

Respecting all kinds of work

By [Diane Roth](#)

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The other day, I was doing a little "internet checking" and went into a website called ["Viewshound"](#), where anyone can publish their views and opinions on almost everything. I actually got an article published there once, a few weeks ago; I wanted to check out their religion section, which is listed (interestingly) within a larger section called "Real Life."

There I was pleased to find an article by a man who took the time and trouble to say write about he was a Christian, in response to an atheist who had posted earlier. I resonated with the inclusivity of his faith and his witness of "total dependence on Jesus."

Then, at the end, came the zinger. He doesn't go to church, because the churches make him mad. (Ok, so I kind of get that.) And, to top things off, pastors make him mad as well, with their "easy jobs and cushy pensions."

Well, all righty then.

After the defensive knee-jerking (you think my job is easy? Just try presiding at the funeral for a still-born baby, or coordinating moving help for the woman who's losing her home, or talking to the people who come in looking for cash, or talking to the couple who won't talk to each other, or just standing in front of people every Sunday and looking into their eyes, and knowing they are all expecting a good word for their lives, and for the battles they face....)

After the defensive knee-jerking was done, what I was left with was the understanding of what it feels like when your vocation has been dismissed as something relatively easy and without much value.

I think that pastors are also guilty of doing this, although in more subtle ways. Sometimes it's not understanding what it's like to work eight hour days, with 1/2 hour for lunch. Sometimes it's not understanding that there are a lot of other vocations where people need to work evenings or take work home, or where the hours are erratic. Sometimes it's not understanding that the people who are our church leaders are doing this volunteer work on top of their other work.

But lack of respect for different kinds of work is everywhere, not just the man who thinks that I have an "easy job", but in the people who like to think that teachers and other public employees are the cause of our problems, in the people who think that those who work with their hands have easy work, or that those who use their brains more than their hands have easy work, or that those who get to go home at 5:00 have easy work, or that those who have a flexible schedule have easy work. Lately there has been disturbing rhetoric that I think tries to elevate certain kinds of work (some people are "job creators" and others are not) without understand the value and the challenges and the necessity of all kinds of work.

Professional musicians I know sometimes complain that no one really understands the complex set of skills and physical challenges of their work -- after all it looks so fun, and some people do it for fun. But the same thing could be said about the landscaper who is coming to beautify our front yard, or the hairdresser, or the homebuilder. And what about the clerk who rings up your purchases, or the waitress that serves you, or the janitor who comes in the night and cleans the building where you work? I will come right out and say that though I have typed for a living, I have never worked a cash register, or waitressed. I have known for almost all of my life that I would not be good at waitressing. I bow to those who are.

So this Labor Day, I give thanks for the garbage collector, the clerk at my grocery store, the teachers and nurses and doctors, secretaries and administrators, those who work on assembly lines, musicians and artists, the landscaper and the person who repairs the roof, I give thanks for those who run companies and those who work for the companies, those who work in the private sector and those in the public sector.

And I invite you to share your own stories of the unique rewards and challenges of the work you do.

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