

Dear Graduate: Do not follow your dreams

By [David Henson](#)

May 4, 2015

If memory serves, this month, as you are nearing graduation, you will be getting a lot of advice from a lot of well-meaning friends, family, and advisers.

Unfortunately, it's often a fair amount of bad advice.

For example, they will tell you to follow your dreams. And you will be tempted to do just that, to trust them as you always have, that seductive suggestion that the world is your oyster waiting to be harvested. While that may be true for some of you, the hard truth is that, for most of you, it won't be.

So please, on your graduation, do not listen to the suggestion that you should follow your dreams. It is the worst advice you could ever get upon your graduation.

Dreams are no longer what they once were. Today, they are merely clever coverings to clothe naked ambitions. In the pursuit of your dreams that you've likely held for years by the time you graduate, you have already poured yourself into a mold to fit your dreams. You've attended summer camps, maybe even at elite or far-flung institutions. You've tailored extracurricular activities to your specific dreams. You've focused your electives to reflect your interests. You've taken trips, shadowed professionals, and perhaps even subscribed to professional organizations as a student to show the seriousness of your dreams.

And, without anyone noticing—least of all you and your loved ones—your dream has become a prison. Because that's what happens to a dream when you fashion yourself into the shape of a resume.

Instead, I have a different suggestion for new graduates: Don't follow your dreams. Don't even trust them. They are too fickle.

Instead, follow your curiosity. Follow your questions, not your dreams. Follow them down any road or path or unmarked trail they might lead.

Follow the questions that burn in you, that keep you up at night, that lead you not to answers but to deeper questions.

And do not fear those questions. Or your curiosity. I believe those two things lie at the heart of our identities, of our deepest souls. Too often we bury them because we fear who we are, we fear looking at ourselves undisguised, without our naked ambition clothing our most profound passions.

So as you go forth a graduate, do not ask yourself what your dreams for your future are. Do not dream about where you will be in five years or ten. Ponder instead that burning uncertainty, that creative wonder, that unanswerable question. And wonder, not what you will be doing in five or ten years, but what questions you might be asking then.

Because if we follow our questions, we might just bump into ourselves along the way. We might just bump into God.

Of course, it won't be God in the form of an answer or an epiphany. Rather it will be God in the form of a question—a question so profound, so unfathomable, so life-giving it can't be anything other than God, or the union of you and the Divine, or that thin place where, to paraphrase [Frederick Buechner](#), your deepest longing meets the world's deepest needs.

It will be that question that can never be answered because it's not worth answering. It's the question meant to be lived. And in the living of it, that question might just lead to a dream, unclouded by ambition, you'd never even dreamed of.

*Originally posted at [Henson's blog](#)*