

Pastors: How to find joy in your job this year

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You've probably seen the statement by leadership guru Peter Drucker [listing](#) the four hardest jobs in America:

- President of the United States.
- President of a university.
- CEO of a hospital.
- Pastor of a church.

Most people would agree with the first three. What makes the fourth just as hard?

After four decades of pastoral ministry, here's my answer: *People want pastors to be all of the above.*

- Like the president of a country, you are supposed to lead your church to be the largest, most effective ministry it ever has been.
- Like the president of a university, you are supposed to be a brilliant communicator and educator.
- Like the CEO of a hospital, you are supposed to care for the personal needs of each of your members.

And you're supposed to do it all at the same time.

No wonder so many pastors are [so ready to quit](#).

What's the way forward this year?

The only yoke you should wear

In my personal Bible study, I read Jesus' familiar invitation: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

- *Come* is an imperative, not a suggestion, but a command from our Lord and Master.
- *To me* calls us to come to the living Lord Jesus himself, not to an institution, idea or anything else.
- *All who labor* could be translated as "everyone who is weary."
- *And are heavy laden* could be rendered "and are bearing many heavy burdens."
- *I will give you rest* is an absolute promise to revive us.

How will he give us this "rest"?

Jesus continued: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (v. 29).

- *Take* is another command from Christ.
- *My yoke* refers to the apparatus by which the farmer guided the ox to do its most productive work. Jesus calls this "my" yoke, showing he has a personal, specific "yoke" for us.
- *Upon you* reminds us, unlike a plowing animal, we have free will and thus must choose to take Jesus' yoke upon ourselves.
- *And learn from me* invites us to be the disciples of a rabbi engaged in a lifelong process of learning who we are and what we are to do.
- *For I am gentle and lowly in heart* could be translated as "for I am humbly considerate and servant-hearted." Jesus seeks to serve us and thus only wants our best, always.
- *You will find rest for your souls* is his promise we *will* experience the relief we need in the core of our lives. This is not a temporary

fix but a permanent blessing.

Jesus repeats his point for emphasis: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (v. 30).

- *My yoke is easy* could be translated, “My plan for your life is perfectly adapted to you.”
- *My burden is light* could be rendered, “My purpose for you is easy for you to bear.”

Four steps to joy

Taking all of this together, we discover the simple key to finding joy in our job this year.

Wear only Jesus’ yoke.

Do only what Jesus is calling you to do. Measure success by obedience to his call alone.

So, how do you find your “yoke?”

Take four vital steps.

1. Pray

This is so obvious that we often overlook it. God wants us to know and wear his “yoke” even more than we do. Ask him every day to lead you into his perfect will (Romans 12:2), remembering “you do not have, because you do not ask” (James 4:2).

2. Submit

Agree to God’s will before you know it. Submit your day to his Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), choosing to be “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20)

and to “present your [body] as a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). God’s will is not an option to consider but an order to obey.

3. Discern

- What are your spiritual gifts? If you’re not sure, I invite you to use our [online interactive test](#).
- What do you find the greatest passion in doing?
- What do you do that seems to make the greatest impact on the people you serve?
- By contrast, what seems to deplete your energy and steal your joy?

Frederick Buechner observed, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

4. Persevere

Your members want you to do what most benefits them. Even many of your friends see you as a means to their ends, an employee to do what your employers want. Our capitalistic culture has trained them to be consumers of commodities, pastors included.

However, as a wise friend once advised me, “Their need does not constitute your call.”

You and I need to take possession of our calling under God, determining to serve only one Master and to advance only one kingdom. Those who truly are for us will want our best. The others cannot come before our loyalty to our Lord.

How to be ‘ultimately happy’

These quotes inspire me to wear only one “yoke,” to do only the one thing I am called to do:

- “Purity of heart is to will one thing.” —Søren Kierkegaard
- “I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby.”—Winston Churchill
- “A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy.”—Abraham Maslow
- “A man will never become outstandingly good at anything unless that thing is his ruling passion. There must be something of which he can say, ‘For me to live is this.’” —William Barclay

As we step into this new year, let’s find and follow our “ruling passion” to the glory of God.

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