

The Three Noble Professions

In the old days, someone decided there were three “honorable” or “noble” professions, which meant they were jobs for people who did not want to sweat. The professions were: clergymen, attorneys, and medical doctors.

In the same old days, most people couldn’t vote, there were no antibiotics or vaccines, and people rarely bathed. They really weren’t good old days.

In reality, all jobs are honorable. Never let anyone make you feel bad for an honest day of work.

My father was a clergyman. He had many graduate degrees and books. When we moved (clergymen often move), the books took up one-half of a semi truck. Tuesdays through Thursdays, he went to his office, visited sick people, presided over funerals, and read books. He wrote a sermon on Friday and would preach it on Sunday at church.

A sermon is a twenty-minute (or more) lecture, punctuated by jokes and/or phrases in other languages, with a moral lesson at the end. Or sometimes in the middle. Or the beginning. Sometimes the jokes are the best parts and it’s best not to try to figure out what moral the clergyman was trying to get at.

Before he became a clergyman, my father worked as a janitor. He said once, as we took down folding tables and put away folding chairs after a potluck, that was the best on-the-job training he had.

There are *lots* of potlucks at churches. Potlucks are meals where there are twenty Jell-O salads and pies but no main courses.

Clergymen get their own parking places at hospitals.

Clergymen are “ordained” when they become ministers. If they do something wrong and are not able to work any longer as clergymen, they are said to be “defrocked.”

I am an attorney (lawyer). This means I have a bachelor’s degree in the humanities and could not figure out what to do with my life. I thought being a lawyer meant I would get to read a lot of books and write, but without having to take down folding tables or chairs. (That much was true.)

I went to law school, where I read casebooks that did not explain what I was supposed to be learning. In class, professors asked questions about the readings, most of which are no longer “good” law, or law as it currently exists. Law school lasts three long years.

It’s only after graduation and taking a very important test (the bar exam) lawyers are allowed to start learning what lawyers really do, by experimenting on clients and going to court. Fortunately, clients believe they already know how to practice law by watching TV. They tell their lawyers this.

Lawyers do not get their own parking places at hospitals.

Lawyers are “called to the bar” or “barred” when they become practicing

attorneys. If they do something really, really wrong, they are “disbarred.”

If I had been a bit cleverer, I would have been a doctor. Most people believe they know what doctors do by watching TV and by going to the doctor, but fortunately, most people do not try to practice medicine on their own. (Unless they are named Jenny McCarthy.)

Doctors study chemistry, biology, and other sciences before they attend medical school. In medical school, and then later in special programs, doctors learn how to avoid eye contact with patients, how to make their hands and stethoscopes very cold before touching you with them, and how to rush excitedly into a room when you have a rare illness the doctor hasn’t read about since medical school.

Doctors live in fear of lawyers because lawyers sue doctors when doctors make bad mistakes. Lawyers live in fear that doctors will find out they are lawyers.

Doctors know lots of lawyer jokes. Doctors get their own parking places at hospitals, too.

Doctors have a license to practice. When they cease to be licensed because they did not practice medicine up to the standards in their community, and someone was hurt as a result, they have their licenses revoked or are said to be “medically disbarred.”

1. What is the best preparation for becoming a clergyman?

- A) Working as a janitor
- B) Working as a nurse
- C) Working as a librarian

2. What do lawyers study?

- A) Lots of science
- B) Lots of things no one understands
- C) Lots of law that is no longer useful in any jurisdiction
- D) B and C

3. Who gets their own parking places at hospitals?

- A) Doctors
- B) Lawyers
- C) Clergymen
- D) A and C

4. Who knows lots of lawyer jokes?

- A) Clergymen
- B) Lawyers
- C) Doctors
- D) Everyone

5. Who knows how to practice law?

- A) Clergymen
- B) Lawyers
- C) Doctors
- D) Everyone who watches TV

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Answers

1. A
2. D
3. D
4. C or D accepted; extra credit for answer: "There is only one lawyer joke and the rest are true stories."
5. B