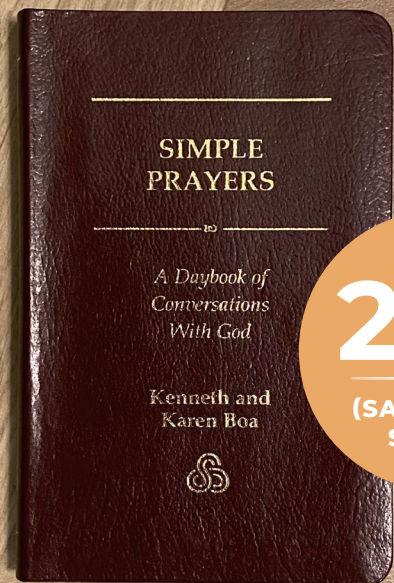


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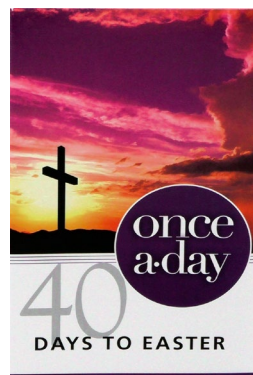
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## JOY OF EXPECTATION: A REFLECTION ON MY ENGAGEMENT

By Xandra Carroll

When I lived in Dar Es Salaam, I used to volunteer in an orphanage. The orphanage was in a bad part of town. On the map it's called Mburahati, but the locals call it "Kigogo," which means "robber." That's the sort of place these children ended up, and there are few people willing to take them in. I was working in the home of kids 3–5 years old. There were about 20 of them, and I got to know them so well that I could sense who was standing behind me without looking. They had simple beds lined along the wall, and their sheets had a simple saying printed on them: "Ipo Siku," which means "one day." It was a reminder to them that someday someone might come for them. Every time they lay down, and every time they rose, the words on their beds reminded them to have hope.

Hope is hard. It takes energy to keep hope aglow, like a little ember in a human soul. The Bible says that hope fulfilled is a tree of life (Prov. 13:12). The more hope we have, the greater our future joy when that hope is revealed.

I recently experienced how powerful the joy of a realized hope can be. I got engaged. My fiancé and I were so happy on the day of our engagement, and as we told others about it, we watched that joy spread. We watched the light of elation shining from so many faces—the happy tears flowing, the embraces, the congratulations. The people we told couldn't help but turn to tell others because they wanted to share the joy even farther. Many people have been walking with my fiancé and I through the past year and a half, and our joy became their joy because they were waiting with us. When the news came, all that time and all those hopes compounded into a felicitous explosion.

The Sunday after our engagement was the start of Advent, a time when we actively wait on the coming of Christmas. The timing made me reflect more deeply on the power of waiting—and how long the people of God had to wait on the arrival of His Son. Two

families were waiting for less than two years for news of my fiancé's and my engagement, and that produced a joy that spanned many continents in a few days. How much more joy was there for an entire people who had waited for generations for the coming of their Savior! The good news of a union between two people pales in comparison to the good news of the union between Christ and His church.

The waiting is hard, but we wait by the steady light of a promise. Hebrews 9:28 says that Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of the world, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Christ came to stake His claim, accomplished on the cross. He will return to finish what He started. He came to save, and He will come to restore. Let us celebrate with great joy while looking forward with eager expectation to His return. The engagement is cause for celebration, but soon we will have our wedding!

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## RECALIBRATE YOUR WORK

Lord, we acknowledge that, unless You build the house, we labor in vain. Unless we work for You, our work will not endure beyond this lifetime. By contrast, if we work heartily, as for You, then everything we do is suddenly infused with meaning and purpose. We also acknowledge that, as humans, You created us to need a balance of work, rest, and leisure. In vain we rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for You grant sleep to those You love (Ps. 127:2). You give us the very ability to work and produce wealth; it is Your power and strength, not our own, that supply us all that we need (Deut. 8:17–18). May we take these verses to heart and truly trust in You as our Provider, especially during times of transition, weakness, or adversity.

REFLECTIONS | FEBRUARY 2023



# Moving From Career to Calling

The following text is excerpted from chapter 4 of *Recalibrate Your Life: Navigating Transitions with Purpose and Hope* by Kenneth Boa and Jenny Abel. © 2023 by Kenneth Boa and Jenny Abel. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)

“A DECADE OF INDULGING HIS DARKEST VICES” is how once–nightclub promoter Scott Harrison described his career prior to declaring “spiritual, moral, and emotional bankruptcy.”<sup>1</sup> . . . Early one morning, sitting in a nightclub, Harrison gave his life to the One he’d come to New York to escape. Feeling like the prodigal son, he left his life in the city and volunteered as a photojournalist for Mercy Ships, a ministry that sends floating hospitals to provide hope and healing around the world.<sup>2</sup> Off the coast of Liberia his entrepreneurial spirit was reignited—this time leading him to an idea that would *help* rather than *destroy* lives.<sup>3</sup> The vision for Charity: Water was born. Though not a religious organization the nonprofit [that Harrison founded] uses a unique donor model to meet a basic human need. Through this, Harrison and his colleagues recognize the dignity, love, and provision God desires to pour out on those who bear his image. Harrison’s story illustrates the dramatic difference our work can make both in our lives and the lives of others, either for better or for worse. . . .

## TRANSITIONS AND PITFALLS

As adults we spend the vast majority of our waking hours working. Because of [this] . . . we must develop an eternal perspective on this sphere of life. . . . Without a biblical worldview underpinning all we do in the area of work, we will be prone to a host of common pitfalls, leading to a personal crisis, regret, or even harm to ourselves or others:

- \* overworking (often to the neglect of ourselves or our family and other relationships)
- \* being unwilling to work and thus becoming a burden or even disruptive to others (2 Thessalonians 3:11)
- \* finding our identity, security, and significance in our work more than in Christ (leading to idolatry and eventually discontentment, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction)
- \* seeing our work solely as the means to a paycheck (which may lead us to toil at a job for years without regard to our unique, God-given skills and aspirations)
- \* being driven instead of called (often leading to frustration and overwork rather than joy and fulfillment)<sup>4</sup>

. . . It’s important to make a distinction here: the work we do for a job or career (or even as a full-time homemaker or parent) is not the same as our vocation. Vocation comes from the

Latin word *vocare*, meaning “to call.” Our calling from God is lifelong; it transcends our roles and seasons of life.<sup>5</sup> We never retire from our vocation. Ideally, our work . . . is one outworking of our unique purpose or calling (this was certainly the case for Scott Harrison). But this isn’t always true. For example, the apostle Paul’s vocation or calling was to preach the gospel as the apostle to the Gentiles, but his trade was tentmaking. That work provided income to fund his ministry travel and basic needs, thus helping him avoid becoming a burden on churches that might feel obliged to support him. . . .

## COMBINING SKILL AND PASSION

Many people make the mistake of choosing a profession exclusively (or almost exclusively) based on salary: *What will pay the bills or lead to the level of income I wish to have?* Although finances are a legitimate factor in choosing our work, our job shouldn’t *merely* be about earning a paycheck . . . We will eventually burn out from work that draws income but fails to capture or exercise our gifts. We will tend to develop a love-hate relationship with that work, enjoying the benefits of the job and feeling the need to continue slaving away, but deep down wishing we could abandon it and spend time doing what we *really* want to do. This attitude often leads us to live more in the future than in the present, and it may cause us to miss opportunities God is putting right in front of us. It helps to evaluate our work in light of three factors:

1. **passion** (what you enjoy doing)
2. **skills** (what you’re good at doing—due to innate tendencies wired into you at birth or developed through experience and training)
3. **finances** (what pays the bills)<sup>6</sup>

Our best, most rewarding work will encompass the greatest overlap of these factors. . . .

## RECALIBRATING

. . . Recalibrating in the area of work, like in other areas, may be forced on us by external factors, or it may be voluntary. Regardless, the question of work centers on how we use one precious resource: time. *We can never get time back, and none of us knows how much of it we have left.* Numbering our days includes numbering our workdays—and our work hours. . . .

## Three Tips for Evaluating Your Work

1. ***Don’t be overeager to quit or retire.*** Work is good—created by God. Study after study shows that those who retire, especially those who retire early, regardless of preexisting health issues, have increased mortality rates over those who keep working. This statistic underscores the fact that . . . *working is part of what it means to be human.* At the same time work isn’t everything, and there is an appropriate time to scale back our work activities—both to make room for others to step into our roles and to tend to the health of ourselves and our loved ones. . . .
2. ***Don’t neglect people.*** The souls of our family and friends are eternal, and relationships are the currency of heaven. . . . The exact opportunities and encounters we have today will never return to us again. . . . If the pursuit of wealth is consistently diminishing our ability to tend to our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with others, then we need to recalibrate. . . .
3. ***Don’t neglect rest and leisure.*** . . . When we rest from our work, we follow the pattern of our Creator himself . . . It is an act of worship to lay down our work at night—even if it’s incomplete—and get the sleep he made our bodies to need. To recalibrate, we need to . . . ask God to help us properly prioritize work in relation to other aspects of life. . . .

Work, leisure, and rest. All three are necessary. And in all three, the orientation of our hearts is what matters most to God. During and after times of transition it’s easy for one of these to get thrown out of whack. May we always be willing to confess our sinful tendencies—whether it’s toward idolatry and overwork or laziness and apathy—and to return to the perspective and priorities of our heavenly Master.

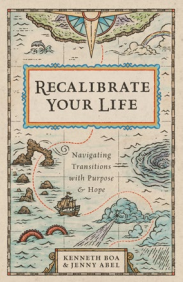
“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” —Colossians 3:23

<sup>1</sup> Scott Harrison, “Meet the Founder,” Charity: Water, accessed September 4, 2021, [www.charitywater.org/about/scott-harrison-story](http://www.charitywater.org/about/scott-harrison-story). Thanks to Jordan Raynor and his book *Called to Create* for calling certain aspects of Harrison’s life change and work to our attention. <sup>2</sup> Rachael Chong, “How the Founder of Charity: Water Went from Packing Clubs to Building Wells,” Fast Company, December 10, 2012. <sup>3</sup> Ibid. <sup>4</sup> This language is borrowed from Gordon MacDonald, who discusses this discrepancy in-depth in *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003). <sup>5</sup> Purpose is the focus of section two of *Recalibrate Your Life*. <sup>6</sup> Finances will carry less weight for some than others. <sup>7</sup> Boa and Abel, *Recalibrate Your Life*, p. 28.

“Humans and all their earthly achievements are like . . . huge, grand sandcastles—impressive for a moment, but as soon as the tide comes in, they’re swept along with whatever other rubble surrounded them—seaweed, shells, dead jellyfish, ocean debris. Before long you’d never know any of it was there. All that’s left is the foundation.

“The question we all wonder is, *Am I building sandcastles that will be knocked down and forgotten forever once I die?* In other words, *Am I writing my name on water?* Or am I living in a way that will make a permanent mark?”<sup>7</sup>

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