

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CHECK-UP: SPRING-SUMMER 2014

I live in a bubble world, of sorts. I do what I love, earn my livelihood doing it, and in the process I enjoy a sense of self-fulfillment.

So far, so good, yes? Back in the early 1990s this “do what you love” way of life and work was the holy grail for newly minted entrepreneurs and consultants who found themselves hurled out of their cubicles in corporate America’s mad rush toward organizational right-sizing.

I wasn’t one of them. Somehow these newly minted entrepreneurs and consultants found me, though, long before I heard of the practice of spiritual direction. I saw their need, and became a career coach. Together we would lean into a deeper form of listening and discerning.

What we often discovered was that “self-fulfillment” was a runaway train that needed the discipline of braking to a slower speed, and the helpful habit of reading the signs.

In other words, even though I couldn’t name it then, back in the early ’90s I was practicing the vital spiritual art of noticing things, and helping others to embrace that art for their own lives. For their own spiritual survival.

So, back to that “bubble world” in which I live. I know that I am privileged to earn my livelihood doing what I love, doing what fulfills me. Many people do not enjoy such privilege. Yet during certain periods of my worklife I too had to “chop wood and carry water,” taking near-minimum-wage jobs just to pay my rent and put food on the table, hoping to not miss the bus that would get me to the temp agency to fetch my weekly paycheck each Friday afternoon.

The key question here is not: “What would self-fulfillment look like in *my* life?” Rather, the key question, I believe, is this: Where does my life purpose and anointing intersect with daily necessities and obligations to others in my life? What am I doing when I feel most “anointed”—gifted *and* empowered—to work effectively and fruitfully? True self-fulfillment will always be in dynamic tension with that most basic human—and therefore Christ-centered—urgency: to live for the sake of those who depend on us, for the sake of the world we touch.

My thanks to my friend Mary who drew my attention to an insightful article, “A Life Beyond ‘Do What You Love,’” by Gordon Marino, which inspired these thoughts.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. When I am doing what I love, who benefits from this?
2. If I am not doing what I love at this point in my life, is a higher purpose being served anyway? (e.g., supporting family, providing much needed stability, talent, or insight for an organization, providing care for a loved one, etc.)
3. If I am not able to do what I love at this time, what sustains me? Not “sustains me if I only I would do it.” What *actually* sustains me, day after day, and serves as food and inspiration for the journey?

NOTES FOR CONVERSATION

FOR YOUR SUMMER READING . . .

Moving in God’s Direction: Essentials of Christ-centered Spiritual and Vocational Direction
Anointed for a Purpose: Confirmed for Life in the 21st Century
MARY SHARON MOORE, M.T.S.

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