



By Byron Mosher

It's an issue of value and values. When the time comes for a young man to start earning his keep, as it were, he and his parents need to make a number of important decisions. The decisions that they make in these early stages of adult life need to reflect the values of the individual, of the family in which he has been raised, and foremost of Christ. The decisions that reflect those values are the decisions that will have lasting value.

My name is Byron Mosher, and I am the second born of 14 children, all of whom have been homeschooled from day one right through graduation (so far). I graduated when I was seventeen and took two years of Bible school by correspondence while taking French at a different school. I then applied for and was accepted into Oak Brook College of Law. I was graduated from OBCL in 2008 at the age of 24, wrote the California Bar Exam in January of 2009, and failed it.

The first job I ever held, like so many other young guys, was a paper delivery route that I started at the ripe old age of 8. After three years of this, we moved to Stony Plain at which point I started a series of part time jobs that came and went and often overlapped, including farmhand on a dairy farm, choreboy for a horse trainer, and log peeler for a log home company. At the age of 16, I started working full time for a small roofing company, and seven years later I started my own home renovation company.

Today when I look back I realise that many of the decisions leading to where I am now were not decisions so much as they were defaults; I was often simply moving with the current of my life and the lives of those around me, taking the opportunities that came my way like a log swept downriver gathers debris. On one hand it is reassuring to recognise God's strong hand on the past years and know that He is in control, but on the other hand it causes me to wonder what may have been different if I were able to see a bigger picture and spend those years with a greater sense of purpose and direction.

I decided long before I graduated that I wanted to study law, and Dad encouraged this by making lots of related reading material available to me, as well as giving me school assignments with a legal focus. Despite all the help, I remember having a strong aptitude for only two areas of legal skills; research and arguing. I had numerous hobbies that would come and go, and with each new interest came the requisite trip to the library and twenty or thirty books on the subject that I would rapidly devour. From training horses, to grinding parabolic mirrors for a reflecting telescope, to theories on nuclear cold fusion, every topic got my full attention for a while and then lost it. Arguing usually speaks for itself . . .

It was during these years I realised that I could very likely enjoy

almost any occupation, and enjoying something is good, but on its own is insufficient reason to pursue something. There are certainly many other issues to consider in choosing a career. I started to dream of changing the world and resolving injustices, instead of simply following whatever caught my interest, and as law became a serious goal I had to start thinking farther down the road. For the first time I began to think in terms of filtering from my activities those things that simply didn't contribute to where I wanted to go.

While there is nothing wrong with the typical "summer job" or "part-time" job such as flipping burgers or stocking shelves, they have the potential to severely limit or delay your preparation for the real job market when that time does come. Why is this? Although a part time or summer job may keep you busy and bring in short term cash, they often have very little to contribute in terms of real value to your resume because they do not require much skill and by extension will not teach you a lot. To make matters worse, part time jobs are usually either boring or tedious or both, and you want a change in scenery when the next summer rolls around.

An equally important limitation to part time jobs is simply one of perspective, and as such can be avoided. Do you see a summer job as a way to keep busy while you're not in school? Is it a means of funding a hobby or recreation? Or is it a stepping stone on the way to becoming a more effective image of Christ in a necessary aspect of living? If you see work only as a means of passing time or making money, you are limiting the value that you can get out of it, and you limit the power you have to influence others through that work.

Finally, the skills you do learn in those jobs are often the same ones that everyone else your age will have on their resume—so when you go to look for a job, your potential employer skims the job experience and goes straight to education. While you and I may know that we received a quality education, you may not be given the chance to demonstrate this fact to an employer if your education is the only thing that distinguishes you from other applicants. Every employer has heard the line "I'm a quick learner", and it tends to fall flat when the potential employee has already had the opportunity to learn and hasn't taken it.

I want to be clear that I'm not advocating turning up your nose at the jobs that are available, but gaining the greatest value on those early jobs requires a long term mindset. Look for jobs that build on skills learned previously, and be willing to work for a lower wage if there is more potential for learning valuable skills. It's also important to identify the skills that you are learning, and know whether they contribute to your long term direction. For example, anybody can run a fast food till, but if you use that time to practice people skills, conversational skills, identifying needs, and so forth, you are creating value for yourself that will have long term benefits beyond

the wages you get paid.

If or when the opportunity does arise for a longer term job, you will be better equipped to recognise it if you are thinking about long term value. The summer I was sixteen, I worked at three different part time jobs that each had advantages and as the summer drew to a close each of those employers made offers of continued employment. At that point I was about a year from graduating and still intended to apply for Oak Brook College to study law once I met the qualifications. When I was offered a job working for a local roofer, who also happened to be a neighbour, I took it because I thought the physical work would be a good balance when I was studying and because outside work tends to slow down a lot in the winter, which would let me be flexible with studying without needing to quit the job during the school year.

A significant advantage that we as homeschoolers have is our flexibility in the pre-graduation job stage. If you are willing to study in the evenings, on weekends, or during the summer, you can be available during normal school hours to work, a freedom that opens numerous job opportunities usually unavailable until after graduation. This is not an excuse to skip homework or get sloppy with your studies though, and some employers may want evidence that you are keeping up with your studies before offering you a job. I worked for that roofing company the entire time that I was in law school, quitting a year before I graduated. With each consecutive year, I learned more of the skills I would need to run my own company while becoming more valuable to my current employer.

Though I am not practicing law today, I am confident that I'm using my time wisely and that the experiences and training I've had will all become a part of what God has in store for me. Back when a neighbour came to our house and asked if I would be willing to help him for a month to catch up, I wasn't thinking about a potential career, but I took the job and worked for him almost seven years. Now I can look back and recognise that it is extremely rewarding to pick a skill set and pursue it, rather than jumping from interest to interest; but I can't claim to have made that decision for the right reasons or even to have consciously made the decision.

Looking back, I can see that while I can't take credit for many of the decisions and circumstances that brought me to where I am now, I have benefited from them. This puts me in the unusual position of being able to offer my story as an example of one way to do things without implying that I was somehow responsible for how it came about. My hope is that these reflections will permit other guys in the same position to perhaps recognise those important decisions as they come and to take a more active role in making wise choices.

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