

The PathFinder

*A Guide to Career
Decision Making*



Lee Ellis

Foreword by Larry Burkett

2 Understanding Your Pattern



To find your calling, you need to know something about the one being called—how God has gifted you for your calling.

Everywhere you turn today you hear about people who are searching to “find themselves.” This search indicates that many are missing something in their lives. We believe that the missing ingredients can be found only by *discovering your Maker, understanding how He has made you, and acknowledging His mission for your life*. These issues define the who, why, and what that give meaning to life.

It is this search for a mission that usually brings someone to examine these issues from a broad perspective—looking specifically at how you can personally discover something about your *mission*.



As an overriding principle, we can say that your mission is shaped by the pattern of talents and interests you have been given.

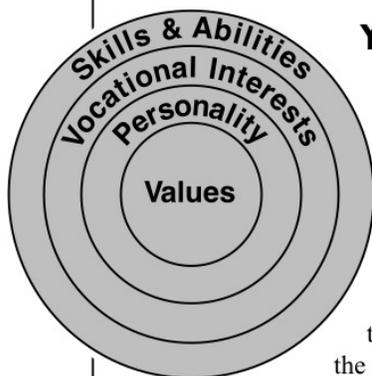
So if you understand your “pattern,” you know a lot more about your mission in life.

In *What Color Is Your Parachute?* (Ten Speed Press), the best-selling book on career development, Richard Bolles has included a section entitled “How to Find Your Mission in Life.” Bolles believes our missions are somewhat preset by our inborn pattern of talents and by the unique desires of our hearts.

The *Career Direct*® Guidance System is designed to identify these two major areas: the **talents**, which include your abilities, skills, and personality strengths; and the **desires of your heart**, as expressed in vocational interests and values. As you discover your “pattern” (see page 24), you’ll see that you are indeed “knit together” in a tapestry that is purposefully and wonderfully made.

“You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are your works” (Psalm 139:13-14).

If you are aware of your pattern, and seek to employ it in an occupation that honors God, He will bless you and fill your need to “find yourself.” You will then see how He is using you to be a blessing to others and a light to the world.



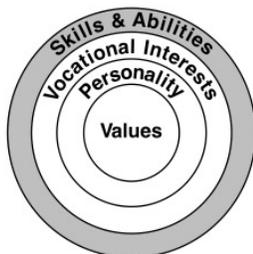
Your Pattern Has Four Major Components

Through research and experience, we have found four major identifiable parts to a pattern: skills and abilities, vocational interests, personality style, and work priorities and values.

For the sake of discussion, let’s use the analogy of concentric circles to explain the concept of a pattern.

As you can see, there is overlap between each area. In fact, we chose this concept to explain the pattern because each dimension is related to the others. Also, the concentric circles are smaller and more defining as you move toward the center. You can see that ultimately your values bring a narrow, but critical, focus to your pattern.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES



In the outer ring, which can be very broad, are **skills and abilities**. By the mere fact that we are human, each one of us has been given a broad range of abilities. For the most part, we all can communicate, use logic and reasoning, work with our hands, and carry out intellectual processes.

“As each has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

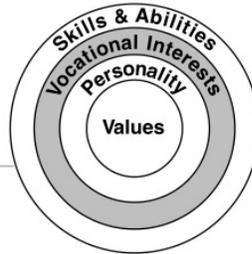
When looking at your pattern, however, you need to focus on the abilities and processes that are easy for you. These are natural strengths that allow you to become highly skilled or to learn specialized processes more easily than most people of your age and experience.

Pay particular attention to the abilities you have used successfully and enjoyably. Remember your play activities as a youth, and think about the processes in which you excelled. Look at your hobbies now; it is likely they use some of your strengths.

In reviewing these highlights, probably you'll see the same environments and processes occurring over and over. Once identified, these same activities or processes should be transferred into your work environment. In their insightful book, *Finding a Job You Can Love* (Thomas Nelson Publishers), Christian authors Ralph Mattson and Arthur Miller describe in detail the significance of these recurring "motifs" in our lives' successes.

► **VOCATIONAL INTERESTS**

Some job areas seem to appeal naturally to us, while others don't, and these desires of the heart are our vocational interests.



If we accept the concept that God gave us our patterns and our desires, it seems to follow that if we are committed to Him, then He has already written His will for us in our hearts.

"The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps"
(Proverbs 16:9).

Our role then is to follow His will and apply it with wisdom under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Vocational interest inventories identify the desires of the heart. With over 30,000 occupations in the United States, inventories survey only a small number of them; however, your choices are generally representative of the occupational groups that most appeal to you. You should identify career fields that appeal to you and then look at a variety of occupations within those fields.

What Level of Job Is Best for You?

An additional issue to consider when appraising vocational interests is the level of job you want to pursue. You may want to pursue a highly skilled job or professional level job. The decision you will have to make is how much training and education are needed and how much you are willing to pursue.

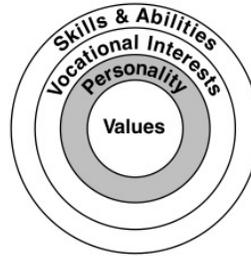
The amount of knowledge is expanding at an increasing rate in today's world. There is a growing need for a skilled, highly trained, well-educated workforce. We encourage you to get as much training and education as possible.

CHAPTER 2

“His banner over me is love” (Song of Solomon 2:4).

PERSONALITY (TEMPERAMENT)

As you move from vocational interests into the area of personality, you gain a more refined insight into both your talents and the desires of your heart. Personality includes both abilities and interests but goes even further—into needs. Your personal profile reveals many of your core strengths and struggles and, for that reason, it provides important information about your behavioral pattern.



Each of us responds to people and situations in a certain way. In a group, some people want to talk while some prefer to listen. Likewise, some people need variety and adventure, while others need predictability and security.

You work most effectively when you use your own personal pattern of strengths.



Knowing and using your pattern will be especially important to your work and career success.

Listed below are the six factors of personality measured by *Career Direct*. Each factor is portrayed across a range of possible behaviors, as in *dominant versus compliant*. Each point on the range has strengths and struggles. This underscores that there is no “best” personality type. Regardless of how God has created you, you have strengths to take advantage of. Some people who have mixed tendencies will likely identify with some of both characteristics.

Summary Chart of Factors

Mixed

Compliant			◆	Dominant
Introverted			◆	Extroverted
Detached	◆			Compassionate
Unstructured	◆			Conscientious
Cautious			◆	Adventurous
Conventional		◆		Innovative

The person in the chart above is dominant, extroverted, detached, unstructured, adventurous, and mixed in terms of innovative abilities.

Keep in mind that a personality mismatch between the individual and the requirements of the job is one of the most common causes of career stress.

As a general rule, you are more successful when you operate from your strengths. On the other hand, remember that strengths overdone can become major flaws.



To be effective, you need a balance of behaviors. Yet it's not easy to modify the negative aspects of extremes. One of the constant themes of Scripture is that of balance and sensitivity to others. It is the Holy Spirit who changes us and empowers us to act more Christ-like. The apostle Paul is an excellent model. Among his many personality characteristics, a study of Scripture will reveal that he was extroverted, adventurous, dominant, detached, innovative, and conscientious. After his conversion, these same attributes still describe him, yet his increasing love and humility were clear indicators of a Spirit-filled life.

The key is to discover your God-given personality strengths and bring them under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The best temperament is a Spirit-filled temperament.

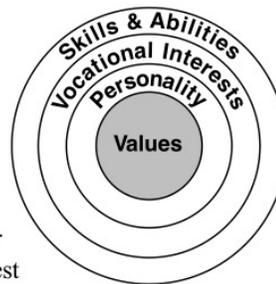
It's important to know our general personality profile and to use our strengths, but we cannot excuse the negative aspects by saying "that's just the way I am."

Day by day, step by step, we are to surrender our rights in order to be in total submission to our Lord. Then He can use our talents to fulfill His purposes on earth.



VALUES

The center of the bull's eye, and probably the most important of the four areas we are discussing, is values. Some areas of your work-related values will overlap with your skills, vocational interests, and personality. The area that deals with your life values, however, will be the acid test for your career decisions. Let me explain.



You could have two people with identical skills, interests, and personalities; yet one could be satisfied with a sales job while the other would hate it or even refuse to do it simply because of the values of the company or product. If the sales methods employed by the company were unfair or unethical, a Christian might reject the job while someone else became wealthy selling the product.



"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"
(Matthew 6:33).

Taken to an extreme, you could imagine that leading a street gang and pioneering a new company would require a similar pattern—except for one key area: values. Such extremes are easy to see, but most people face decisions in the gray zone where it's not so clear and the temptations are great.

We can't emphasize enough: *Be strict with yourself in the area of values. Rather than glossing over them, face up to them and make them a key criteria for your career decisions.*



You'll never regret honoring the values that have eternal and spiritual foundations.

You will find that your values will change as you go through life. Physical maturity, spiritual maturity, and changes in your circumstances will usually cause some reordering of your priorities. For that reason, you should periodically review your list and change your priorities as necessary.

▶ **DISCOVERING YOUR PATTERN FOR WORK**

The best method for career development takes into account your strengths in all four areas: work skills, vocational interests, personality, and values. These four dimensions define your pattern for work.

Each dimension makes a valuable contribution to your understanding of God's plan for your life. For that reason, it is a mistake to formulate career plans and goals and overlook any of the four dimensions. For instance, I have a high level of interest in playing golf. I lack the skills, however, to excel in that game, and it would be a mistake to attempt to earn a living at that endeavor.

Or, you may have personality tendencies, skills, and interests that would enable you to excel in the field of sales. Your values, however, may prevent you from selling products that are potentially harmful. Increasingly, we're seeing Christians make career decisions based on key values in their lives, such as respect for biblical principles and allowing time for their families.

To make wise, responsible career decisions, you must consider how your skills, interests, personality, and values all complement one another. We have found it helpful to refer to a person's pattern for work using the pattern being defined by the four areas discussed earlier.