

Does Anyone Out There Know How To Give Career Direction To My Teen?

By Rodney Marshall

“My son desires to influence public life for Christ through a career in politics. Shouldn’t we confirm this direction before marching down a path which may not fit him?”

“My daughter loves the animals God created and wants to become a veterinarian, but my son has no idea what to do with his life. Can you help us?”

“Like his uncle, my son wants to become a computer analyst, but I think he is too people oriented to succeed in such technical field. How do we sort this out?”

“The work world my children will enter is more fast paced and variable than the world my wife and I entered. How do we assure they enter a successful careerpath”

“If my son is suited for pastoral ministry will a career assessment confirm this?”

Christian parents and educators seeking careerpathing assistance for their teens have asked me dozens of questions like these. While some youths know what they should do from the earliest years others approach high school graduation without a clue about their future. Stewardship of time, talents, and finances dictates approaching the careerpathing process intelligently. Passive acquiescence could result in costly mistakes. I recommend pursuit of a process of career discovery or confirmation that is biblical in its worldview, respects the nobility of all kinds of work and is technically well proven.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings to search out a matter.” Proverbs 25:2b. God has concealed a calling for each Christian teen. It is the honor of the teen to search it out and prepare to fulfill it by making wise post-secondary training decisions.

God reveals His unique design of a teen through his or her personality, and vocational interests, skills and values or work priorities. Examining all four of these factors using a comprehensive career assessment will reveal a unique God-given pattern. The Christian teen that finds a calling/career consistent with God’s unique design will produce the most good and exert the most influence with his life for Christ.

Let me show you what I mean. Jason and Megan graduated from high school, completed their post-secondary training and entered the workforce.

Personality: Jason is an outgoing young man with plenty of initiative. When confined to work in the next cubicle over from Dilbert crunching numbers and staring at gray partition walls, his youthful zeal and personal energy for life and work dropped to a record low shortly after graduation. He was grossly mismatched in steady, task-oriented work with little people interaction. Megan, a quiet, steady, conscientious young lady finds herself in a sales position that requires her to instantly strike up short term relationships with people of all types every hour of every day. Yikes! She did not want to rise in the morning and face the second day. Do these two lack a work ethic or were they mismatched in positions they were never created for? What if each pursued educational

preparation at a high cost in order to enter their respective fields? Why not figure this out before college? A thorough career assessment administered in high school would have revealed these personality tendencies and helped with the directional process.

Interests: Quickly realizing the withering affects of his accounting position, Jason transferred into the sales department. He knew he could succeed adequately in sales but his interests drew him to a management position where he could build a team for long term effectiveness. Megan switched to the accounting field because her previous boss told her it would fit her personality. She found it dry and meaningless and began to dream of work in a science laboratory where she could seek a cure to a deadly disease.

Skills: Jason worked his way into a sales management position where he could set his own goals, train others, and influence upper management with his ideas. He found his people skills well used mentoring others into success. After a period of retooling, Megan prospered in a lab where her sense of focus and detail rapidly proved an excellent fit.

Values or work priorities: Jason enjoyed his fast paced work environment where he could make many of his own decisions, take a few measured risks and be responsible for their success or failure. However as he refined his life goals a pattern of desire to lead a business with more direct impact for the cause of Christ emerged. The outcomes of his work grew in importance when he thought about the legacy that he would leave the next generation. Eventually he was able to take his giftings into the Christian publishing field where he grew sales and distribution of quality books and software to a growing worldwide market. He saw the impact on a regular basis that made up for the moderately lower salary expectancies. Megan quietly progressed until faced with the decision about whether to enter a Ph.D. program. Although qualified, she decided to wait on further education since the lab allowed her to work part time enabling her to raise a family. The doctoral program would have required a commitment inconsistent with the values she held with her husband for that time in her life.

Put the Pattern together: Putting the pattern together after entering the workforce presents challenges that don't always have such rosy results. Why not seek to discover the pattern in high school, choose appropriate post-secondary educational preparation, and ramp up into the right career field and position from the beginning. Begin when a student enters the teen years. The Youth Exploration Survey YES!, an appealing Biblically based early teen life and career exploration survey will help the Christian teen start moving in the right direction. Later the more sophisticated Career Direct Guidance System will provide direction or confirmation for high school juniors and seniors and college students before making or completing post-secondary commitments. If you choose these instruments they will support your Christian values while giving needed career direction.

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