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The Joy of Passion - Finding Your Calling

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THE JOY OF PASSION: FINDING YOUR CALLING

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The authors express their gratitude to the exceptional efforts of all of the editors, as well as their patience, help, and friendship.
"Take this job and shove it, I ain't working here no more." 

The idea of finding career passion troubles most people. Deciding on a career and committing to it while maintaining balance in the other areas of one's life is an arduous task. As educators, we often admonish students that passion does not always connect to high grade point averages (or high salaries). However, as a student, one might have stumbled upon one's passion but was too distracted to recognize it.

Therefore, as we see it, the key in any professional pursuit is that one must enjoy what he does for a living. If one has a passion for his career, he is at an advantage. If he considers his career pursuit to be a true calling, that is even better.

What does it mean to have passion? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines passion as "a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept." We are at this point in our lives as college professors as we love and enjoy what we do

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1 JOHNNY PAYCHECK, TAKE THIS JOB AND SHOVE IT (Epic Records 1977).
when we go to class. We do not classify what we do as going to work, because we have too much fun teaching to ever call this work.

What, then, is a “calling”? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a calling as “a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence.” While the religious aspect of a calling is certainly relevant, many people see the big picture of a career calling as work that is socially significant and beneficial.

A person with a Calling works not for financial gain or Career advancement, but instead for the fulfillment that doing the work brings to the individual. The word “calling” was originally used in a religious context, as people were understood to be “called” by God to do morally and socially significant work. While the modern sense of “calling” may have lost its religious connection, work that people feel called to do is usually seen as socially valuable—an end in itself—involving activities that may, but need not be, pleasurable.

We strongly agree that what we do today is in fact our career calling, as the sum total of our professional experiences invariably brought us to this point. In the legal world, several practitioners have also recognized how practicing law can be a calling:

If a law firm associate experiences her work to be a calling, then she is motivated by that calling itself, sees that calling to be a mission, passion, and/or privilege, expects a better world and fulfillment from her calling, and looks forward to more work.

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It's really a calling, meaning one derives inspiration from work itself. What matters is fulfillment and satisfaction from work that is well-done, as opposed to financial gain or career advancement.\(^6\)

So, how do you know if you are called to do this work? That, my friend, is a tough question. It is hard to know sometimes, unless you try to turn away from it—and find yourself lost and miserable without it. A calling is powerful—it will not let us go. When you are doing work you are called to do, you find that time flies by. You are doing what you love. You know that you are home. All of your talents, your experiences, your heart, all mesh; it all comes together and you help someone. Then you know that all the trouble is worth it, that you were born to do this work.\(^7\)

II. REASONS PEOPLE HATE WHAT THEY DO FOR A LIVING

The above introduction notwithstanding, there are many people who detest what they do for a living. Many people feel this discontent irrespective of their profession, whether it is law, accounting, teaching, truck driving, economics, house painting, sanitation, or anything else. The reasons for this discontent are nearly as many as the people who hate their jobs. The reasons include, among others:


A. The pressure to perform and get to the top.

This dynamic was expertly portrayed in an episode of the classic television series, "The Twilight Zone."\(^8\) The scene is with the boss, Misrell (played by Howard Smith), severely dressing down his already ulcer-ridden employee, Williams (brilliantly played by James Daly), after Williams lost a key business contract:

**Misrell:** Don't sit down! And don't con me, Williams. It was your pet project. Your pet project! Then it was your idea to give it to that little college greenie. Now, get with it, Williams! Get with it, boy! So what's left, Williams? Not only has your pet project backfired, but it's sprouted wings and left the premises. I'll tell you what's left to us in my view: A deep and abiding concern about your judgment in men. This is a push business, Williams—a push, push, push business. Push and drive! But, personally, you don't delegate responsibilities to little boys. You should know it better than anyone else. A push, push, push business, Williams. It's push, push, push, all the way, all the time! It's push, push, push, all the way, all the time, right on down the line!\(^9\)

**Williams:** Fat boy, why don't you shut your mouth!\(^{10}\)

B. The pressure to STAY on top after getting there.

In legal practice, once one makes it to partnership, one should be able to relax and enjoy the fruits of his labor. That should be the end of the grind. Or is it? "In the words of one partner with a large firm in Los Angeles, ‘the corporate partners battle the litigators.

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\(^8\) *The Twilight Zone: A Stop at Willoughby* (CBS television broadcast May 6, 1960).

\(^9\) *Id.*

\(^{10}\) *Id.*
The young Turks fight the old guard. The workaholics fight the civic-minded. I thought making partner was the end of the struggle for survival. It was only the beginning. Another law partner made the following observation.

This, then, is life in the big firm: It is in the interests of clients that senior partners work inhuman hours, year after year, and constantly be anxious about retaining their business. And it is in the interests of senior partners that junior partners work inhuman hours, year after year, and constantly be anxious about retaining old clients and attracting new clients. And it is in the interests of junior partners that senior associates work inhuman hours, year after year, and constantly be anxious about retaining old clients and attracting new clients and making partner. And most of all, it is in everyone’s interests that the newest members of the profession—the junior associates—be willing to work inhuman hours, year after year, and constantly be anxious about everything—about retaining old clients and attracting new clients and making partner and keeping up their billable hours. The result? Long hours, large salaries, and one of the unhealthiest and unhappiest professions on earth.12

C. Going into a different field instead of pursuing one’s own dream.

“Sadly, we often see this when a child feels compelled to join the ‘family business’ out of loyalty rather than love.”13

D. Having to provide for one's family.

"I hate what I do, but I have no choice. I've got to earn money for my family." 14

E. Being trapped in professional life because the money is good.

"'It pays well, so I do it, but it leaves a bad taste in my mouth,' says a successful corporate lawyer." 15 Another attorney complained, "I'm very well paid for what I do, but sometimes I feel more like a prostitute than a professional." 16

F. Hopelessness.

"It takes all my energy just to make it through the day. Sometimes tears well up in my eyes for no reason. I dream about jumping in my car and taking off somewhere, anywhere, by myself." 17 A computer programmer mentioned, "I spend eight hours a day punching data into a computer. I'm not doing anything for anyone." 18

G. The realization that the drive to the top was not worth the trip.

"Too many people claw and climb their way to the top, only to find that it wasn't worth the effort. When they finally make it to

14 Id. at 29.
15 Id.
16 Id. at 1.
17 Id. at 29.
18 Id. at 1.
the top of the ladder of success, they discover that it was leaning against the wrong wall.”

H. The hope for greener pastures ... anywhere.

“We’ve all known people like this, people who seem congenitally unable to stay at a job for more than a few months. They start with high hopes but become disillusioned as soon as reality sets in—which doesn’t take long. Once their dream is shattered, they flee for greener pastures. They spend their entire life flitting from job to job in a vain quest to capture the Holy Grail of the workplace, the once and future job that will satisfy all their needs and desires.”

Gilmore: Speaking for myself, that is certainly true. My own disillusionment with professional life resulted in me switching accounting jobs three times in less than five years.

III. THE HOPELESSNESS OF IT ALL—JOB BURNOUT

Hopelessness leads to job burnout. The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives several excellent definitions of what it means to be hopeless: “having no expectation of good or success; not susceptible to remedy or cure; incapable of redemption or improvement; giving no ground for hope; incapable of solution, management, or accomplishment.”

We have been there. Believe us—there are few feelings in professional life that are worse than going to a job you hate to engage in a career pursuit you already know to be an exercise in futility. This type of experience is the antithesis of pursuing one’s

19 Id. at 38.
20 Id. at 18.
true professional calling and is an anathema to a worker’s overall well-being.

A humorous article (looking at how overwhelming career dissatisfaction can ultimately result in employee burnout) included the following multiple-choice questions:

1. *When it comes to your career path, which of the following statements are most relevant to your situation?*
   A. My supervisor and I have talked extensively about where I am going and what I can achieve, and have developed challenging but attainable goals to help me get there.
   B. I receive a lot of positive feedback from upper management and have been told that there are good things in my future, but I’m not sure how or when I will get there.
   C. I have been in the same position for so long, my business cards have our company’s old logo.
   D. I’m pretty sure I just got demoted last week.

2. *Which statement describes your typical workweek?*
   A. My company has made cutbacks and I have had to pick up the extra slack. I now put in the hours of two people.
   B. The hours I work fluctuate depending on how busy the company is. There are seasons when I put in extra time, but I am compensated for the extra work with more time off in the slower months.
   C. I consistently put in 40 to 45 hours a week.
   D. What, you mean there are people who work fewer than 60 hours a week?

3. *When it comes to personal recognition, which of the following do you most relate with?*
   A. I am so often referred to by my employee number in the office that I sometimes forget my own name.
B. I hear from my boss often—every time I do something wrong.
C. I receive a lot of feedback—both positive and negative—from my manager.
D. The last time I received a raise, I used the extra money to buy Milli Vanilli concert tickets.

And finally:

4. Which of the following best describes your relationship with your boss?
   A. I feel that my sole purpose at the company is to make my boss look good.
   B. We have a solid relationship based on mutual respect and appreciation.
   C. I do a great job ... when I do the opposite of what my boss does.
   D. I think I saw my boss once last month, right before the door to his office was slammed.\(^\text{22}\)

**Gilmore:** If I had to answer those questions in approximately late 1991 or early 1992, my answer choices undoubtedly would have been D for all of them.

When all one does is work, and work, and work, and gets no satisfaction from his efforts, this results in that individual suffering job burnout. The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes burnout as "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration."\(^\text{23}\) Some of the classic symptoms of job burnout include the following:

- A generally negative attitude often paired with the feeling that nothing is going to work out.
- Inability to concentrate.


• General apathy towards your work, chores, and other tasks.
• Feelings of stagnation.
• A lack of interest in social activities and being with others.
• Difficulty with healthy habits like exercise, diet, and regular sleep.
• Feeling like you’re never doing enough.
• Neglecting your own needs (and putting the needs of others ahead of your own).
• Personal values and beliefs lose their importance.
• Short temper.
• Constant exhaustion.
• Feelings of inefficacy.
• Feelings of detachment from people and things you care about.
• Frequent boredom.
• Psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches, lingering colds, and other issues with a cause that’s difficult to identify.
• The denial of these feelings.  

Gilmore: Needless to say, I suffered through the burnout stage for years. My job stunk, nothing was fun, and I really did not have much to look forward to. Sundays were depressing precisely because Monday was coming! Even when I took my semi-annual vacations, I just did not have the strength to go anywhere; I just stayed home, watched TV, and vegetated. Then my furlough ended and it was back to the salt mines and more career failure. More than once, I thought to myself: “I went through four years of

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24 Adam Dachis, Burnout Is Real: How to Identify and Address Your Burnout Problem, LIFEHACKER (Feb. 13, 2012, 8:00 AM), http://lifehacker.com/5884439/burnout-is-real-how-to-identify-the-problem-and-how-to-fix-it.

25 See, e.g., DEBORAH ARRON, RUNNING FROM THE LAW: WHY GOOD LAWYERS ARE GETTING OUT OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION 130 (4th ed. 2004) (“Pretty soon I contracted ‘Sunday Syndrome,’ dreading Monday when I awoke on Sunday. Eventually, the only good time of the week was Friday night because I still had all of Saturday before I felt that dread of heading back to the office again.”).
college for this?” Had my work life truly become that banal? Yes, it had—quickly.

For those practicing (and perhaps non-practicing legal escapees) their similar question is: “I went through four years of college plus three years (or more) of law school to see my efforts come to this?” Unfortunately, when one is in that kind of situation, it is very difficult to visualize anything resembling success when the best one has experienced is mediocrity.

IV. CHASING THE MONEY

One major reason for professional dissatisfaction in the legal profession is that attorneys (among many others) too often choose the higher paying job instead of the job that truly makes them happy. Why do law students and attorneys go for the higher paying job? One reason is that younger attorneys are lured by the tantalizingly large salaries offered by big firms—often to the detriment of their physical and emotional health. In return for the large salaries, young attorneys end up working insanely long hours just to maintain their status quo, and to stay on the partnership track.

Big Law, Big Angst: Big Law is a shorthand reference for working at a large firm in a big city. Salaries for law school graduates who join Big Law firms begin in six figures and are trending even higher. Partners in Big Law firms fare even better, oftentimes earning upwards of a million dollars per year. The price for this level of success does not come cheap. The billable hour is the engine of financial success in large firms. Consequently, lawyers in large law firms work at a punishing pace, especially new associates at the

26 Lance McMillan, Tortured Souls: Unhappy Lawyers Viewed Through the Medium of Film, 19 SEtON HALL J. SPORTS & ENT. L. 31, 70 (2009) (“Law students choose higher-paying jobs over their hearts’ desires.”).
bottom of the economic ladder who are expected, minimally, to bill 2,000 or more hours a year. Unhappiness and poor health follow.\textsuperscript{27}

Is chasing the top dollar the only reason young lawyers are willing to sell out their desire for a better-balanced life?\textsuperscript{28} No, not entirely. There is a practical consideration as well. The truth is obtaining a legal education is very expensive.\textsuperscript{29} As such, law students have rather massive student loans that they need to pay back when they graduate. In making their career decision as to where they want to work, a recent graduate has to choose between a big firm job that will pay the bills and a job they will find personally fulfilling.

Apart from the lust for money, there is the need for money. Law school is expensive. To pursue their dream of becoming a lawyer, more and more students are financing their law school studies. Enormous post-education debt is the result, oftentimes reaching six figures. The existence of liabilities on this scale creates pressure on the debtors to sell their services to the highest bidder. In the words of one scholar, student debt has become the all-consuming factor governing the lives of many new lawyers: Most law students graduate with very high educational debt. For some, the debt can without exaggeration be described as "staggering," in the sense that repayment according to a "standard" ten-year schedule would leave the graduate with full-time employment but scant discretionary income. Such

\textsuperscript{27} Id. at 66.

\textsuperscript{28} Id. at 71 ("Thousands of lawyers choose to give up a healthy, happy, well-balanced life for a less healthy, less happy life dominated by work.").

\textsuperscript{29} See, e.g., Janine Robben, After Law School, Now What? Law's "Lost Generation" Looks For Work, 70 OR. ST. B. BULL. 26, 27 (2010) ("According to Jodi Heintz, Lewis & Clark's director of public relations, the average 2009 Lewis & Clark Law School graduate has a law school student loan debt of $84,618."); Paul Horowitz, Book Review: What Ails the Law Schools?, 111 MICH. L. REV. 955, 962 (2013) ("For example, tuition at Yale Law School was $12,450 in 1987; in 2010, it was $50,750.").
a graduate can survive only by sacrificing consumer goods and services, postponing having a home and a family, and accruing additional credit card debt. The loan repayment problem is greatest for law students who would like to be self-sacrificing up to a reasonable point: those who decide to go to law school because they want to serve the public as “public interest” lawyers, such as staff attorneys at legal aid organizations. From this perspective, pragmatism—and not the lust for money—drives many students into high-paying positions. The result is that legal jobs with the largest starting salaries are populated with people who do not want to be where they are, but for the money.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{Gilmore:} Let us assume, for example, that I am a recent graduate who finished in the top 10\% of my class. My lifelong passion is to preserve the environment. Consequently, I hope to practice environmental law when I graduate. In the meantime, I have over $100,000 of student loans that I have to start paying back six months after my graduation. I have interviewed with several environmental law firms, all of which are offering starting salaries averaging $63,000.\textsuperscript{31} I also interviewed with XYZ Chemical Corporation, an organization that is not exactly sympathetic to environmental concerns. But, XYZ offers me a job as its in-house counsel at a starting salary of $157,000 per year. So, I swallow my desire to defend environmental concerns and take the higher paying job with XYZ. One of my duties with XYZ is to go to court and get restraining orders against environmental

\textsuperscript{30} McMillan, supra note 26, at 72-3. See also Mary Sue Backus & Paul Marcus, \textit{The Right to Counsel in Criminal Cases, A National Crisis}, 57 HASTINGS L.J. 1031, 1126 (2006) (“Low pay and significant law school student-loan debt leave many defenders and prosecutors struggling financially and discourage many talented lawyers from careers in public service.”).

\textsuperscript{31} See, e.g., Deborah L. Rhode, \textit{Legal Education: Rethinking the Problem, Reimagining the Reforms}, 40 PEPP. L. REV. 437, 441 (2013) (“Only about two-thirds of those who graduated from law school in 2010 secured full-time legal jobs, and those who did and reported income had a median salary of $63,000, which was inadequate to cover average debt levels.”).
protesters—many of whom are friends of mine (or were), who are as passionate about saving the environment as I am.

How ironic: to pay my bills, I have to defend the interests of a client that I find personally reprehensible. This is precisely what many attorneys do every single day. But when it comes to the point where I feel I’m nothing more than a functionary and a slave to my paycheck, no matter how big the check, then my work life is a waste. This is what I get for making a deal with the devil. This is what many attorneys feel in their professional lives.

Still, when a young lawyer realizes that there is a precipitous opportunity cost in the form of losing a desired career choice of lifestyle, he will rationalize his decision to take the big firm job anyway. He can rationalize by saying he will work in this job only for a few years to save money, to get practical experience, to make a name for himself in the profession, or until he can pay down his loans. Once he has put his time in, then he is free to pursue his true desires. To put it another way, some lawyers are willing to mortgage some short-term discomfort now for long-term fulfillment later—if it ever comes.

Decisions of this type have straightforward implications for how new attorneys approach their first jobs. If debt pushes

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32 See, e.g., Joseph Kanefield, Defending the Defenders, 48 ARIZ. ATT’Y 6 (2011) (“Defending unpopular clients is what lawyers do.”); Laurel E. Fletcher, Alexis Kelly, & Zulaikha Aziz, Defending the Rule of Law: Reconceptualizing Guantanamo Habeas Attorneys, 44 CONN. L. REV. 617, 619 (2012) (“The Guantanamo Lawyers, their supporters argued, were following a time-honored tradition of defending unpopular clients.”); David B. Wilkins, Race, Ethics, and the First Amendment: Should a Black Lawyer Represent the Ku Klux Klan?, 63 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 1030, 1065 (1995) (“Consider, for example, the organized bar. As I argued in Part II, the image of the lonely lawyer defending an unpopular client’s constitutional rights is an important professional trope. By constantly invoking this example, the profession conveys the impression that ordinary citizens can count on lawyers to defend their most important rights.”). 33 McMillan, supra note 26, at 101 (“The responsibility for choosing the right path rests squarely with each lawyer. One comment on an ABA blog aptly cuts to the heart of the matter, ‘I say don’t complain about the devil when you sell your soul to him.’”).
a student to join a particular law firm, then that student will view work as a short-term burden to bear until freed from student loans. From the outset, therefore, the new employee is mentally and emotionally disengaged from the new employer. This mindset will affect the new lawyer's interactions with partners, other associates, staff, and clients. Knowing that one is not in it for the long haul, it becomes harder to invest and care about the cases and people one encounters. More primitively, hired guns rarely show loyalty. Here's an analogy. When people are sick, they will undergo all manner of painful procedures to recover their health. The long-term benefits justify the short-term costs. No one, however, would choose to endure the pain if they could reasonably avoid it. But they do so when circumstances dictate that it is necessary. For many new lawyers, the decision to work at a high-paying firm flows from the same type of calculus. In this conception, staggering educational debt is to financial health what a serious sickness is to physical health. The thinking goes, “I will endure the unhappiness of Big Law for just a few years to get my financial house in order. Then I will be free to do what I want. I will trade short-term pain for future gain.” With this type of attitude, the disgust so many new lawyers feel toward their jobs is no surprise; the choice was made to embrace misery. Law firms understand this thinking well. As the painful nature of life in Big Law has become more publicized in the last ten years, large firm salaries have skyrocketed to ensure that a steady stream of fresh law students will continue to choose short-term discontent. The price to endure unhappiness has increased. It is an indictment of the cost structure of legal education that so many of our students feel the need to pay such a price in the first instance.34

34 Id. at 73-74.
V. GETTING OUT OF THE RAT RACE

In the premiere episode of the short-lived situation comedy, "The Paul Lynde Show," comedian and series star Paul Lynde (playing an attorney, no less!) gave the perfect description of life in the rat race. When his wife (played by Elizabeth Allen) asked him how the rat race was going, he responded: "the rats are winning!" Another very popular description of the rat race says: "The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat." Then the problem becomes, what do you win? Not much, evidently. I know this from my own experience as I wasted years of my life in a professional pursuit that resulted in complete and total failure. This sentiment, unfortunately, is not uncommon in today's working world.

We often refer to the workplace as "being in the rat race," but this is probably unfair. It's actually demeaning to the rats. Rats won't stay in a race when it's obvious there's no cheese. Research shows that even average rats quickly look for new territory when the cheese is gone. Humans, on the other hand, seem to often get themselves into career traps from which they never escape. Some research shows that up to 70 percent of white-collar workers are unhappy with their jobs—ironically, they are also spending more and more time working.

Similar to former United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's take on what constitutes pornography ("I know it when I

36 FRANK O'NEILL, NEVER ENOUGH: LESSONS FROM A RECOVERING WORKAHOLIC 131 (University Press 2010).
38 Id.
see it"), a disgruntled, burned-out individual just knows when he has to make a run for it. Sometimes, one may have to overcome obstacles in the form of disapproving family members, or even disapproving supervisors. One attorney recalled resigning from her high-pressure job, along with her supervising partner’s very hostile response:

On Sunday night, I wrote a letter giving two months’ notice. First thing the next morning, I handed it to one of the partners. He was livid. Even though I’d given two months’ notice, he told me to be out of the office in two weeks. He also suggested that if there was anyone whose opinion I valued, I should talk to them soon because the rumors were going to fly. For the next two weeks the guy tried to convince me that I had been fired. He told me that my reputation had been shot, and that no one would seriously look at me now. The only thing I could possibly do was go back to school and start over. I believed him.

We all have stories about the boss from hell, like the above example, who can really take the joy out of going to work (and sometimes take the joy out of leaving for a better opportunity). Luckily, the attorney found another job that fit her interest and abilities.

After about a year of being severely depressed and mostly unemployed, I found an announcement at Stanford Law School for director of a new foundation in Palo Alto. The members of the board wanted a lawyer who could understand the regulations applying to nonprofit corporations, yet someone new to the field who would help them shape their own agenda. It sounded like me. I applied

40 ARRON, supra note 25, at 99.
and got the job. I love it, and don’t regret leaving law at all.\textsuperscript{41}

After reading this attorney’s account of her escape, we can only say this: \textit{take that, partner!}

\textbf{Smith:} Often, our passion comes disguised as something that society (especially parents and family) would not encourage. An example could be someone who loves working with children but majored in pre-law. Generally, most people would encourage that individual to go to law school and enter the legal profession. The perception is that lawyers are always needed in a society and that people that work well with kids are somehow not as valuable.\textsuperscript{42} “Society has \textit{chosen}, mostly through government policy, and sometimes through its market mechanism, to maintain teaching as a second-rate career that, more often than not, does not attract the smartest and most ambitious.”\textsuperscript{43}

Unfortunately, that future attorney might have made a better K-5 teacher or social worker who could help mold society. Given the priorities of society, the lawyer is somehow prized more than the teacher. The perception of the lawyer’s higher pay is viewed as a badge of honor, while teaching or counseling is often seen as a second-tier career option. For example:

Consider lawyers who spend insufferable 12-hour days pouring over mind-numbing, overly complex regulation books and legal codes. They earned $124,750. The average middle school teacher? A paltry $52,570. That’s certainly no mark of prestige .... Those are today’s societal images, I’m afraid. Smart, ambitious people want society

\textsuperscript{41} Id. at 99-100.
\textsuperscript{43} Id.
to view them as something great and important, and that’s not a teacher in 2010.\textsuperscript{44}

Moreover, part of compensation is public esteem. When governors mock teachers as lazy, avaricious incompetents, they demean the profession and make it harder to attract the best and brightest. We should be elevating teachers, not throwing darts at them.\textsuperscript{45}

Regardless of the perception, we know that being pigeon-holed into any unfulfilling line of work due to family influences or outside pressures is counterproductive. It is pointless to follow someone else’s dream instead of running your own race.\textsuperscript{46}

Another former attorney described his escape from the legal rat race and transition into teaching this way:

I was not willing to spend another 25 years doing something a very immature person of 21—me—had decided to do . . . . There’s a limit to the satisfaction one can earn making a lot of money. I found the world could get along without one more good tax lawyer. But there are a lot of kids out there who might not do so well without a good teacher.\textsuperscript{47}

As a result, many people are leaving the rat race to forge their paths to personal satisfaction and fulfillment. “Employees are bidding farewell to corporate America in the hope of finding a more secure, or at least fulfilling, future.”\textsuperscript{48} Still another corporate

\textsuperscript{44} Id.
\textsuperscript{46} ALLEGRETTI, supra note 13, at 63 (“I’ll never find my calling if I follow your dreams instead of my own.”).
\textsuperscript{47} ARRON, supra note 25, at 115.
Michelle Lawton, who spent two decades in a successful career in branding and marketing, left it all behind to start her own business, Joyful Plate, seeking to strike a better sense of balance in her life. Lawton decided to use her savings to invest in herself. “I was at a point in my life where I was looking for a real shift,” Lawton says. “I realized I had a life opportunity. I had a strong network, and I’ll be 44 this year. This is the time. I wanted to somehow give myself a portal to use my talents to do something that I’m really passionate about. But also, from a strategic standpoint, I wanted to figure out an infrastructure that would allow me to pave my own way moving forward.” Lawton notes when she was in the corporate world working for companies like Procter & Gamble, Pepperidge Farm, Lavazza Coffee and Remy Cointreau, she was compensated very well but still not nearly enough considering the hours she was putting in. “It’s so hard to find a happy medium,” says Lawton. “The stress level is so high, you indulge in unhealthy ways to compensate, emotionally treating yourself, whether it’s overeating or overdrinking or overspending.” As her own boss, Lawton makes time for things she never could during her years in the business world, such as lunchtime yoga and pilates classes. “It’s something I can’t quantify,” explains Lawton. “I’ve never been healthier. What I’m not gaining in financial rewards, I’ve gained in personal well-being. It sounds like a cliché, but it’s a trade-off.”

Obviously, there cannot be much good in working sweatshop hours every week, making a ton of money, if one is too stressed out to enjoy spending it. It is even more pointless to work sweatshop hours and not make much money.

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49 Id.
Gilmore: In my own working life, I was working ridiculous hours, dealing with stress, and, to add injury to insult, I was not making as much money as I should have (compared to similarly situated accountants). When my opportunity for escape came in the form of my getting accepted to law school, I too made a run for it and never looked back.

VI. HEARING THE CALL

Whether one lucks into it (like we did) or one follows a meticulous plan, the truth is that anyone can find a calling for his career. Finding the call for one’s career is by no means easy, no matter the route taken, and it may take years of failure (as in Gilmore’s case) before finally hitting one’s stride. “As you search for your calling, there may be years of false starts, lost opportunities, and embarrassing failures. Most of us will change jobs lots of times. Each change may be a step along the way to our calling. The virtues of patience and hope are indispensable.”

But, when one has found his true calling, and knows beyond all doubt that this is what he is meant to do, we can definitely say that it is a true joy knowing that his work does matter. Again, it does not matter what line of work one pursues. If he knows in his heart that his efforts are not in vain, but are actually beneficial, he is probably in the right place.

Although one might expect to find a higher number of Callings among those in certain occupations, for example, teachers and Peace Corps employees, it is plausible that salespersons, medical technicians, factory workers, and secretaries could view their work as a Calling. Such people could love their work and think that it contributes to making the world a better place.

50 Allegretti, supra note 13, at 64.
51 Wrzesniewski et al., supra note 4, at 22.
VII. TWO MISFITS’ (OUR) REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES
WITH THE REALITIES OF WORK

"Mine isn’t a string of victories. It’s no golden past."

A. Gilmore and the Rat Race—Gilmore Lost ... Badly!

Gilmore: I was an accountant in my earlier professional life, and the above quote perfectly sums up my time in the profession. With the now twenty years of hindsight since leaving the profession, I can honestly say that my accounting "career" (and I use the term very loosely here) was an embarrassing joke at best and a spectacular failure at worst. I will not bore anyone with the details here, but suffice to say that I made some early career choices that I would love to have back, and those bad early choices set the stage for ten years of career failure. Ultimately, I lost a decade of my life in an unfulfilling career with absolutely zero to show for it.

Ironically, I enjoyed my accounting courses when I was an undergraduate student. During my time as an accounting major, I had several professors tell me that the sky was the limit once I pursued an accounting career. I wanted to pursue a career doing tax work in a CPA firm, and my finest hour as an undergraduate was my scoring an A in Federal Income Tax in my senior year. So what happened? Unfortunately, I just could not make the transition from academic promise to professional success.

In addition, I had neither the maturity nor the wisdom to understand that starting a career right out of college was a painstaking, meticulous undertaking and that rejection was part of the process. "It’s funny how things shift after graduating college. Your first jobs are never quite as you imagined them, and often

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times you feel a sense of disappointment." After graduation, I just knew that I would hit the ground running and success was mine for the taking. Thus, I took my shiny new bachelor’s degree in accounting and went off to set the world on fire ... or so I thought.

Man, was I wrong!

I could not set the world on fire until I got a job. The trouble was, I could not score an accounting job to save my life. As my insecurity got worse with each passing day—and every rejection letter—all of my close friends were receiving job offers left and right. Their only trouble was deciding which offer they should accept.

This only aggravated my crisis in self-confidence as my friends were getting offers from top corporations, CPA firms, and other reputable organizations, and all I was getting was one rejection letter after another after another after another. The worst blow I got was after I had gone on an interview with a CPA firm on a Friday morning, and the managing partner was quite impressed with me. So when he called me the following Monday morning, at 8am, I thought surely he was calling me with an offer. I was even stupid enough to think that he wanted me to start later that day. Instead, he called me at that time of the morning to tell me that he and his partner decided to hire someone else. That incident completely vaporized what little confidence I might have had left for a very long time.

Nearly six months after graduating, I finally got a job offer from the New York City Department of Finance to audit business tax returns. By then, I was so demoralized by my first job search that I was absolutely floored that I finally got an offer. I really did not celebrate all that much; I was that stunned that somebody actually said yes! Anyway, I always wanted to do tax work, this was a tax job, and I figured that this would be a great opportunity to attain some valuable experience and possibly learn tax preparation on my way to the top of the tax field.

Wrong again!

In my job of auditing business tax returns, all I did was check for discrepancies in each return that might have resulted in additional tax assessments. I was not learning how to prepare tax returns, since all I did was merely check up on what someone else did. I was much less a tax auditor than I was a clerk. Frankly, I really could not have an intelligent conversation about taxes with any knowledgeable practitioner because I was hopelessly behind the curve and only falling further behind. My job was pretty mindless as there was nothing for me to analyze and there was certainly no room in that clerical job for any professional and intellectual growth. I was already starting to suffer from intellectual atrophy. In the meantime, my friends were learning more and more, and they were getting some very lucrative promotions as they went on. Things deteriorated to the point where I was truly embarrassed to say what I did for a living and where I worked. To quote WFAN radio’s Joe Benigno: “OH THE PAIN!”

After two mind-numbing years, I left the Department of Finance to take a job in a corporate accounting department. If my first job was completely stultifying at the one extreme, my next job was non-stop pressure at the other extreme. In my first corporate job, I did get the opportunity to prepare income tax returns, sales tax returns, property tax returns, financial statements, and bank reconciliations. However, this was a job where the corporate culture was all about fear. I had a couple of supervisors who inspired terror as soon as they walked into the office. I admit, I had plenty of days on this job where I was scared to make a mistake. There were even some colleagues I was afraid to look in the eyes. Sadly, this kind of workplace experience is not exactly

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unprecedented. For example, Touro Law professor Suzanne Darrow-Kleinhaus recalls a similar workplace horror:

Unfortunately, in my prior work experience, I had worked for a company where every word and facial expression was scrutinized and criticized. The management style was to create an atmosphere of fear and terror. Every action of the employee was controlled and analyzed so that it had come to the point where I no longer had any confidence in my ability to think for myself. I worried endlessly over every little thing and I no longer felt competent to choose even the type of copy paper to use for a particular manual. This was precisely the effect my manager had sought to achieve. Well, it might have been her goal but it was certainly not mine. So I found another job but it took months before I recovered my feelings of self-worth and competence. Despite my horrible experience, I learned a valuable lesson: I would never again work for an employer that required complete domination and control over its employees.55

No matter what I (or anyone else) did in this particular place, someone was always looking to take your head off whether you deserved it or not. There is nothing worse than being in a work environment where a gun is (figuratively) pointed at your head every single day. I cannot work under that kind of pressure, and I refuse to ever again. As I saw it, this was an employer who would not let a little thing like common decency get in the way of turning a profit.56

The last straw for me was when I was out sick for much of the week with a bad case of the flu. From Monday through Wednesday, I was getting an incessant string of phone calls at home from one supervisor after another. Still sick, and against my better judgment, I dragged myself into work on Thursday morning.

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56 THE GODFATHER (Paramount 1972) ("I got a business to run. I gotta kick asses sometimes to make it run right.").
Almost immediately, the controller started cross-examining me about a tax return I had filed. When he didn’t like my answer to one of his questions, he yelled at me, in front of the whole office, “You’re a goddamned idiot!” In retrospect, if I had any guts, I would have (and should have) told him where he could go and resigned on the spot. Unfortunately, my cowardice and my final year of car payments did not make this a viable option. So I kept swallowing both the abuse and my pride.\footnote{\textsuperscript{57} Bevere, \textit{supra} note 37 (“Each week I talk to individuals who feel trapped in their current work. They talk about being demeaned, belittled and emotionally abused. And yet they stay, hoping against all odds that things will magically improve.”).}

Luckily, less than a month later, I was blessed with an escape. In keeping with the premise of “take this job and shove it,” I was able to get a job offer for my third (and final) accounting job. I went into the office extra early to write my letter of resignation. That day, for obvious reasons, I was not afraid of getting fired. I was almost finished writing my resignation (don’t worry—I kept it professional) when the assistant controller came into the office, looked over my shoulder, and asked me what I was doing. I looked at him with a big smile on my face and told him I will show him my finished product in ten minutes. I told the assistant controller, the controller, and the chief financial officer (in a nice way—much more than they deserved) that I am escaping this godforsaken place. Good riddance!

That should have been the end of it. Even after I had left the firm, the assistant controller called my house a couple of more times to ask some extra questions, and my dad came to the rescue. My dad really ripped into the assistant controller, telling him to leave me “the hell alone,” and called him out on how he and his cronies never appreciated me while I worked for them, and all but threw me out the door when I left. My dad then spoke to the controller and laid him out, too. I wish I had been home when my dad “smoked” them both. Thanks, Dad.

There you have it. In my first four short years in the accounting profession, I had already run the gamut of my professional identity from extreme apathy to extreme fear. Consequently, in those first
two jobs, I dreaded going to work. The dread would set in at approximately five o’clock p.m. every Sunday afternoon. Then the career failure would start all over again on Monday. My last accounting job was pretty decent, for the most part. By then, however, I knew that I was never really going to go far in my chosen profession. For whatever the reason, my “chosen” profession somehow did not choose me. For years, I thought that professional life had to be a lot better than where I ended up, and that I had been sold a bill of goods about how great being an accountant was. Frankly, I had been taken.

Don’t get me wrong, I am not looking to blast the accounting profession all these years later; I have no axe to grind. Interestingly, just like the legal profession, the accounting profession seems to have its own issues with career satisfaction and work-life balance. Still, a lot of my friends are successful, happy accountants to this day, as are many of my former students. This career choice just did not work out for me.

B. From Corporate Flunky to Law School

Gilmore: In the summer of 1995, I finally left the accounting profession to go to law school. I had already heard the zillion alleged horror stories about law school, but I always took them with a grain of salt. I always wanted to go to law school and in

light of my then recent professional failure, I laughed at the rumors of intimidating professors,\textsuperscript{59} end of semester, one-shot-only exams,\textsuperscript{60} and allegedly dog-eat-dog student competition.\textsuperscript{61} Consequently, I had a blast in law school. For me, law school was three of the best years of my life. Admittedly, law school gave me the escape from my joyless, demoralizing, psychologically-debilitating professional existence, but I still had to perform and succeed in law school once I got there. Law school is no place for the truly stupid. Once I got to law school, I had fun all the way through.

Compared to the disaster of my earlier professional life, I found law school to be quite calm, relatively speaking. I did not

\textsuperscript{59} See generally James J. White, Maiming the Cubs, 32 OHIO N.U. L. REV. 287, 303 (2006) ("Assuming for the sake of the argument that law school causes anxiety and depression in students, I am not persuaded either that that anxiety and its associated psychological ills persist after law school or that they can be prevented by even Herculean efforts at making law school more humane. Until better data come forward, I will continue the traditional law teacher's reign of pillage and abuse. I do that happy in the belief that my hectoring will leave my students better, if momentarily sicker, lawyers."). See also THE PAPER CHASE (Twentieth Century Fox 1973).

\textsuperscript{60} Andrew Jay McClurg, Law Stories: One L Revisited – Neurotic, Paranoid Wimps – Nothing Has Changed, 78 UMKC L. REV. 1049, 1050 (2010) ("[A]nd the fate of most students still rests on a single make-it-or break-it exam."). See also GARY A. MUNNEKE, HOW TO SUCCEED IN LAW SCHOOL 18 (4th ed. 2008) ("As a rule law school exams average one hour of exam for each credit hour of class, and in many cases count for 100% of your course grade (one exam—all the marbles!)").

\textsuperscript{61} Rebecca Flanagan, Lucifer Goes to Law School: Towards Explaining and Minimizing Law Student Peer-to-Peer Harassment and Intimidation, 47 WASHBURN L.J. 453, 460 (2008) ("The rapid pace of law school instruction and the intense pressure of ten-hour days, often spent in the company of a limited number of peers, accelerate the socialization process among law students. The breakneck law school day allows changes in thinking to take place in a short time that would normally take months to evolve. While this transformation is necessary to succeed on exams, it has considerable negative effects on the interpersonal relationships of law students. Because of the intense competition for grades and subsequent summer clerkships, students become distrustful of their peers. It is not unusual for students to question the motives of peers they would otherwise call friends.").
have to get up before sunrise every single day, and I could actually get home at a decent hour in the afternoon. For my entire time in law school, the earliest weekday class I ever had started at 10 a.m., which is far better than having to be in an office by 8 a.m. Needless to say, I quickly got used to the relaxed lifestyle of getting up later in the day and doing everything I needed to do. With my new, low-stress lifestyle, I decided quickly that I was never going to practice law and take on sixty- to ninety-hour workweeks. I had already done that once in my life. To do it again in law practice would have been a step down and, most likely, would have defeated the purpose of my going to law school in the first place.

That brought me to the question of what kind of job I could get with a similar lifestyle once I finished law school. Although it took a little while to convince myself that I could do it, I decided that going into academia could be a viable career option. I had always entertained the vague idea that I could be a college professor somewhere. I knew that a law degree could open the door for me to make that idea a reality. The more I thought about it, the better it looked. For all my professional travails, I realized that I could teach college-level tax courses with a law degree and my experience as a tax practitioner. I also knew that a law degree would give me the necessary credibility to teach business law. As I started to put all this together, my next career path was coming into sharper focus. Not only that, I could actually see myself doing the same thing as those professors who I admired and had the good fortune to take classes with.

But the goal of teaching was still lurking—especially after I was inspired by several tremendous professors during college. I decided that after college I would go to graduate school to pursue a master’s degree in education. I knew I wanted to be a teacher for many reasons. First, I love being in a school environment. Second, as I mentioned earlier, I love learning. I enjoy having my mind opened to new ideas. Finally, I love connecting with others, and just being
around other smart people. I thought that teaching would be a great way to continue doing this.62

C. From High School Dropout to College Professor

1. Escape from High School

Gilmore: I cannot say that I took the most direct route to a teaching career. Nor could I ever envision that someone who hated academic life in high school as much as I did would ever find a rewarding career as an academician. But that is exactly what happened. Before that, I was a high school dropout. I hated high school—it was brutal—and it was an experience that I would not wish on my worst enemy. One certainly cannot be passionate about learning if the academic environment is that of antipathy and intimidation. That was my high school experience.

I went to a specialized high school, and that turned out to be one of the biggest mistakes of my life. I had to take courses there that had absolutely no relevance in the real world. They consisted of subject matters that, to this day, have never helped me in real life, whether I chose to be an attorney, an accountant, a college professor, a cab driver, a gravedigger, a cosmetologist, or anything else. This was the direct result of being automatically programmed to take these useless courses instead of being able to take something worthwhile that would help me in the real world. I went through the horror of sitting in class after class, day after day, with no conceivable hope of ever having anything positive happen. In addition was the fact that the administration there at the time could not have cared less about students like me who sorely needed some positive reinforcement (because it fell all over itself catering to the honor students).

My old high school is an institution with a national reputation for its programs in upper-level science, math, and engineering—none of which I had any aptitude for. Yet, the people there never gave me so much as a pat on the back if I happened to do well at something. But they were always quick to castigate me if I came up short at anything. I really could not enjoy learning for its own sake; I always had the feeling that I had to somehow get through one class, only to defend myself against the next one.

Similar to the experience in the corporate world, one cannot enjoy an academic experience, or be ultimately successful with it, if the overall environment is one of fear and hostility. Sadly, my old high school environment was anything but nurturing and student-friendly, and eventually killed my desire to work through it. "Nobody wants to work in a hostile environment. None of us can do our best if we work in constant fear of being criticized or yelled at for the smallest mistake."\(^{63}\) This sentiment is just as true in academia as it is in the workplace.

To this day, I recall two incidents from high school where an overbearing teacher’s hostility ruined my desire for improvement and passion for learning. In my freshman year, I had taken a required technical drafting class. One otherwise ordinary day, at the end of class, we turned in our assignments and prepared to leave for our next class. Out of the blue, the teacher’s voice boomed out of nowhere: "What kind of crap is this? You’ve got to be kidding, Gilmore!" Thanks a lot. Instead of taking the time to explain what I did wrong, this man went out of his way to embarrass the hell out of me, and all but wrote me off in his class (and for what?). Just because I (a lowly fourteen-year-old freshman) had no ability as a future architect (I already knew this). Needless to say (but I will), I just wanted to get out of his class with a passing grade and be done with him. It did not matter if I scored an A or a D—it was all the same to me. Thankfully, I did pass his class and I never saw him again.

The other indelible incident happened in my junior year. Another teacher was ripping mercilessly into this poor kid solely

\(^{63}\) ALLEGRETTI, supra note 13, at 121.
because he forgot to bring his engineering notebook with a special type of graph paper (called “quadrille”) to class. The teacher verbally undressed this poor kid for approximately fifteen minutes and never came up for air. I admired my classmate’s restraint and stoicism in taking the abuse. Had it been me, I would have walked out of that class and taken my F. I still shake my head at that incident. “Freakin’ quadrille graph paper!”

There are those who would argue that so-called “tough love” is not entirely a bad thing. I would agree with that sentiment, but only up to a point. I understand as well as anyone that there are specific academic and professional standards that a student or practitioner must satisfy in order to be successful.

Still, in my humble opinion, there is a thin line separating tough love from outright abuse. If the desired effect is to toughen someone up mentally for certain hardships one will face later in the workplace, and life in general, then tough love certainly has its place. However, when the allegedly constructive criticism serves only to humiliate and debase its intended target, and results in the recipient turning his back on any potential benefits the situation might otherwise have to offer, especially when the so-called “critic” constantly harps on the other person’s supposed ineptitude—then it is just pointless.\footnote{See, e.g., Laura McCallister & Stephen Mayer, \textit{Student, Allegedly Bullied by Teacher, Tries to Stop Future Cases of Abuse}, KCTV5 (June 27, 2013), http://www.kctv5.com/story/22709391/student-allegedly-bullied-by-teacher-tries-to-stop-future-cases-of-abuse (“She told me I would never amount to anything.”).}

In fact, I had initially decided not to go to college because I was that traumatized by high school, and I thought college was just more of the same (thank God it was not). Still, I cannot help but believe that there are situations where a student’s hopes and desires were at least severely damaged (if not permanently snuffed out) because of a bad incident or bad relationship with an adversarial, hostile teacher.

I imagine that a psychologically and emotionally defenseless child would be TERRORIZED by even the
thought of that sort of public display and humiliation. You can imagine the damage done should the child actually be forced, by the teacher, to submit to the public humiliation. Self-esteem would take a hit, their social network would probably crumble, and the effects would no doubt trickle out into the schoolyard in ways to [sic] innumerable to enumerate in this short article. Schools have a hard enough time dealing with bullying to begin with without teachers painting a target on a child’s back in this fashion.\textsuperscript{65}

Consequently, the constant browbeating, undermining of confidence, and overall negative reinforcement finally caused me to lose all incentive to continue, and I finally dropped out early in my fourth year. I decided that it was pointless for me to continue to attend classes only to have the usually hard-hearted teachers yell at me for trivial, really stupid reasons (along with their 1950's mentality of “learn this subject ... or else!”). And I was never going to learn anything useful or pass anything anyway. I really believe that I would have had a much better experience if somebody—anybody—would have taken the time to explain how most of these courses were relevant to everyday life. Thus, my spirit was completely broken in that place and I have not been back since. As the great Steely Dan song once observed, “and I’m never going back [t]o my old school.”\textsuperscript{66}

Even law students voiced similar concerns about the effect of a professor’s lack of humanity and common decency on the learning process.

Although the importance of teacher friendliness may be obvious, many students made it clear how detrimental to


\textsuperscript{66}STEELY DAN, \textit{MY OLD SCHOOL}, \textit{on COUNTDOWN TO ECSTASY} (ABC Records 1973).
learning it can be when their teachers are not friendly. Several students warned that teachers should not be "intimidating," "hostile," or "unfriendly and aloof." Another student said: "A stiff, cold, unapproachable personality makes someone an ineffective teacher." Yet another said: "Poor social skills inhibit learning in an interactive classroom." Finally, a part-time UNLV student said that "when the [professor] is unapproachable and barely human, the class is truly brutal."67

After my high school horror, I really enjoyed academic life in college, graduate school, and law school. This is because I had the freedom to pursue a course of study in accordance with my interest and ability. I was also allowed to successfully progress at my own pace without needless interference from the academic bureaucracy. It was especially crucial for me to have this kind of academic flexibility after my spirit-crushing experience in high school. This in turn brought me academic success, which eventually brought me to a successful career in academia (of all places).

2. The Decision to Go Into Teaching

**Gilmore:** As I mentioned, academic life was quite rewarding after escaping high school, and my time in law school caused me to think about the possibility of a career in academia. How did I know I could really teach? I would not know until I actually did it. As any professor can attest, teaching is really nothing more than taking a subject matter and being able to deliver it in laymen's terms where it makes practical sense to the students.

My professional station in life today comes directly from my great time in law school. Law school allowed me to become a big, fat, happy kid again. This was the identity that was ripped away

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from me during my angst-ridden accounting days. Law school also gave me the confidence to speak in front of an audience. It was this newfound confidence that led to the one incident that confirmed the belief that I could be a competent college professor.

In my second-year criminal procedure class, we had an exercise in which we were to make oral arguments before a mock appellate court. The assignment was an evidence suppression hearing, and I argued for the defendant who was accused of murder. My professor said that I didn’t need to put on a suit (I certainly would have if he’d said otherwise). So I showed up for the oral argument wearing my New York Yankees baseball cap, loud Bermuda shorts, a golf shirt, and I hadn’t shaved in about two weeks. I looked every bit the thirty-three-year old, burned-out, corporate escapee, ex-accountant that I was.

My opponent was ten years younger than me, fresh out of college, and was barely old enough to shave. Naturally, he showed up wearing a freshly pressed suit, looking every bit like Atticus Finch. At the risk of sounding immodest, I thoroughly destroyed him. While my opponent was rifling through his script every time the judges (selected classmates and my professor) asked him a question, I was firing back point-blank answers off the top of my head, with no script. I learned later that the judges unanimously ruled in my favor, both in terms of the legal analysis and my stage presence. From the professor on down, everyone in my class gave me rave reviews on my performance. In addition, the talk around the school for the next few days was how Gilmore, disguised as a ratty looking bum, completely undressed and outclassed the up-and-coming hot-shot face-to-face. That was definitely one of the highlights of my law school days.

Looking back at my time in college, graduate school, and especially law school, I know that the classes that were the most fun, and where I had the most laughs, were many of the same classes where I also did the best. Was I an honor student or

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68 To Kill A Mockingbird (Universal Pictures 1962) (Gregory Peck played defense attorney Atticus Finch, who defended a black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman. Peck won the Best Actor Academy Award for his performance.).
valedictorian? Hardly...but I was no academic chump, either. There is just something heartwarming about any teacher who can make a class fun and enjoyable, irrespective of the discipline.

In response to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey, students identified "humor" and making the material "fun" as specific characteristics they sought in an "entertaining" teacher. For instance, a Colorado student said: "Teachers that are funny, friendly, make sarcastic comments, etc. . . . are more real and it makes class more interesting which facilitates learning." Several others said things like: the "best way to keep students' attention is to try to make class fun or entertaining." "Be a dynamic lecturer" was another comment echoed by several students. "If a teacher is entertaining, knows the material and enjoys teaching, then learning is so much easier" nicely summarizes what many students value in a good teacher.69

In my own teaching endeavors, I merely stand in front of a classroom and tell funny stories all day about negotiable instruments,70 how ordering a number six from Wendy's becomes an express contract, how finding money is includable as part of the finder's gross income for tax purposes,71 or how drunkenly signing a restaurant check resulted in a valid contract for the sale of a farm.72 This works for me. I enjoy teaching and I have fun doing it. Most importantly, I'm reasonably sure that the majority of my students have fun with my in-class, Dean Martin-style comedy routine, and many of them have done well in my classes.

In the sixteen years that I have been blessed to know and work with Geoff, I have had the privilege of sitting in on his Business Writing, Sociology, and Speech Communication classes where his students' reactions are just comedic platinum. I've seen his students at their desks just crying and having convulsions (from

69 Levy, supra note 67, at 82.
70 U.C.C. § 3-104 (2002).
laughing so hard) from his witty one-liners and his dance steps across the room. When he sits in on my law classes, happily for me, I get similar reactions when I tell stories (fictitious—don’t panic!) about my pole dancing, prostitution, and insider trading misadventures...in addition to my day job...among many other tall tales. When we get together in class and let the zingers fly, it really lightens the load and spirits of our students, and helps them do well in our classes.

Over the years, Geoff and I have developed a definite reputation in our college as a fairly serviceable comedy team. Geoff is the rubber-faced comic, and I am the straight man. Our closest friends on the faculty and administration consider me to be Dean Martin to his Jerry Lewis (a very nice compliment) or Dan Rowan to his Dick Martin (another very nice compliment), or in some circles, Jack Klugman to his Tony Randall (also a very nice compliment). I am not sure if any of these comedic legends would be impressed (especially since Jerry Lewis is the only one still with us as of this writing) with a pair of nondescript misfits like us being compared to them, but we will address that in our next article.

We both believe in our hearts that our students’ successes and our having fun on the job comes directly from the fact that we truly enjoy what we do now, which is merely telling stories and having our students have fun, relax, and also learn something in the process. “My mission is to make people laugh, so that the travail of this earthly life doesn’t seem so hard to them.” I have been teaching for seventeen years (and counting), and I have been safely removed from the corporate world for the past twenty years. I cannot conceive of doing anything else now.

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3. Meeting our Calling: Loving Post-Corporate Life as Professors and Having Passion in the Classroom

**Gilmore:** At this point in my life, I cannot say often enough how much I love teaching. I believe in my heart that if one loves what he does for a living, it is not work. I am not the only person who has this mindset. The legendary centenarian comedian George Burns, when he was only ninety-five years young, voiced a similar sentiment in an interview with the Los Angeles Times:

> The most important idea is to fall in love with what you do for a living. That’s terribly important. Here I am 95 years old, and I got up this morning with something to do that I love. If you love what you do for a living, it works. A lot of people work and hate what they do, but I love it. Even when I was a failure in show business, from age 7 to 24, I didn’t think I was a failure. I loved what I was doing. I thought the audience was a flop, not me.75

Like any professional pursuit, one does go through some growing pains on the way to reaching one’s ultimate niche. I certainly did. It is similar to a professional athlete stumbling through an atrocious rookie season, but eventually plays well enough to win championships, to win league Most Valuable Player awards, and eventually make his sport’s Hall of Fame (former Denver Broncos Hall of Fame quarterback John Elway’s disastrous 1983 rookie season comes to mind).76

Although I have seventeen years of teaching experience under my belt, and I have confidence in my ability, it was not always easy for me to get where I am now. This was especially the case when I first started. The first course I ever taught was Accounting

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Principles I. For all of my knowledge and intellect (allegedly), I certainly did not have the aura of somebody who knew what he was doing, and it really showed in my vocal inflections that I was not the most confident person either. Addressing a college classroom was much harder than I anticipated, and I saw quite quickly that playing lawyer in a mock exercise and being a real life college professor were mutually exclusive.

I’ve found that if you give love to students, they will give love in return. I remember the first class I taught in law school. I was terrified of public speaking, and I can assure you that my first class began poorly. I stammered. I paused in awkward places. I said very little of substance. I was dying up there, but I found comfort in the smile and undivided attention of a student—a student who was smiling and being attentive simply because she was a nice person who saw that I was struggling on my first day. This student exemplifies how kind so many of our students are. I received very good evaluations at the end of my first year. However, upon reflection, I was at best a mediocre teacher back then.77

Luckily, I kept at it. “This means bringing energy to every class, as if you’re having a mortal battle with inexperience that you have to win.”78 One night halfway through the semester, as I was preparing for class, the Executive Vice President of my college stopped by and told me that I had really improved as the semester progressed. That really meant a lot to me, and was the turning point in showing me that I made the right career decision this time. I do not know what my teacher evaluations were for that semester, but they must have been good enough for me to get invited back for the following semester … and every semester since then.

I admit it … I am at a wonderful station in my current professional life. I love teaching Forensic Accounting, Business

77 Holm, supra note 62, at 228.
78 Id. at 226.
Law, Individual Income Taxation, and Corporate Income Taxation. When I am telling stories, I mean teaching, my work days fly by. In my Forensic Accounting class every semester, I always show the movie The Producers. This, in my view, is the single greatest movie about accounting fraud and it perfectly fits with the subject matter of the course (financial fraud). It also serves to bring home the point that there is very little disconnect between what goes on inside the classroom and what goes on in real life.

Geoff and I are blessed to work at a job that we truly love, as well as with an employer (our current one) that loves us back. It is amazing to us (even now) that we get paid, in essence, to tell stories and have fun all day. Our good fortune today reminds us of the classic line from the original Ocean’s Eleven, in which one of the co-conspirators who helped burglarize five Las Vegas casinos on New Year’s Eve remarked: “If it had been any easier, I would have been ashamed to take the money.” We believe that line perfectly sums up the joy that we and many others feel in doing work we enjoy and feel good about. “Teaching is fun, and when you have passion for what you do, you give it all you got.” No matter where my career pursuits might take me in the future, I have no doubt that I will be blessed to be a college professor for as long as God lets me live.

Smith: One way that passion manifests itself for me is in the classroom. When you are passionate about your career, job, life, and family, you do things without focusing on time. In my teaching, I have learned to be present, in the moment, engaged, and this translates into learning, laughter, and fun.

Teaching social sciences (Sociology, Marriage and Family, and Psychology) can be somewhat banal depending on the professor and their level of passion for the subject. Are you called to teach? Is this your passion? Do you like to work a truncated schedule and have weekends off? What is your passion?

79 The Producers (Metro Goldwyn Mayer 1968).
80 Ocean’s Eleven (Warner Brothers 1960).
81 Holm, supra note 62, at 227.
The answers to those questions are the key to finding your passion. In my case, I can bring my outside interests and meld them into my classroom activities. Depending on the course, I can use tapes by Bill Cosby, Andy Griffith or The Three Stooges to teach real life concepts. After twenty years of teaching college and graduate school, I believe students (adult learners as well) learn better when they are engaged, are having fun, and see the relevance of what’s being taught to their lives. In our classes, we tend to have excellent attendance.

As an instructor, I cannot control who my students are. I can, however, control my level of passion, commitment, and zeal. Passion, commitment and being zealous translate into better attendance (by the professor and the students). Better attendance generally correlates to better student grades, which is inextricably linked to better student retention.

In a nutshell, if the professor has fun and can operate well outside the parameters of the proverbial box, so can the student body. Students that show an ability to think outside of constraints can become future members of society capable of doing the same. Those same future members that can think differently can become corporate leaders, teachers, and mentors who find their passion and enable others to find their passion as well.

D. Smith’s Profound Question

Smith: I attended and graduated from Bernard M. Baruch College. I earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration, and it was off to corporate America. I accepted a position at Nestle Foods as a product merchandiser in the New York City market. Eventually, I went into sales and marketing and did work in the newly emerging Latino market. I stayed at Nestle for several years and eventually took a position at Coca-Cola in management. The hours at Coke were especially long. There were the requisite meetings, employee management, and entertaining of clients (often on weekends).
Many meetings included travel and often were scheduled to commence before seven o’clock a.m. It was very common to work fourteen to seventeen hours a day (six to seven days per week). I was armed with the corporate beeper, which meant I could be reached after working hours (keep in mind this was the 1980s). We had company fishing trips (where we discussed business), political fundraising dinners (where we discussed business) and a corporate basketball team (where we discussed—you guessed it—business). Do you sense a pattern here? I literally ate, slept, and drank business approximately ninety hours per week. It was virtually impossible to achieve anything that remotely resembled “work-life” balance.

I subsequently left the world of Coca-Cola and returned to Nestle Foods. I was recruiting, training, marketing, and selling. I also enrolled in graduate school and, as one might imagine, kept very busy. After doing this for more than a decade, I had an opportunity to visit my parents. During the visit, I shared a most-telling meal with my mom. Mom then asked me the most-profound question that sociologists and clinical psychologists will probably ponder for decades.

Over sandwiches she asked, “Who benefits from your work?” Thank you MOM. My initial response was “I do.” What a shallow, selfish response for someone who was raised to serve and help other people. Looking back, this was another stage in my journey. My ten years in corporate America, came with excellent salaries, benefits, cars, bonuses and tuition reimbursement. My wardrobe was professional and I was always well groomed. However, as I progressed in my career, a chronic sense of emptiness was prevalent. It took me a while, but I realized material things do not make you happy, but happiness comes from within.

Finding your passion is a manifestation of internal feelings that connect to outward actions and emotions. Passion stems from the right mindset, sacrifice and service to others. In the Bible, Jesus said, “The greatest among you will be your servant.”

82 Matthew 23:11 (New International Version); see also Matthew 20:26-27 (New Living Translation) (“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave.”).
Gilmore: That is a great question. In my wasted corporate life, my answer to that question certainly would have been: anybody BUT me!

E. The Next Step

Smith: I stayed at Nestle Foods, enrolled in night school, and completed my master’s degree. The degree exposed me to a new network of professional classmates and re-energized my career. I also developed a new way of thinking, especially in classes that dealt with counseling and problem solving. Ironically, the school I attended was called the New School for Social Research.

My classes were run by some very nice and interesting professors. The learning process was strengthened by the school’s Greenwich Village location. After earning my Master’s Degree in Management, I returned to my corporate day job. As a reward for my educational attainment, my supervisor gave me a double increase. I was 30 years old, educated but still unfulfilled. On my journey, I’ve learned that if something is trying to get the attention of your subconscious, it’s worth addressing. We are all marvelously created,83 and if something like an idea, a thought, or situation keeps presenting itself, do not dismiss it—it could be a link to finding your passion.

I eventually left Nestle Foods (after a merger) and moved to a series of consulting and marketing/sales positions. I remained active in my faith, my church, and my community. In essence, I took care of myself while I was still on my journey.

83 Psalms 139:14 (English Standard Version) (“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”).
F. Smith's "Beshert"

Smith: There are many Hebrew words that I love but none more than "beshert." It translates into your path or destiny. This word presupposes that we are aware that we all have an individual path or destiny. Often, all around us are clues to our beshert. As I mentioned earlier, so many people are preoccupied with their own lives, pain, and past regrets to notice the cues to their respective destinies.

As I was interviewing, I was contacted by a senior manager from an international grocery manufacturer about the possibility of being a manager in his corporation. The position had growth opportunities, travel, a car, and all the perks of corporate life. As he reiterated during our meeting, corporate life is your comfort zone. That is when I made the distinction that comfort and passion are generally mutually exclusive emotions. Just because you are comfortable with something does not mean that it's your passion.

The more he talked, the louder my instincts screamed, "No!" Towards the end of our conversation, I literally told him, "This is not my path." I was feeling that my passion was working in an educational setting. As dumbfounded as the executive was, he said he understood my logic. His line of questioning then shifted from corporate work to my then untapped desire to work in academia. Again, my only response was that I felt called to teaching; I never felt called to work in a Fortune 500 company.

Our meeting ended and he told me to call him if school does not work out (that was in 1992). I doubt he is still waiting to hear from me, twenty-three years later. Moreover, I thank God that I never needed to call.

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85 LEE GOLDWASSER, GREAT GRANDMA’S LAST HURRAH 58 (2011) (“My favorite Yiddish word is ‘beshert.’ It means something was meant to be. When you can’t explain a strange event, it’s ‘beshert’ that clarifies what you cannot see.”).
Smith: Approximately a week after our meeting, a neighbor asked me for a lift to work in lower Manhattan. During the previous week, my car was in the shop and I was excited to get back on the road. After dropping off my neighbor, I headed south in New York City for reasons that I still cannot explain. My “fixed” car developed engine trouble and started to sputter. I called the mechanic who told me to let the car sit for an hour.

Realizing that the car was a few blocks from the New School, I found a meter and parked. It had been some time since visiting my alma mater. I went in, admired the changes, and saw several former professors. That is when fate stepped into my life.

As I walked down the hall, a former professor stopped me. She told me that the graduate school recently received a grant to start an after-school program in an inner-city housing project. They needed someone to oversee this enterprise, and she was planning on calling me that week.

I interviewed on the spot (wearing a sweatshirt, jeans, and work boots). I accepted the position and was then asked if I would consider a full-time administration position at the graduate school. Again, I said yes, and became the Director of Career Development and Placement at the New School for Social Research.

In that position, I developed my counseling and listening skills, and this reinforced my desire to serve other people. As director, I learned just how few people are happy with their careers. I started doing one-on-one counseling sessions, which eventually developed into group teaching.

I was in that group teaching role for about six months when an adjunct professor quit about 48 hours before his class was scheduled to begin. Since I was already “teaching” small groups, my supervisor asked me if I wanted to teach. Keeping in line with my usual demeanor, I agreed without blinking an eye.

I developed a curriculum, got a textbook, and lectured. It was during that first class that I realized that teaching, counseling, and
sharing information was what I was put on this earth to do. I thank my supervisor to this day.

**H. Smith's Experience Counseling Rat Racers**

Smith: Throughout much of the 1990s, I was a career counselor and was frequently called on to assist people with their job searches. Many people looked at salaries first, titles second, and the position responsibilities at a distant third. This was the beginning of trouble for people. All too often, one takes a job only to find that he lacks the requisite zeal that will help him build and sustain a career.

As a career counselor, predictably, I talked to a great deal of burned-out, frustrated job seekers who also seemed to be miserable in other areas of their lives. Needless to say, they lacked balance between work, fun, and family.

Although I probably counseled thousands of individuals, one encounter comes to mind. I met with a middle-aged male who had spent the past twenty-five years as a mergers and acquisitions attorney for a large, respected multinational company. His job required him to travel seventy-five percent of the month at minimum. “John” was married, had two children, and was seemingly always at work. He missed most of his kids’ school events (concerts and conferences). As you might have figured, the years went quickly. Before he knew it, the children were out of college and he was in a banal, empty-shell marriage.

Like so many individuals, John traded a balanced life for a large salary, bonuses, and profit sharing along with an eighty-five-hour work week. He became estranged from his passions, support system, and community. Sadly, the law was not his passion or his life’s calling.

When I met John, he was meticulously attired and well groomed. During our initial forty-five minute meeting, he looked at his watch a minimum of seven times. Clearly, this man was stressed and preoccupied. On paper, he had an exclusive New York
City address, a self-proclaimed trophy wife, and a weekend retreat that he rarely used. Unfortunately, he appeared to be the poster boy for unhappiness.

After several meetings, I asked John, “What are you passionate about?” His rather dour reply was, “Quite frankly, I do not know—and that scares me.” I reviewed his resume, and nestled between legal positions, law review articles, and a plethora of corporate jobs, was a position teaching inner city children. We discussed this position and, for the first time, John smiled. He felt that teaching was a calling, but one that did not pay as much as a corporate legal position. His father discouraged John from teaching and felt that law was a noble undertaking.

Here’s the point: many people have found their calling or passion, only to be persuaded by others that they should redirect their efforts into more lucrative endeavors. That’s where we miss our opportunities. John’s passion (just like yours and mine) is that thing that he loves and would generally do for free. Sometimes your passion is disguised as a hobby, a volunteer project, or even some type of temporary crisis that gets our attention. Often, our passion or calling can be right in front of us, but we can miss it anyway. “A calling is something to be discovered, something that was there all the time but hidden, obscured, ignored. It’s like a vein of gold, lying undisturbed for centuries deep underground, until a skillful and lucky miner (you!) pinpoints its location and persuades it to give up its fortune.”

However, we get side-tracked by life (bills, relationships, education, and family commitments). Frequently, our calling is literally “calling” us, but it gets drowned out by stress and things that we invest time in that are mentally and physically draining.

Remember, a calling is a summons—you have to listen for it. It’s like the still, small voice of God that Elijah heard—words dancing on the wind, words you can hear only if you

86 Allegretti, supra note 13, at 62.
quiet down and rid yourself of the noise and busyness that clutter up your life.  

VIII. THE BENEFITS OF ONE'S CALLING

A. Helping those in need

I think that a person who is attached to riches, who lives with the worry of riches, is actually very poor. If this person puts his money at the service of others, then he is rich, very rich.

In our opinion, one of the many benefits of finding one’s calling is being able to help someone solve a problem. In fact, helping people in need has the same common denominator: one person has a particular problem, and that person consults with a specialist to solve that person’s problem. A sick person goes to see a doctor. A client with a legal issue goes to see an attorney. A couple with relationship issues goes to see a counselor. A struggling student goes to see his professor.

In the legal world, practicing attorneys enjoy their jobs precisely because they can help clients solve their legal issues. Several legal practitioners have expressed this very sentiment. Here is an example: “Most people who work for the government are there by choice…. No one is getting rich off of it. We have to have another motivation. I have a sense of accomplishment when a crime victim walks out of the courtroom, feeling like justice was served.”

Similarly, Karin Crump, the former president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA), rekindled her career passion in practicing law in a certain way:

87 Id.
88 MOTHER TERESA, IN THE HEART OF THE WORLD: THOUGHTS, STORIES AND PRAYERS 70 (New World Library 1997).
About the time when I was reconsidering my career choice, I began working on local bar activities in Dallas. I was first tapped to organize a teddy bear drive after the chair of the project moved to another city. Someone had to collect bears for the kids who were sitting in hospitals and shelters over the holidays. Then there was a book drive to benefit Head Start, a Habitat for Humanity home build, the DAYL Leadership Class and VoTexas, the TYLA high school voter registration project. By the time I started working on Junior Judges, TYLA’s curriculum project that teaches fourth graders about the rule of law, I was hooked. In the six years I have served on the TYLA board of directors, I have developed friendships with other lawyers who enjoy bar work and who similarly find passion in public service. I spend much less of my free time worrying about deadlines and more of it actually helping people and doing things that made a difference. My entire outlook on our profession has changed. Every time I work on a TYLA project, I am reminded of why I went to law school. Every time I walk into a classroom to present a TYLA project, I realize how respected our profession is and should continue to be. Every time I speak to law students, I am reminded of why ours is one of the noblest of professions. TYLA has renewed my faith in our profession and provided opportunities to do more meaningful things with my legal skills than I would have ever been provided otherwise. We, as young lawyers, are uniquely trained to provide service to others. By putting those skills to work, public service can and will help you remember why you decided to become a lawyer. Serving the public will help you find your passion.90

As professors, we experience this all the time. Students ask us for personal advice, career advice, academic advice, and the like. We are most gratified when our students ask us for

recommendation letters for employers, graduate school, scholarships, and yes, law school. As much fun as we have teaching, the true joy comes from seeing our students reach their academic, professional, and personal goals. This truly validates what we do.

B. Loving What You Do

Gilmore: Contrary to popular belief, and the literature that supports that belief, there are people who enjoy what they do for a living. I can certainly attest to that sentiment, and I have been on both sides of the fence. It is truly a joy going to a job where I know that my efforts will not go to waste. Does this mean that there is the perfect, no-stress (and no-office-politics) job out there where nothing ever goes wrong? Of course not. However, enjoying one’s job means that one is better able to deal with the occasional bad day. One is also better able to handle any other downsides that will occur once in a while. “But if your work is a calling, you know you’re in the right place, doing the right thing, and this gives you the energy and endurance to carry on in bad times as well as good.”

Part of my career satisfaction today also comes from the fact that I now know what I do NOT want to do. Although I have the academic credentials (I think) to rise in the legal or accounting professions if I wanted it, I realize now that I am not hard-wired for that type of lifestyle, especially now at age fifty. Even though I saw some of this during my accounting days, I will never again tolerate my further professional life as just one big deadline, sacrificed to the altar of billable hours. “Legal life lurches from deadline to deadline, as lawyers remain tethered to their offices with email, Blackberries, cell phones, and faxes. Although these

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91 Ecclesiastes 5:19 (New Living Translation) (“To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.”).
92 ALLEGRETTI, supra note 13, at 64.
developments have made it easier for attorneys to work from home, they have also made it harder not to.\textsuperscript{93}

In addition, I found it personally grating, and mentally exhausting, trying to justify every last thing (including my existence) to corporate managers and the board of directors. I was always dealing with a corporate mentality of incompetent until proven otherwise (similar to guilty until proven innocent). I always had the fear that I would have to confront this small-minded mentality if I ever wanted to practice law. And, if I wanted to move up in the ranks, there would be more pressure, more politics, and more stress. "For lawyers, escalating incomes come with escalating demands and have squeezed out time for family, friends, public service, and personal interests that would ultimately prove more satisfying."\textsuperscript{94} As the old adage says, "New Level, New Devil."\textsuperscript{95} I was not about to repeat that mistake and take that on a second time, no matter how good the money might have been. I am sure that I could have made more money if I had practiced tax law or maybe become a partner in the tax department of a CPA firm.

Even in academia, Geoff and I have no desire to become a department chair, a dean, or any other administrator. Nor do we want to sit in endless meetings and write management reports all day, every day. We know we are at a point where our efforts are truly appreciated by our students, our colleagues, and our college administration. That is worth more to us than any law partnership, CPA firm partnership, or any corner office. We also know that we have a much happier lifestyle today, along with career fulfillment. This is truly \textit{priceless}!

Geoff and I are both blessed that our teaching endeavors give us the chance to work with interesting people, the chance to write and publish, and, most importantly, the chance to do meaningful work that we enjoy. I do not know if we found our calling, or our

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{93} Deborah L. Rhode, \textit{Foreword: Personal Satisfaction in Professional Practice}, 58 SYRACUSE L. REV. 217, 225 (2008).
\item \textsuperscript{94} Id. at 226.
\item \textsuperscript{95} See, e.g., DAVID P. HAYNIE, \textit{Go Ye Therefore ... Down The Street!: Lessons From a Reviled Evangelist} 7 (West Bow Press 2012); JOEL OSTEEN, \textit{It's Your Time} 222 (Free Press 2009).
\end{itemize}
calling found us. Either way, we are tremendously happy with the result. We also know that we are right where we are supposed to be.

C. Having Fun with Like Minded Coworkers

In our teaching exploits today, one of the high points of the day is interacting with our fellow professors who have as much fun on the job as we do. A big part of the interaction is that we often get together and tell jokes and have laughs as we go along. We know that we are part of a championship team with one goal in mind—which is to help our students be successful in their classes, in their professions, and in their lives.

Gilmore: In fact, I told our department chair more than once that if we are the Yankees, then he is our Casey Stengel, Billy Martin, and Joe Torre rolled into one person. “We’re not doing it just for the money. We’re doing it for the laughs and the companionship—the joy of those moments in your practice that give you joy.”

I cannot overstate how having a few laughs can just lighten the workload. I believe that when one enjoys what he does, it is much easier to have many moments of fun and levity with his friends on the job. This, in turn, results in doing a better job because one is approaching his job with a light-hearted spirit. But, as already shown in the preceding pages, when the job is nothing but drudgery, tedium, and is just emotionally draining, then it is just plain hell on earth. “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.”

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97 Proverbs 17:22 (New Living Translation).
IX. CONCLUSION

Gilmore: Failure and I were close companions (not friends) for many years. I was a hopeless high school dropout. I was a miserable failure when I was an accountant. Many times, when I looked in the mirror, I usually did not see a success staring back at me. How did I go from all that angst to the joy I have today? I believe this is a function of God’s sovereign genius and the fact that God has a sense of humor. I believe that God had it all figured out beforehand that I would have to endure years of disappointment before I would be able to appreciate my success today. I cannot prove any of this logically, but I believe in my heart that my years of failure actually prepared me for the calling and career fulfillment that I enjoy today. God had taken my two greatest failures in life and turned them into a teaching career that I love. He really did return “beauty for my ashes.”

Smith: My father (Stanford Smith, Sr.) always admonished me to pace myself in life. He said that, in any relationship, the slower you go the more you will know. That has proven to be a sagacious statement, and it continues to be wiser the older I get. His pearls of wisdom are excellent metaphors for life. All too often, people rush from the start of the day until they literally drop from exhaustion at day’s end.

Pay attention to the following sentences and notice the verbs in each sentence.

- People jump out of bed and travel during rush hour.
- They run to meetings and grab lunch.
- They run home, often skipping dinner.
- They zip to their kids’ school, fly home, and pass out from exhaustion.

98 Isaiah 61:3 (New Living Translation) (“To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair.”).
Does the above sound like you? It sounds like most people in America today. Technology, especially the Internet and cell phones, tends to dominate the lives of many working people today. When non-urgent things control your life, you may lose sight on what is important. Losing sight on what’s important can have you miss your passion. Please, whenever possible, take a break or a literal “fast” from technology. This “tech-fast” can help you regain focus.

Another way to connect to your passion is to spend daily quiet time alone. I believe in the power of prayer, and I pray often throughout the day. Find a quiet location and just pray for guidance and direction. Use this time to reflect and ask for divine intervention on your passion journey. After that, write a list of things to do for your day. This helps set priorities and increases the probability that you won’t get pulled away from your goals. On your “to-do” list, build in some fun activities, such as taking photos during your lunch break, or taking a daily walk for 30 minutes to clear your head for the day. In addition, taking mid-week classes in areas outside of your profession can help re-ignite passion and expose you to new people, places, and ideas.

People can make a good living. People can enjoy what they do for a living. Best of all, this is not an “either-or” proposition. We have shown testimonials, including our own, that people can make a living doing what they enjoy. Reaching that station in life involves soul-searching, trial and error, and ultimately making that leap of faith. Finding your career calling and reaching career fulfillment is neither impossible nor hopeless. It is not a fluke. Keep the faith, and take that leap!