

## **What if your job is your passion?**

**By Rose Jonas, Ph.D.**

You would want that, wouldn't you, especially since surveys consistently show that 70 percent of us are dissatisfied with our work? But is the issue really whether our job holds the passion promise for us ... or our life outside of it? It's more complicated than you might think.

A very unhappy client was a graduate student in music. Music was all he'd ever wanted to do, and he was educating himself accordingly. Why was he so miserable, since he was living his dream? What we discovered, in teasing apart his unhappiness, was that music-as-job was drudgery for him. He hated the hours of boring scholastic accountability, preferring to fly where his soul might take him. THAT was his passion: the soul aspect of music. He changed majors so music could stay pure and lovely to him. A business degree would help him get a job to sustain that flight.

A man in construction was bored and wanted a new career, something he could be passionate about. What we learned in working together was that he didn't have a passion around careers, period. Work was a means to an end for him. He was reasonably happy with his pay, job requirements, working conditions, and seasonality. What he LIVED for was his life outside of work — caving — and his job made that financially possible. He stayed in construction and followed his passion on weekends and in winter jaunts to Central America. He became a world-class caver.

A third example. Television is a brutal industry and not pretty seen up close. A friend is an executive producer at a network station. For decades she's lost weekends and sleep because of floods, church murders, and political conventions. She rises to the late-night phone call like a dalmation to the fire house alarm. While a dedicated mom, TV is all she's wanted to do.

Can you see the difference? The musician found his passion in spontaneous riffs, the caver in bat-inhabited holes; their jobs facilitated their passion. Who knows what heights (or depths) they can reach, approaching their joy in this way? The producer's passion for TV was in her bones. She tolerates any challenge or missed party because her work IS her passion.

The notion of passion is a complex one. Do you have passion for your career or does it lie with raising a family, participating in your church or community, being an amateur athlete, playing in a garage band, or writing a history of your people's struggles? You can hope for passion in your career AND the rest of your life, but you use a different model of how your passion gets nourished. You may have the will to pursue your heart's desire no matter the cost; you might have to delay it because other things come first for right now. The only right answer lives within you.

Here's the point: (1) Be as honest as the musician and the caver about where your passion lies for you. (2) Be diligent in discovering your passion, which is listening carefully to

your heart's song, a task that gets easier with practice. (3) Be realistic about what you pursue NOW. If the drive within consumes you and you have no barriers and possess the resources, GO. If you're like most of us who discover the passion at mid-career, there will be trade-offs and baby steps to reach the dream. You might have to go for something else today. (4) Nourish the dream, whether or not you can pursue it now. Life gives you more than one chance at this. I promise.