions for you than it has answered. If so, I encourage you to go to the Lord with the question, 'What do you want me to do about it, Lord?' and to seek further counsel. Some of the ethical questions we face do not have cut-and-dried answers, but we have confidence in the Spirit, whom God has given to lead and guide us into a life that fully honours Christ.