

Chapter 38

Choosing what to do has more power than studying what to do

In the 1930s the richest and most successful man in the world was Andrew Carnegie.

He would also become one of the greatest donors of money who ever lived, determined to give away everything he had by the time he died.

But it wasn't just money that he wanted to give away.

He wanted to give away his functional philosophy of wealth-creation. He believed anyone could attain the riches he had attained, and he said, "The world needed a practical philosophy of individual achievement which would permit the humblest worker to accumulate riches in whatever amount and form he might desire."

One of the central principles in Carnegie's philosophy was to "Have your heart fixed on what you want."

I call it the path.

Choose your path and put your heart there.

What is the service you want to provide? What is the product you want to create? What is your offering to the world?

"I don't know what I want to do," Barry said to me as we sat in my office in Arizona watching a dust storm start to blow outside the picture window.

Barry was suffering from a lifelong habit of feeling vague and indifferent. He believed that his definite major purpose in life would have to *come to him*. Maybe it would arrive in a waking dream or a spiritual vision. He was in his late thirties and the vision had not arrived yet. He was still waiting.

I suggested to him that he was dying.

I suggested that every day was taking him one step closer to a big, dark nothing.

This seemed to get his attention.

People are often hypnotized by a childish sense of forever. Like Barry was. They think things will eventually be given to them if they wait for eternity plus a week or two.

I decided to ask Barry a question that might wake him up further.

“Have you ever considered *working* for your vision?”

“What do you mean?”

“If you want a vision of who you want to be, what’s stopping you from *developing* that vision? Like an architect might develop a small community in a third world country? What stops you from crafting it and bringing it into existence yourself?”

He sat in silence.

Finally he stood up and walked to the window and looked at the dust storm. Life was happening outside. Nothing was happening inside.

Barry thought that was how it worked.

“I didn’t know you could do that,” he said. “What about all those people who have a calling? They just feel called to do something, like be a doctor or a singer, and they answer their call?”

Barry was like everyone who believes their childhood experience ought to never end. Things should just appear. Like in the womb, and in the months after the womb. Everything should be provided.

Just cry and it’s yours.

You didn't have to do anything other than occupy. Occupy your space and wait for what you demand. And the occupying you were doing was not actually "doing" anything; it was just being you in your space.

Barry wanted a calling or profession to come to him from simply occupying his own space in a soft chair.

If I was going to succeed as his coach I would have to have him see that the real magic is in what you *create*, not in what you expect to receive.

(Listen, Barry: Expect nothing. Create everything.)

"Why don't you *choose* a profession?" I asked Barry. "Why don't you select one, and then put your energy into it? As an experiment. Not because it's the right thing to do, but just as an experiment."

Barry looked puzzled.

"How would I know what to choose?" he said.

I asked him what happens when he goes to a restaurant and someone hands him a menu.

How does he know what to order?

"I just pick something."

"Based on what?"

"Based on what appeals to me, I guess."

"Based on what calls to you?"

Barry laughed, "Yes, I guess in a way it calls to me."

But for the calling to occur, don't you first have to *do* a few things? You have to read the menu. And reading isn't easy. Ask the forty percent of adults in Detroit who can't do it. It's not automatic. You don't just put the menu in front of your face and have the selections appear in your brain.

You have to focus.

You have to think.

Finally, you have to choose.

Those are three extremely important actions you must take before you can order any food.

These actions were the actions I wanted Barry to respect

and understand. They would be the same actions he would eventually have to take in choosing his work: focus, think and choose.

You don't receive your calling, you choose it.

For some people—maybe those whose recollections are intended to make them the stuff of legends—it may feel like they “receive” their visions, but even then they must choose.

Barry was encouraged to see his life as a menu. First he would focus, then he would think and then he would choose.

“Okay, I'm seeing this,” he said. And he actually looked energized. This happens with everyone who has been put to sleep by the ether known as “entitlement” and who then wakes up.

The new energy in Barry came from seeing his own power. He saw a glimpse of his ability to create. To do good work and *cause* things to happen.

“Now what?” he said. “How do I focus, think and choose a calling?”

I asked him to set that aside for now and tell me about his life. Who does he envy? Who does he think has a fun job? Whose work would he like to be “given”? What would be his least favorite job? What subjects in school did he like the least? What class did he look forward to?

We were starting to narrow things down and get a picture.

I told Barry about my friend Lindsay Brady (now an author and noted hypnotherapist). Lindsay had a similar crossroads moment when he, too, had no idea what he wanted to do with his life.

So he found a phone book in his house and he opened it to the Yellow Pages.

He knew his job, whatever it was, would have to be in there. So he treated the Yellow Pages like a menu and went through every page, every service, every profession, and circled the ones that looked most appealing to him. He knew intuitively that life and success were all about choosing.

They were not about merely wanting.

Barry's life thus far was a life of waiting and wanting.

No wonder nothing good was happening "to him."

Lindsay Brady narrowed his choice down to three things, airplane pilot, hypnotherapist (though he had no idea what that was all about) and beekeeping.

He is now highly accomplished in all three. People who talk about his success might even be saying that these things always called to him and he just followed his heart. Later the story might get better. People might say he saw his north star and climbed up onto his spiritual unicorn and followed the light into his field of passion.

But what he really did was choose.

And after he chose, he found out what action steps were needed, and he followed them. He stayed on his path, allowing only his purpose to guide him.

Barry's story also ends well.

Like so many people trapped in their own outside-in beliefs, he became happier and happier the more he worked and created an inside-out path. The focus of power shifted from the world (the womb) to Barry himself, the independent creator, the *cause* of his life's work.