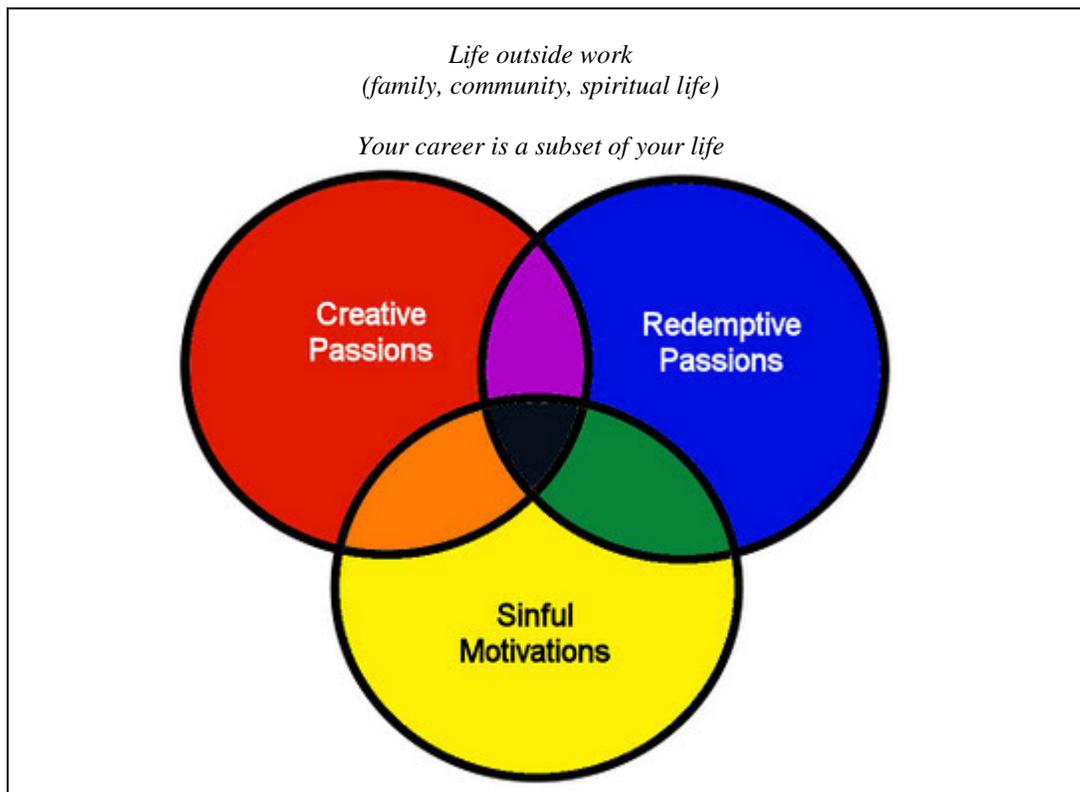


## Career Discernment: A Christian Perspective Based on Passions and Desires

Originally given by Dakota Pippins: <http://ohbadiah.blogspot.com/2008/06/career-discernment-christian.html>

Modified by Mako Nagasawa, January 2012



The LIFE box surrounds the CAREER box. Career is part of life, but not all of life. Christ's reign in our lives might limit how much work we do. Family and friendship considerations might also limit how much work we do. How does one's larger LIFE purpose shape and limit one's career? (Read 1 Corinthians 7:17 – 35)

- Loving God: Taking a Sabbath rest, studying Scripture, and practicing other spiritual disciplines
- Loving family, neighbor, and church community
- Developing redemptive passions, below.

Typically, three internal forces govern our career decisions. They are creative passions, sinful motivations, and redemptive passions.

Creative passions are basically things that you are good at, which are morally neutral. Creative passions may have been seen in what life could have been like without the Fall. These come out of the Creation of humans in Genesis 1:28, when God blessed Adam and Eve and commissioned them to, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'

- Towards beauty: design, painting, singing, knitting, etc.
- Towards problem-solving: counseling, accounting, computer programming, law, etc.
- Towards nature: farming, gardening, veterinarian, etc.
- Towards truth: researching, learning, etc.
- Towards the next generation: family, children, teaching, education, etc.

Sinful motivations are morally negative. Sinful motivations come out of the Fall and the corruption of human nature. You make yourself the primary object of your love. And your definition of good and evil revolves around

yourself, not around God. Sinful motivations are static in the airwaves of communication between a person and God. It is harder to hear and understand His voice when they are present.

- Desire for human approval: by parents, supervisor, etc. if it becomes a primary force or leads one to do things not in line with the heart of Jesus
- Pride: wanting power and status for one's sense of superiority over others, wanting to not share recognition, not caring about people of lower standing like custodial staff, etc.
- Jealousy and greed: wanting money and recognition to feel superior over others, unwillingness to live simply, inability to rejoice on behalf of others getting recognized
- Fear: fear about trusting God, taking risks for redemptive purposes like standing up for truth or for others, or being identified with Jesus
- Unreconciliation: willingness to burn bridges to get one's name first on a published paper, to fully play office politics, to overlook someone who is annoying
- Pure individualism: willingness to move for promotions and overlook community, spiritual life, and redemptive passions; more than anything, you want to feverishly develop your 'potential,' even though God has given you more potential than you can possibly develop in one lifetime (which is why He wants to give you exactly that: more than one lifetime!)

Redemptive passions are morally positive. Redemption passions are connected to Jesus' work of restoring this fallen world and cultivating Jesus' character and desires in ourselves. They are nurtured by being in relationship with him and how he exhibits certain values explicitly.

- Evangelism: caring about people spiritually, inviting people to Jesus by loving them, investing in other people, understanding who they are, learning more about them, praying for them, etc.
- Social justice, care for the poor, powerless: caring about people physically
  - Is your *product* damaging people (chemicals, processed foods, etc.)
  - Is the *process* of making the product damaging to people (pollution, employee health and wages, racism in the office, limited liability so corporations can escape full responsibility for their actions, interest-rate lending which exploits the poor, etc.)
  - Are you trying to bring employment to people
  - What is the political-economic impact of your industry (pharmaceuticals, banking, insurance, etc.)
- Reconciliation: in this case, between people at work, e.g. not playing by office politics, helping advocate for others, seeking recognition for others, refusing to be cutthroat and gossip, etc.
- Discipleship: investing in other Christian people at work, building a sense of partnership and friendship between Christians, mentoring Christians who are younger in faith, caring about their home lives, etc.

How do you grow in redemptive passions?

- Learn. Root it in Scripture. Learn from other Christians trying to be redemptively minded.
- Risk. Do something. Learn from it.
- Reflect. Deepen your theological reflection by reading Christian ethics. Talk to more people about it.
- Eventually, join or form a Christian community around a redemptive purpose.

My friend Dakota says many people choose a career that lies in the orange zone of the diagram, combining both creative passions and sinful motivations. Maybe you wield logic like a fencer wields a sword and you want to make a lot of money. So you become a lawyer. This kind of path is most natural to follow, but it feeds appetites which should be starved and misses the mark of following Christ's voice in all facets of life.

Adding redemptive passions to the mix focuses our creative passions toward manifesting the Kingdom of God in one's life. However, if sinful motivations are still present, we attempt to serve two masters (Matthew 6:21; Luke 16:13), which is impossible and will become an explicit problem at some point. So the center of the Venn diagram is not an acceptable final destination. Truly godly career discernment occurs in the purple region intersecting creative and redemptive passions. Take what you're good at. Take what you want to do for Jesus. Put them together.

Many look at career discernment as trying to find the one job to which God has called them. That idea does not flow from the picture presented here. God will take and use mightily anything from that magic purple zone, and the choice is really up to us. Opening doors and closing doors isn't the primary way God helps in discernment; it is

more internal. Examine your motivations. Weigh careers for the opportunities to live out redemptive motivations and provide context for relationship. Be wary of career-driven purposes. Ask God to show you His redemptive passions, and to adjust the size of the three circles. Go for the purple. Anywhere in the purple. In this choice there is freedom. Rather than struggling to remain on some sort of career tightrope, the theoretical One Right Path, God invites us to join him in discovering how to redeem the world.