

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Community Life and Living

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Following your passion. Have you found your niche in life? Are you doing *the* number one thing you want to do? In other words, are you *following your passion*?

Over the years, when talking with young people and the conversation comes around to life purpose and life goals, at some point I invariably ask them, *What is your passion?* What is the key thing in life you really like to do? Put another way, what life-pursuit *really* makes your heart sing?

I'm not saying there's only one thing for any one of us. There may be multiple things, and at different junctures in our lives. However, I am suggesting that we all have potential passion for something. The key is to uncover what that is and then find ways of cultivating the passion, making it the center of our life-focus and purpose.

Recently, I've been reading Chris Gardner's new book, *Start Where You Are*. Chris Gardner is himself an American success story. Growing up with an absentee father and an abusive step-father, he had much to overcome. At one point, later in his life, he and his young son were homeless, living on the streets of San Francisco.

However, although he was homeless, he's quick to remind us: he was never hopeless. Always, from within, the passion burned. But for what?

Finally, after dabbling in the stock market for a brief period, it all came together when he visited the stock exchange in San Francisco for the first time. As he tells it:

The energy was spectacular. I'm standing there and the ticker tape is going, bodies are flying all over the place, tickets are getting stamped, traders are shouting out orders, furiously scribbling their trades down, with bells and whistles ringing madly. I thought I had died and gone to heaven.

No backup plan for passion. For Chris Gardner, the stock market was his passion. It was *the* activity, *the* life-experience, where he felt most fully alive.

Earlier, he thought it would be music and, later, some realm in the medical field. But for him, when Wall Street came calling, he found his natural home.

As Chris Gardner reminds us from his own life-story, *there is no Plan B for passion. Do what you love and love what you do. Plan A has to come first. Besides, he says, Plan B sucks.*

We hear, often, about the importance of planning and how those who *fail to plan, plan to fail*. And we reflect all the time on having a *back up* plan for this and a *Plan B or C* for that. However, because of the strong priority consideration for *Plan A* and not letting our

life passion slip into obscurity, there's a sense of urgency that we get on track with our passion at our earliest opportunity.

What's at stake in *Plan A's* success is that our passion has so much to say about who we are and our ultimate happiness as a person. When we're in healthy pursuit of our passion, the overlap effect into virtually every aspect of our lives is amazing. It's like, when we find our niche (our passion), our niche finds us as well.

Still, the larger value is being alive to the passion that vibrates in our spirit. A side benefit of this is that when we're in tune with our passion, our lives become more simplified. Suddenly, everything is less complicated and life, and its consequent joys, naturally, *come to us*.

That doesn't mean hard work is not required of us; on the contrary. It simply means that the hard work we put forth in realizing our passion is more focused and flows more naturally from the depths of our spirit.

Much of the time, the most gifted and talented artists, athletes and professionals of all kinds are among the hardest workers. The good news is that, for them, it doesn't seem like work because it's so foundational to who they are.

So, finally, a mandate for all of us: follow your passion; so that when the sun sets in the west, we'll know we were alive to the deepest truth in our spirit.