Wordgems - Labor: How to find your mission in life

Word Gems
What is a man but the sum of his thoughts?

Labor:
Richard Nelson Bolles'
What Color Is Your Parachute?
How to Find Your Mission in Life

[Editor's note: Richard Bolles' What Color is Your Parachute? is considered to be the very best job-hunting/career-planning manual available. How to Find Your Mission in Life is the final essay in his well-researched, annually-updated work.]

How I Came To Write This

Recently, a woman asked me how you go about finding out what your Mission in life is... the question of one's Mission in life arises naturally as a part of many people's job-hunt.

She told me that what she was looking for was not some careful, dispassionate, philosophical answer, where every statement is hedged about with cautions and caveats -- "It may be . . ." or "It seems to me . . ." Nor did she want to know why I thought what I did, or how I learned it, or what Scriptures support it. "I want you to just speak with passion and conviction," she said, "out of what you most truly feel and believe. For it is some vision that I want. I am hungry for a vision of what I can be. So, just speak to me of what you most truly feel and believe about our mission in life. I will know how to translate your vision into my own thought forms for my own life, when I reflect afterwards upon what you have said. But I want you to talk about this now with passion and conviction -- please."

And so, I did. And I will now tell you what I said to her.

The Motive for Finding A Sense of Mission in Life

The motive that drives us to search for A Sense of Mission is our desire for some reassurance of our Uniqueness. We want to feel that we are not just another grain of sand lying on the beach called humanity, unnumbered and lost in the 5 billion
mass, but that the Universe -- God -- caused us to be born and put here for some unique reason: to contribute to Life on earth something no one else can contribute in quite the same way.

At its very minimum, then, if you search for a sense of Mission you are searching for reassurance that the world is at least a little bit richer for your being here; and a little bit poorer after your going. Every keen observer of human nature will know what I mean when I say that those who do find some sense of Mission find a very special joy, "which no one can take from them." It is wonderful to feel that beyond eating, sleeping, working, having pleasure and it may be marrying, having children, and growing older, you were set here on Earth for some special purpose, and that you can gain some idea of what that purpose is.

So, how does one go about this search?

I would emphasize, at the outset, two cautions. First of all, though I will explain the steps that seem to me to be involved in finding one's Mission -- based on the learnings I have accumulated over some sixty years, I want to caution you that these steps are not the only Way -- by any means. Many people have discovered their Mission by taking other paths. And you may, too. But hopefully what I have to say may shed some light upon whatever path you take.

My second caution is simply this: you would be wise not to try to approach this problem of "your Mission in life" as primarily an intellectual puzzle -- for the mind, and the mind alone, to solve. To paraphrase Kahlil Gibran, Faith is an oasis in the heart that is not reached merely by the journey of the mind. It is your will and your heart that must be involved in the search as well as your mind. To put it quite simply, it takes the total person to learn one's total Mission.

It also takes the total disciplines of the ages -- not only modern knowledge but also ancient thought, including the wisdom of religion, faith, and the spiritual matters. For, to put it quite bluntly, the question of Mission inevitably leads us to God.

The Main Obstacle in Finding Your Mission in Life: Job-Hunting Compartmentalized from Our Religion or Faith

*Mission* challenges us to see our job-hunt in relationship to our faith in God, because *Mission* is a religious concept, from beginning to end. It is defined by Webster's as "a continuing task or responsibility that one is destined or fitted to do or specially called upon to undertake," and historically has had two major synonyms: *Calling* and *Vocation.* These, of course, are the same word in two different languages, English and Latin. Regardless of which word is used, it is obvious upon reflection, that a Vocation or Calling implies *Someone who calls,* and that a destiny implies
Someone who determined the destination for us. Thus, unless one opts for a military or governmental view of the matter, the concept of Mission with relationship to our whole life lands us inevitably in the lap of God, before we have even begun.

There is always the temptation to try to speak of this subject of Mission in a secular fashion, without reference to God, as though it might be simply "a purpose you choose for your own life, by identifying your enthusiasms, and then using the clues you find from that exercise to get some purpose you can choose for your life." The language of this temptation is ironic because the substitute word used for "Mission" -- Enthusiasm -- is derived from the Greek, en theos, and literally means "God in us:"

It is no accident that so many of the leaders in the job-hunting field over the years -- the late John Crystal, Arthur Miller, Ralph Mattson, Tom and Ellie Jackson, Bernard Haldane, Arthur and Marie Kirn, the Piders have also been people of faith. If you would figure out your Mission in life, you must also be willing to think about God in connection with your job-hunt.

The Secret of Finding Your Mission in Life:
Taking It in Stages

The puzzle of figuring out what your Mission in life is, will likely take some time. It is not a problem to be solved in a day and a night. It is a learning process which has steps to it, much like the process by which we all learned to eat. As a baby we did not tackle adult food right off. As we all recall, there were three stages: first there had to be the mother's milk or bottle, then strained baby foods, and finally -- after teeth and time -- the stuff that grown-ups chew. Three stages -- and the two earlier stages were not to be disparaged. It was all Eating, just different forms of Eating -- appropriate to our development at the time. But each stage had to be mastered, in turn, before the next could be approached.

The Three Stages of Mission:
What We Need to Learn

By coincidence, there are usually three stages also to learning what your Mission in life is, and the two earlier stages are likewise not to be disparaged. It is all "Mission" -- just different forms of Mission, appropriate to your development at the time. But each stage has to be mastered, in turn, before the next can be approached.

And so, you may say either of two things: You may say that you have Three Missions in Life.

Or you may say that you have One Mission in Life, with three parts to it.
But there is a sense in which you must discover what those three parts are, each in turn, before you can fully answer the question, "What is my Mission in life?"

Of course, there is another sense in which you never master any of these stages, but are always growing in understanding and mastery of them, throughout your whole life here on Earth.

As it has been impressed on me by observing many people over the years (admittedly through Christian spectacles), it appears that the three parts to your Mission here on Earth can be defined generally as follows:

(1) Your first Mission here on Earth is one which you share with the rest of the human race, but it is no less your individual Mission for the fact that it is shared: and it is, to seek out and find, in daily -- even hourly -- communication, the One from whom your Mission is derived. The Missioner before the Mission, is the rule. In religious language, your Mission here is: to know God, and enjoy Him forever, and to see His hand in all His works.

(2) Secondly, once you have begun doing that in an earnest way, your second Mission here on Earth is also one which you share with the rest of the human race, but it is no less your individual mission for the fact that it is shared: and that is, to do what you can, moment by moment, day by day, step by step, to make this world a better place, following the leading and guidance of God’s Spirit within you and around you.

(3) Thirdly, once you have begun doing that in a serious way, your third Mission here on Earth is one which is uniquely yours, and that is:

a) to exercise that Talent which you particularly came to Earth to use -- your greatest gift, which you most delight to use,

b) in the place(s) or setting(s) which God has caused to appeal to you the most,

c) and for those purposes which God most needs to have done in the world.

When fleshed out, and spelled out, I think you will find that there you have the definition of your Mission in life. Or, to put it another way, these are the three Missions which you have in life.

The Two Rhythms of the Dance of Mission: Unlearning, Learning, Unlearning, Learning
The distinctive characteristic of these three stages is that in each we are forced to let go of some fundamental assumptions which the world has falsely taught us, about the nature of our Mission. In other words, throughout this quest and at each stage we find ourselves engaged not merely in a process of Learning. We are also engaged in a process of Unlearning. Thus, we can restate the above three Learnings, in terms of what we also need to unlearn at each stage:

We need in the first Stage to unlearn the idea that our Mission is primarily to keep busy doing something (here on Earth), and learn instead that our Mission is first of all to keep busy being something (here on Earth). In Christian language (and others as well), we might say that we were sent here to learn how to be sons of God, and daughters of God, before anything else. "Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."

• In the second stage, "Being" issues into "Doing:" At this stage, we need to unlearn the idea that everything about our Mission must be unique to us, and learn instead that some parts of our Mission here on Earth are shared by all human beings: e.g., we were all sent here to bring more gratitude, more kindness, more forgiveness, and more love, into the world. We share this Mission because the task is too large to be accomplished by just one individual.

• We need in the third stage to unlearn the idea that that part of our Mission which is truly unique, and most truly ours, is something our Creator just orders us to do, without any agreement from our spirit, mind, and heart. (On the other hand, neither is it something that each of us chooses and then merely asks God to bless.) We need to learn that God so honors our free will, that He has ordained our unique Mission be something which we have some part in choosing.

• In this third stage we need also to unlearn the idea that our unique Mission must consist of some achievement which all the world will see -- and learn instead that as the stone does not always know what ripples it has caused in the pond whose surface it impacts, so neither we nor those who watch our life will always know what we have achieved by our life and by our Mission. It may be that by the grace of God we helped bring about a profound change for the better in the lives of other souls around us, but it also may be that this takes place beyond our sight, or after we have gone on. And we may never know what we have accomplished, until we see Him face-to-face after this life is past.

• Most finally, we need to unlearn the idea that what we have accomplished is our doing, and ours alone. It is God’s Spirit breathing in us and through us which helps us to do whatever we do, and so the singular first person pronoun is never appropriate, but only the plural. Not "I accomplished this" but "We accomplished this, God and I, working together . . ."
That should give you a general overview. But I would like to add some random comments on my part about each of these three Missions of ours here on Earth.

Some Random Comments About Your First Mission in Life

Your first Mission here on Earth is one which you share with the rest of the human race, but it is no less your individual Mission for the fact that it is shared: and that is, to seek out and find, in daily -- even hourly -- communication, the One from whom your Mission is derived. The Missioner before the Mission, is the rule. In religious language, your Mission is: to know God, and enjoy Him for ever, and to see His hand in all His works.

Comment 1: How We Might Think of God

Each of us has to go about this primary Mission according to the tenets of his or her own particular religion. But I will speak what I know out of the context of my own particular faith, and you may perhaps translate and apply it to yours. I will speak as a Christian, who believes (passionately) that Christ is the Way and the Truth and the Life. But I also believe, with St. Peter, "that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34-35)

Now, Jesus claimed many unique things about Himself and His Mission; but He also spoke of Himself as the great prototype for us all. He called himself "the Son of Man," and He said, "I assure you that the man who believes in me will do the same things that I have done, yes, and he will do even greater things than these . . ." (John 14:12)

Emboldened by His identification of us with His life and His Mission, we might want to remember how He spoke about His Life here on Earth. He put it in this context: "I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father." (John 16:28)

If there is a sense in which this is, in even the faintest way, true also of our lives (and I shall say in a moment in what sense I think it is true), then instead of calling our great Creator "God" or "Father" right off, we might begin our approach to the subject of religion by referring to the One Who gave us our Mission and sent us to this planet not as "God" or "Father" but -- just to help our thinking -- as: The One From Whom We Came and The One To Whom We Shall Return when this life is done.

If our life here on Earth be at all like Christ's, then this is a true way to think about the One who gave us our Mission. We are not some kind of eternal, pre-existent being. We are creatures, who once did not exist, and then came into Being, and continue to have our Being, only at the will of our great Creator. But as creatures we
are both body and soul; and although we know our body was created in our mother's womb, our soul's origin is a great mystery. Where it came from, at what moment the Lord created it, is something we cannot know.

It is not unreasonable to suppose, however, that the great God created our soul before it entered our body, and in that sense we did indeed stand before God before we were born; and He is indeed The One From Whom We Came and The One To Whom We Shall Return.

Therefore, before we go searching for "what work was I sent here to do?" we need to establish or in a truer sense reestablish -- contact with this One From Whom We Came and The One To Whom We Shall Return. Without this reaching out of the creature to the great Creator, without this reaching out of the creature with a Mission to the One Who Gave Us That Mission, the question what is my Mission in life? is void and null.

The what is rooted in the Who; absent the Personal, one cannot meaningfully discuss The Thing. It is like the adult who cries, "I want to get married," without giving any consideration to who it is they want to marry.

Comment 2: How We Might Think of Religion or Faith

In light of this larger view of our creatureliness, we can see that religion or faith is not a question of whether or not we choose to (as it is so commonly put) "have a relationship with God." Looking at our life in a larger context than just our life here on Earth, it becomes apparent that some sort of relationship with God is a given for us, about which we have absolutely no choice. God and we were and are related, during the time of our soul's existence before our birth and in the time of our soul's continued existence after our death. The only choice we have is what to do about The Time In Between, i.e., what we want the nature of our relationship with God to be during our time here on Earth and how that will affect the nature of the relationship, then, after death.

One of the corollaries of all this is that by the very act of being born into a human body, it is an inevitable that we undergo a kind of amnesia -- an amnesia which typically embraces not only our nine months in the womb, our baby years, and almost one third of each day (sleeping), but more importantly any memory of our origin or our destiny. We wander on Earth as an amnesia victim. To seek after Faith, therefore, is to seek to climb back out of that amnesia. Religion or faith is the hard reclaiming of knowledge we once knew as a certainty.

Comment 3: The First Obstacle to Executing This Mission
This first Mission of ours here on Earth is not the easiest of Missions, simply because it is the first. Indeed, in many ways, it is the most difficult. All can see that our life here on Earth is a very physical life. We eat, we drink, we sleep, we long to be held, and to hold. We inherit a physical body, with very physical appetites, we walk on the physical earth, and we acquire physical possessions.

It is the most alluring of temptations, in our amnesia, to come up with just a Physical interpretation of this life: to think that the Universe is merely interested in the survival of species. Given this interpretation, the story of our individual life could be simply told: we are born, grow up, procreate, and die.

But we are ever recalled to do what we came here to do: that without rejecting the joy of the Physicalness of this life, such as the love of the blue sky and the green grass, we are to reach out beyond all this to recall and recover a Spiritual interpretation of our life. Beyond the physical and within the physicalness of this life, to detect a Spirit and a Person from beyond this Earth who is with us and in us -- very real and loving and awesome Presence of the great Creator from whom we came -- and the One to whom we once again shall go.

Comment 4: The Second Obstacle to Executing This Mission

It is one of the conditions of our earthly amnesia and our creatureliness that, sadly enough, some very human and very rebellious part of us likes the idea of living in a world where we can be our own god -- and therefore loves the purely Physical interpretation of life, and finds it anguish to relinquish it. Traditional Christian vocabulary calls this "sin" and has a lot to say about the difficulty it poses for this first part of our Mission. All who live a thoughtful life know that it is true: our greatest enemy in carrying out this first Mission of ours is indeed our own heart and our own rebellion.

Comment 5: Further Thoughts About What Makes Us Special and Unique

As I said earlier, many of us come to this issue of our Mission in life, because we want to feel that we are unique. And what we mean by that, is that we hope to discover some "specialness" intrinsic to us, which is our birthright, and which no one can take from us. What we, however, discover from a thorough exploration of this topic, is that we are indeed special -- but only because God thinks us so. Our specialness and uniqueness reside in Him, and His love, rather than in anything intrinsic to our own being. The proper appreciation of this distinction causes our feet to carry us in the end not to the City called Pride, but to the Temple called Gratitude.

- "What is religion? Religion is the service of God out of grateful love for what
God has done for us. The Christian religion, more particularly, is the service of God out of grateful love for what God has done for us in Christ." Phillips Brooks

Comment 6: The Unconscious Doing of The Work We Came To Do

You may have already wrestled with this first part of your Mission here on Earth. You may not have called it that. You may have called it simply "learning to believe in God." But if you ask what your Mission is in life, this one was and is the precondition of all else that you came here to do.

Absent this Mission, and it is folly to talk about the rest. So, if you have been seeking faith, or seeking to strengthen your faith, you have -- willy nilly -- already been about the doing of the Mission you were given. Born into This Time In Between, you have found His hand again, and reclasped it. You are therefore ready to go on with His Spirit to tackle together what you came here to do -- the other parts of your Mission.

Some Random Comments About Your Second Mission in Life

Your second Mission here on Earth is also one which you share with the rest of the human race, but it is no less your individual mission for the fact that it is shared: and that is, to do what you can moment by moment, day by day, step by step, to make this world a better place -- following the leading and guidance of God’s Spirit within you and around you.

Comment 1: The Uncomfortableness of One Step at a Time

Imagine yourself out walking in your neighborhood one night, and suddenly you find yourself surrounded by such a dense fog, that you have lost your bearings and cannot find your way. Suddenly, a friend appears out of the fog, and asks you to put your hand in theirs, and they will lead you home. And you, not being able to tell where you are going, trustingly follow them, even though you can only see one step at a time. Eventually you arrive safely home, filled with gratitude. But as you reflect upon the experience the next day, you realize how unsettling it was to have to keep walking when you could see only one step at a time, even though you had guidance in which you knew you could trust.

Now I have asked you to imagine all of this, because this is the essence of the second Mission to which you are called -- and I am called -- in this life. It is all very different than we had imagined. When the question, "What is your Mission in life?" is first broached, and we have put our hand in God’s, as it were, we imagine that we will be taken up to some mountaintop, from which we can see far into the distance. And that we will hear a voice in our ear, saying, "Look, look, see that distant city? That is the goal of your Mission; that is where everything is leading, every step of your way."
But instead of the mountaintop, we find ourselves in the valley -- wandering often in a fog. And the voice in our ear says something quite different from what we thought we would hear. It says, "Your Mission is to take one step at a time, even when you don't yet see where it all is leading, or what the Grand Plan is, or what your overall Mission in life is -- Trust Me; I will lead you."

Comment 2: The Nature of This Step-by-Step Mission

As I said, in every situation you find yourself, you have been sent here to do whatever you can -- moment by moment -- that will bring more gratitude, more kindness, more forgiveness, more honesty, and more love into this world.

There are dozens of such moments every day. Moments when you stand -- as it were -- at a spiritual crossroads, with two ways lying before you. Such moments are typically called "moments of decision." It does not matter what the frame or content of each particular decision is. It all devolves, in the end, into just two roads before you, every time. The one will lead to less gratitude, less kindness, less forgiveness, less honesty, or less love in the world. The other will lead to more gratitude, more kindness, more forgiveness, more honesty, or more love in the world. Your Mission, each moment, is to seek to choose the latter spiritual road, rather than the former, every time.

Comment 3: Some Examples of This Step-by-Step Mission

I will give a few examples, so that the nature of this part of your Mission may be unmistakably clear.

You are out on the freeway, in your car. Someone has gotten into the wrong lane, to the right of your lane, and needs to move over into the lane you are in. You see their need to cut in, ahead of you. Decision time. In your mind's eye you see two spiritual roads lying before you: the one leading to less kindness in the world (you speed up, to shut this driver out, and don't let them move over), the other leading to more kindness in the world (you let the driver cut in). Since you know this is part of your Mission, part of the reason why you came to Earth, your calling is clear. You know which road to take, which decision to make.

You are hard at work at your desk, when suddenly an interruption comes. The phone rings, or someone is at the door. They need something from you, a question of some of your time and attention. Decision time. In your mind's eye you see two spiritual roads lying before you: the one leading to less love in the world (you tell them you're just too busy to be bothered), the other leading to more love in the world (you put aside your work, decide that God may have sent this person to you,
and say, "Yes, what can I do to help you?"). Since you know this is part of your Mission, part of the reason why you came to Earth, your calling is clear. You know which road to take, which decision to make.

Your mate does something that hurts your feelings. Decision time. In your mind’s eye you see two spiritual roads lying before you: the one leading to less forgiveness in the world (you institute an icy silence between the two of you, and think of how you can punish them or otherwise get even), the other leading to more forgiveness in the world (you go over and take them in your arms, speak the truth about your hurt feelings, and assure them of your love). Since you know this is part of your Mission, part of the reason why you came to Earth, your calling is clear. You know which road to take, which decision to make.

You have not behaved at your most noble, recently. And now you are face-to-face with someone who asks you a question about what happened. Decision time. In your mind’s eye you see two spiritual roads lying before you: the one leading to less honesty in the world (you lie about what happened, or what you were feeling, because you fear losing their respect or their love), the other leading to more honesty in the world (you tell the truth, together with how you feel about it, in retrospect). Since you know this is part of your Mission, part of the reason why you came to Earth, your calling is clear. You know which road to take, which decision to make.

Comment 4: The Spectacle Which Makes the Angels Laugh

It is necessary to explain this part of our Mission in some detail, because so many times you will see people wringing their hands, and saying, "I want to know what any Mission in life is," all the while they are cutting people off on the highway, refusing to give time to people, punishing their mate for having hurt their feelings, and lying about what they did. And it will seem to you that the angels must laugh to see this spectacle. For these people wringing their hands, their Mission was right there, on the freeway, in the interruption, in the hurt, and at the confrontation.

Comment 5: The Valley vs. The Mountaintop

At some point in your life your Mission may involve some grand Mountaintop experience, where you say to yourself, "This, this, is why I came into the world. I know it. I know it." But until then, your Mission is here in the valley, and the fog, and the little callings moment by moment, day by day.

- More to the point, it is likely you cannot ever get to your mountaintop Mission unless you have first exercised your stewardship faithfully in the valley.

It is an ancient principle, to which Jesus alluded often, that if you don't use the
information the Universe has already given you, you cannot expect it will give you any more. If you aren't being faithful in small things, how can you expect to be given charge over larger things? (Luke 16:10, 11, 12; 19:11-24)

If you aren't trying to bring more gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, honesty, and love into the world each day, you can hardly expect that you will be entrusted with the Mission to help bring peace into the world or anything else large and important.

If we do not live out our day by day Mission in the valley, we cannot expect we are yet ready for a larger mountaintop Mission.

Comment 6: The Importance of Not Thinking of This Mission As 'Just A Training Camp'

The valley is not just a kind of "training camp." There is in your imagination even now an invisible spiritual mountaintop to which you may go, if you wish to see where all this is leading. And what will you see there, in the imagination of your heart, but the goal toward which all this is pointed: that Earth might be more like heaven. That human life might be more like God's. That is the large achievement toward which all our day by day Missions in the valley are moving. This is a large order, but it is accomplished by faithful attention to the doing of our great Creator's will in little things as well as in large. It is much like the building of the pyramids in Egypt, which was accomplished by the dragging of a lot of individual pieces of stone by a lot of individual men.

The valley, the fog, the going step-by-step, is no mere training camp. The goal is real, however large. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth, as it is in heaven."

Some Random Comments About Your Third Mission in Life

Your third Mission here on Earth is one which is uniquely yours, and that is:

a) to exercise that Talent which you particularly came to Earth to use -- your greatest gift which you most delight to use

b) in those places) or settings) which God has caused to appeal to you the most,

c) and for those purposes which God most needs to have done in the world.

Comment 1: Our Mission Is Already Written, "in our members"

It is customary in trying to identify this part of our Mission, to advise that we should ask God, in prayer, to speak to us -- and tell us plainly what our Mission is.
We look for a voice in the air, a thought in our head, a dream in the night, a sign in the events of the day, to reveal this thing which is otherwise (it is said) completely hidden. Sometimes, from just such answered prayer, people do indeed discover what their Mission is, beyond all doubt and uncertainty.

But having to wait for the voice of God to reveal what our Mission is, is not the truest picture of our situation. St. Paul, in Romans, speaks of a law "written in our members," -- and this phrase has a telling application to the question of how God reveals to each of us our unique Mission in life.

Read again the definition of our third Mission (above) and you will see: the clear implication of the definition is that God has already revealed His will to us concerning our vocation and Mission, by causing it to be "written in our members." We are to begin deciphering our unique Mission by studying our talents and skills, and more particularly which ones (or One) we most rejoice to use.

God actually has written His will twice in our members: first in the talents which He lodged there, and secondly in His guidance of our heart, as to which talent gives us the greatest pleasure from its exercise (it is usually the one which, when we use it, causes us to lose all sense of time).

Even as the anthropologist can examine ancient inscriptions, and divine from them the daily life of along lost people, so we by examining our talents and our heart can ... divine the Will of the Living God.

- For true it is, our Mission is not something He will reveal; it is something He has already revealed. It is not to be found written in the sky; it is to be found written in our members.

Comment 2: Career Counseling: We Need You

Arguably, our first two Missions in life could be learned from religion alone -- without any reference whatsoever to career counseling, the subject of this book. Why then should career counseling claim that this question about our Mission in life is its proper concern, in any way?

It is when we come to this third Mission, which hinges so crucially on the question of our talents, skills, and gifts, that we see the answer. If you've read the body of this book, before turning to this appendix, you know without my even saying it, how much the identification of talents, gifts, or skills is the province of career counseling.

Its expertise, indeed its raison d'être, lies precisely in the identification, classification, and (forgive me) "prioritization" of talents, skills, and gifts. To put the matter quite
simply, career counseling knows how to do this better than any other discipline -- including traditional religion. This is not a defect of religion, but the fulfillment of something Jesus promised: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16:12) Career counseling is part (we may hope) of that promised late-coming truth. It can therefore be of inestimable help to the pilgrim who is trying to figure out what their greatest, and most enjoyable, talent is, as a step toward identifying their unique Mission in life.

If career counseling needs religion as its helpmate in the first two stages of identifying our Mission in life, religion repays the compliment by clearly needing career counseling as its helpmate here in the third stage.

And this place where you are in your life right now -- facing the job-hunt and all its anxiety -- is the perfect time to seek the union within your own mind and heart of both career counseling (as in the pages of this book) and your faith in God.

Comment 3: How Our Mission Got Chosen: A Scenario for the Romantic

It is a mystery which we cannot fathom, in this life at least, as to why one of us has this talent, and the other one has that; why God chose to give one gift -- and Mission -- to one person, and a different gift -- and Mission -- to another. Since we do not know, and in some degree cannot know, we are certainly left free to speculate, and imagine.

- We may imagine that before we came to Earth, our souls, our Breath, our Light, stood before the great Creator and volunteered for this Mission. And God and we, together, chose what that Mission would be and what particular gifts would be needed, which He then agreed to give us, after our birth. Thus, our Mission was not a command given peremptorily by an unloving Creator to a reluctant slave without a vote, but was a task jointly designed by us both, in which as fast as the great Creator said, "I wish" our hearts responded, "Oh, yes."

As mentioned in an earlier Comment, it may be helpful to think of the condition of our becoming human as that we became amnesiac about any consciousness our soul had before birth -- and therefore amnesiac about the nature or manner in which our Mission was designed.

Our searching for our Mission now is therefore a searching to recover the memory of something we ourselves had a part in designing. I am admittedly a hopeless romantic, so of course I like this picture. If you also are a hopeless romantic, you may like it too. There's also the chance that it just may be true. We will not know until we see Him face-to-face.
"There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than that of society, say, or the superego, or self-interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this: the kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work

(a) that you need most to do and

(b) the world most needs to have done.

"If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you haven't only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping your patients much either. Neither the hair shirt nor the soft birth will do.

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking -- A Theological ABC*

Comment 5: Examples of Mission As Intersection

Your unique and individual mission will most likely turn out to be a mission of Love, acted out in one or all of three arenas: either in the *Kingdom of the Mind*, whose goal is to bring more Truth into the world; or in the *Kingdom of the Heart*, whose goal is to bring more beauty into the world; or in the *Kingdom of the Will*, whose goal is to bring more Perfection into the world, through Service.

Here are some examples:

"My mission is, out of the rich reservoir of love which God seems to have given me, to nurture and show love to others -- most particularly to those who are suffering from incurable diseases."

"My mission is to draw maps for people to show them how to get to God."

"My mission is to create the purest foods I can, to help people's bodies not get in the
way of their spiritual growth."

"My mission is to make the finest harps I can so that people can hear the voice of God in the wind."

"My mission is to make people laugh, so that the travail of this earthly life doesn't seem quite so hard to them."

"My mission is to help people know the truth, in love, about what is happening out in the world, so that there will be more honesty in the world."

"My mission is to weep with those who weep, so that in my arms they may feel themselves in the arms of that Eternal Love which sent me and which created them."

"My mission is to create beautiful gardens, so that in the lilies of the field people may behold the Beauty of God and be reminded of the Beauty of Holiness."

Comment 6: Life As Long As Your Mission Requires

Knowing that you came to Earth for a reason, and knowing what that Mission is, throws an entirely different light upon your life from now on.

- You are, generally speaking, delivered from any further fear about how long you have to live. You may settle it in your heart that you are here until God chooses to think that you have accomplished your Mission, or until God has a greater Mission for you in another Realm.

You need to be a good steward of what He has given you, while you are here; but you do not need to be an anxious steward or stewardess.

You need to attend to your health, but you do not need to constantly worry about it. You need to meditate on your death, but you do not need to be constantly preoccupied with it.

To paraphrase the glorious words of G. K. Chesterton:

- "We now have a strong desire for living combined with a strange carelessness about dying. We desire life like water and yet are ready to drink death like wine."

We know that we are here to do what we came to do, and we need not worry about anything else.
Final Comment: A Job-Hunt Done Well

If you approach your job-hunt as an opportunity to work on this issue as well as the issue of how you will keep body and soul together, then hopefully your job-hunt will end with your being able to say:

- "Life has deep meaning to me, now. I have discovered more than my ideal job; I have found my Mission, and the reason why I am here on Earth."