



CROSSROADS
career®

Hear God Calling You

*A Biblical and Practical
Approach to Discerning Your
Calling and Finding Career
Fulfillment*

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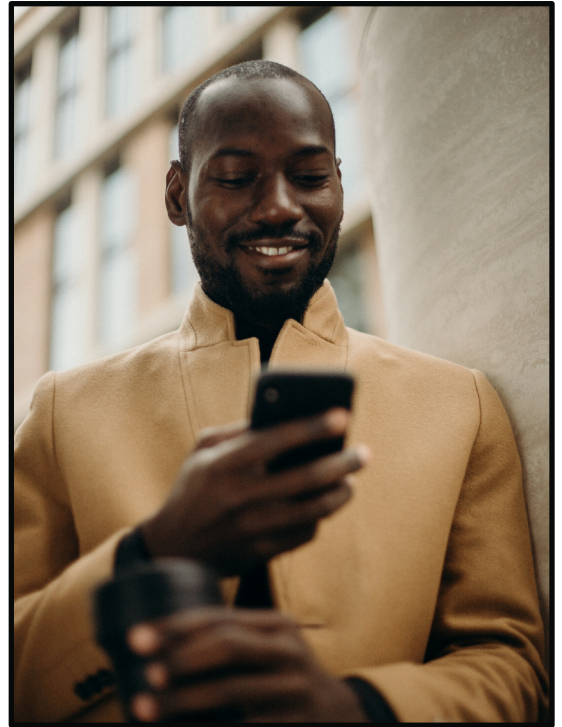
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Introduction

Since it began as a faith-based staffing firm in 1987, Crossroads Career Services, Inc. has been helping people find and follow Jesus Christ through crossroads in their careers. The methods of the ministry have changed over time, but the heart remains the same. Today, we are still educating, equipping, and encouraging people to hear God calling, maximize their potential, and get the right job.

For many of those 30+ years, our core resource has been the Crossroads Career Workbook, now called *You Are Created for Good Works*, which uses a 7-step process and plan designed to flesh out the “developing your career and getting the right job” portion of the Crossroads’ mission statement, with resumes, networking, interviewing and employment resources. And rightly so. We are now excited to be providing an additional workbook, which is more exclusively dedicated to the complex yet vital aspect of hearing God calling.

The Bible gives many examples of people hearing God calling. Moses hears God in front of the burning bush, where the great I Am called Moses to free His people from Egypt.¹ There’s Samuel in the temple, hearing a voice repeatedly, and finally learning to answer, *“Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.”*² Along the Sea of Galilee, Jesus literally called out to his first disciples, *“Come, follow me”*³ and they followed! Paul had a vivid dream of a man from Macedonia calling for help that changed his travel plans.⁴



From these accounts, we know that God can very clearly give direction to people’s lives. Even more remarkable is that God’s calling of His people didn’t just stop after biblical times. We believe that God still communicates and gives direction to your life today. It may look different, but as Numbers 23:19 says, *“God is not human, that He should lie, not a human being, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?”* The same God who called Moses, Samuel, Peter, and Paul is also calling you.

How To Use This Workbook

For a nuanced topic like hearing God calling, some crucial theological groundwork is necessary. But this is not a dissertation on every Scripture that talks about calling. Rather, this workbook is designed to be practical and hands-on. We collected strategic insights from pastors and theologians who have been writing for decades on this deep and critical topic. Then, based on what we’ve learned, we’ve outlined a practical and applicable process for you to follow. This workbook is full of exercises that ask you to think, reflect, engage, and act. If you want to put the rubber to the road, this book is for you.

The sections are deliberately ordered in a sequence, but you may find yourself following a different flow through the steps. Either way can work! Whatever order you approach these topics, we encourage reflection at each step along the way. We pray that our breaking down the process of

hearing God calling in this way will lead to more clarity in what can be a difficult or ambiguous journey. And we pray that you'll see the fruit of your work as you apply these concepts to your life.

Hearing God calling and applying it to your life is about progress, not perfection. We are talking about you getting closer to God, understanding your calling better, and living out your calling more fully. Like many things in life, calling is much more about the journey than the destination. We believe that you knowing God Himself is the ultimate destination. Every little step in the right direction is a victory. This side of heaven, no one is perfect.

Do you want to understand why you're here and what God wants for your life? Do you want to hear God calling? If so, let's get started.

As far as how to use this workbook, you can certainly work through it by yourself, at your own pace, over a period of time. To aid you in this, we have broken up the workbook into eight chapters, with some summary questions at the end of each section for your contemplation and then action.

We also highly recommend going through this workbook with a small group of people who are interested in this topic. You might gather a few friends together, or you might find some people in your church, who would help keep each other encouraged and accountable.

Chapter 1

***Where
to
Start?***

In light of Steven Covey's principle of "Beginning with the end in mind,"⁵ let's look at what you can expect from this workbook. We're going to progressively break down this simple sentence: Hear God calling you. First, we'll look at how to hear God, the one who is doing the calling. Second, we will examine what calling is and what it means for you. Third, we'll look at you—the special and unique way that God created you, with a specific purpose and calling.

The Calling Canvas: A Tool for Reflection

At the conclusion of this workbook on page 95, you'll find a tool that we have dubbed the Calling Canvas, complete with a picture frame as the focal point for your calling and purpose in the center. We created this resource to help you apply what you learn in our quest to "Hear God Calling You."

If you're familiar with the Lean Canvas or Business Model Canvas,⁶ this approach might look familiar. The Lean Canvas ideology is all about validated learning, which means you build, measure, learn, and then repeat the process until you reach a conclusion.

To help you through this process, we'll use a simple framework of investigative questions to guide us on the journey. They are the path that leads to the destination. When journalists are sleuthing out a story, they ask six types of crucial questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Likewise, to delve into the concept of hearing God calling and what it means for your life, we will investigate different aspects of your Calling Canvas using questions like:

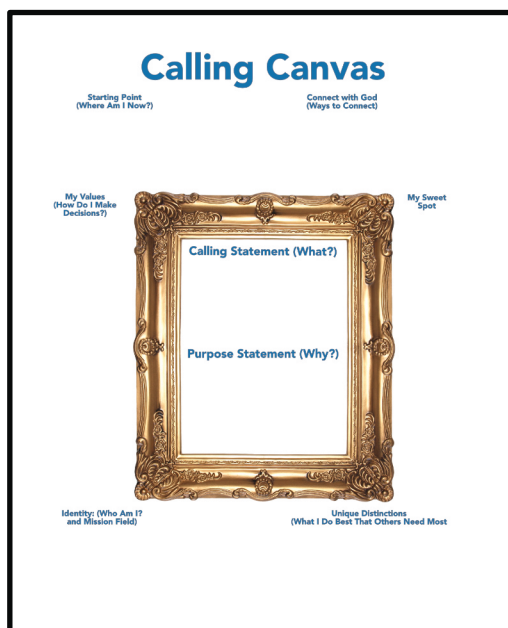
- Where am I starting from?
- When do I connect with God?
- Who am I?
- What makes me unique?
- How do I make decisions?
- Why am I here?
- What am I supposed to do?
- How do I stay in my sweet spot?

One of Crossroads' key verses is:

*"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."*⁷

As you fill in the Calling Canvas by completing the eight applications throughout the workbook, you're essentially painting a picture of what you've discovered about your calling as a "masterpiece" of God, one box at a time. When you leave this book, hold on to this one-page portrait of your unique calling that you've gradually filled in.

Maybe you will pin the Calling Canvas up on your wall in your office, or someplace you'll see it regularly. Maybe you'll come back and work through this process annually or when you feel you've lost your way. We hope it will serve as a reminder of all that God has done, and is yet to do in you and through you.



Hello! Who's There?

We're not talking about your mom, pastor or friend calling. We're talking about God calling you. Just like when you try to hear anyone else speaking, to hear God calling you have to be close and connected to Him.

Above anything else, God cares about your relationship with Him. He wants your heart, mind, soul, and strength.⁸ He wants you to be His, always and forever. Only after you discover Whose you are should you turn your attention to what you do.

Os Guinness, a noted theologian and author of *Rising To The Call* wisely says, "We are not primarily called to do something or go somewhere; we are called to Someone. We are not called first to special work but to God. The key to answering the call is to be devoted to no one and to nothing above God himself."⁹ So, the first part of this process will be about developing your relationship with God, so that you can hear and follow Him better.

Your Spiritual Starting Point

The starting point needs to be who God is and your relationship to Him, because the rest of the questions and answers flow from that relationship. If you aren't starting at the right place, it's hard to get to the destination.

People in Jesus' day had a similar question about where to start and they asked Him, "*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*"¹⁰ What they were really thinking might have been, "Hey, what is the thing we should focus on? What are we called to do?" These are still valid and relatable questions. Ultimately, Jesus replied to them with two great commandments:

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."*¹¹

Did you notice the command to love yourself in the midst of loving God and others? Starting with the fact that God loves us first, theologian and author Ken Boa describes the flow of love this way:

*"When you love God more completely, you see yourself more correctly, as His masterpiece, created for good works. When you see yourself correctly, then you are free to love others compassionately."*¹²



UPWARD
Love God
completely



INWARD
Love yourself
correctly



OUTWARD
Love others
compassionately

For years, Crossroads has described work in terms of the Upward–Inward–Outward framework originally found in the *You Are Created for Good Works* workbook. Your love should be directed upward to God, then inward to yourself as God's masterpiece, and finally outward to those around you.

Keep this Upward–Inward–Outward framework in mind as you continue through the rest of the workbook. Remember that when you are living out your calling as God intended, each of these areas should be fulfilled and healthy. God wants your relationship with Himself, yourself, and others to be full of His love.

Believing in the Caller

Maybe you're reading this and you're thinking, "I bought this workbook because I want to know what to do with my life!" and here we are talking about theology and God. Don't worry, we will get to the nitty gritty exercises soon. But maybe you're reading this and you are not sure that you actually know God very well at all.

We believe that in order to live your life to its fullest potential, you have to know the God Who made you and be in relationship with Him. Otherwise, the end result of seeking your own desires will be that your life lacks true purpose and fulfillment. If you never believe that you were created to know God, if you never talk to Him and find out what those plans are for your life, you're missing out.

The One who created the world and everything in it wants to have a personal relationship with you. He made it possible through His Son, Jesus Christ, who paid the price of death for your sin, the only thing that separates you from Him. By accepting this truth, you can have a relationship with the Creator of the universe—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—starting right now and lasting forever.

The Bible explains clearly why you need to be freed from the grasp of sin by believing in Christ Jesus as the One who rescues us:

- *"For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16)

- *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)*
- *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)*
- *"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)*

To begin following God in a personal relationship, we encourage you to earnestly pray this prayer:

Dear God, I know I am a sinner, and I ask your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe He died for my sins and that You raised Him to life. I want to trust Jesus as my Savior and follow Him as my Lord, from this day forward. May Your Holy Spirit guide my life and help me to do Your will. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

When you pray this prayer:

- Tell your family and friends who love and care for you.
- Seek people who believe what you just prayed and ask them to pray for you.
- Join a church that teaches, preaches, and lives out your new inward commitment.
- Make a habit to pray and to read the Bible and other devotionals every day to fuel and establish your belief.

If you already believe in God and have prayed this prayer before, take a moment to check in with God. Are you close to Him? Or does He feel far away from you? Consider praying a prayer like this as we start this journey together:

Dear God, I believe in You, and I've accepted Your Son Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. But I'm searching for answers right now when it comes to understanding Your calling, plan, and purpose for my life. Your Word says You already know these things. Help me see and hear clearly from You. I pray that You would remove any barriers to my understanding or obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit. I can't wait to see what You have in store for me. Amen.

Follow up your prayer with these next steps:

- Pray daily that God would take the lead in your life during this transition.
- Seek wise counsel from fellow believers for guidance and discernment.
- Be open to new ways to serve God's people.
- Remain obedient to Him always, trusting that He will provide for you.
- Focus on ministering to the people God has provided in your life, modeling complete faith in Christ.

Now that we've established the importance of knowing God and having a personal relationship with Him as the basis to hear Him calling, let's take a look at your current attitudes toward work, vocation, and calling.

Your Starting Point with Work

Keeping our work in proper perspective is as difficult as it is vital. It's easy to discount the importance of work, but equally easy to place too much of our identity and need for fulfillment in our occupation.

To see progress in an area, it's helpful to establish a starting point or baseline. Author and speaker Chip Ingram came up with five paradigms of how people look at their jobs.¹³ Read the following descriptions and see if there is one you identify with or that describes where you are right now.

Five Paradigms of Work

1. Freddie and Francis Freeloader
 - Work is evil. Avoid it.
2. William or Wilma Workaholic
 - Work is everything. Embrace it.
3. Ted and Terri TGIFerson
 - Work is an obligation. Endure it.
4. Evan and Elsie Evangelizer.
 - Work is strategic. Exploit it as a platform for evangelism and ministry.
5. Kent or Kerri Calling
 - Work is a calling. Steward the work that God's given you. Work is the primary ministry.

Which of these personas and paradigms best describes you? Which would others choose to describe you?

I think I am

Is there a different persona you wish you were? Which one do you see for yourself?

What would you need to do to see work as a calling from Christ? Ask God for help shifting your paradigm.

Is Your Vocation a Magic Show?

Read [this article](#), "Resisting the Temptation that our Vocation is a Magic Show" by Dr. Vincent Bacote, about what one man learned about his view of work from a theater production of Pippin:

"Our family went to see the revival of Steven Schwarz's musical Pippin as an early birthday present for my oldest daughter several years ago, who loves the theater.

Pippin could be described as "themes from the book of Ecclesiastes set in the time of Charlemagne." A group of players leads the title character through pursuits such as war, kingly rule, sensual delights, and others, all in the hope of finding deep personal fulfillment.

As seen in Ecclesiastes, all of these things fail to satisfy, even as the troupe performs all kinds of magic throughout the show.

At the end, Pippin is urged to perform "The Finale," which will be truly extraordinary: setting himself on fire in a great and spectacular act.

Pippin refuses and decides to live a mundane life with a widow and her son. The troupe's leader commands the entire stage be torn down, including the hair and make-up on Pippin, the widow, and her son.



The magic setting is gone.

As our family drove home we had a conversation about what it meant that the make-believe and magic was stripped away at the end of the show. There is a great, persistent temptation to treat our lives as a magic show where our vocations provide the fulfillment only God can really give us.

Society tells us we can craft a version of life where our work and hobbies deliver the deepest satisfaction of all. This is a counter-narrative to the perpetual sigh expressed in Ecclesiastes's refrain, "All is vanity."

As we encourage fellow believers to recognize the great truth that their work matters to God, we should be wary of suggesting work itself provides an eschatological type of satisfaction. As we embrace the fullness of our vocations before God, it is vital to resist a spiritualized form of idolatry leading us to treat work as a magical performance.

The point is not that we never experience enjoyment in what we do. Delight is not absent in Ecclesiastes or Pippin's pursuits, but ultimate satisfaction and significance remain elusive.

There are many articles about job dissatisfaction, leading me to wonder if part of the explanation is that the magic does not work as advertised—especially for those who put much effort into extraordinary acts.

Perhaps distress occurs because our work, though a good and proper dimension of our humanity, cannot bear the weight placed upon it.

The fact that we sometimes sigh even amid the sweet spot of our vocations provides a great opportunity for self-examination. Are we giving God alone his proper place? We can ask ourselves if we

are truly considering the ways we are tempted to create magical illusions with the practice of our vocations.”¹⁴

How do you view work? What has it meant to you in your life?
sdsdsdsadfadfsdfsdf

Like Dr. Bacote’s Pippin example, is there an analogy that reflects your attitude toward work? Write down that analogy here. What does it show you?
asdfasfsfasdf

Calling Canvas Application #1: Starting Point

In the Calling Canvas on page 95, identify the "Starting Point," which is an accurate assessment of where you are now. So, take another moment to reflect on where you are right now spiritually, in your work, and when it comes to hearing God calling. Then go write down your answer in the "Starting Point" box on your Calling Canvas.

Reflect and Review on Chapter One

Key Takeaways from Chapter 1

Take a moment to reflect on what brought you to this workbook. Are you ready to rediscover what "hear God calling" means to you? How are you feeling so far?

Did you pray one of the prayers included in the "Believing the Caller" section? If so, which one? What are your next steps?

The next chapter is going to reflect on several ways to deepen your relationship with God. Before you start chapter two, think about how deep your relationship with God is right now? Do you feel connected with Him? Circle on this Relationship Depth Chart where you feel like you are currently.

1 (very far) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (very close)

Chapter 2

How Do I Hear God?

When you are trying to hear from God, sometimes the communication is not clear. You already know how unclear communication feels in a physical sense. Maybe your phone call drops due to a bad signal. Or maybe the internet breaks up during a virtual meeting and your co-worker's sentence is garbled. Or there's background noise on the line and it's difficult to hear what your friend is saying. Communication with God can feel obstructed or obscured as well. Addressing issues of sin, disbelief, anger, stress and more can go a long way to "clear up the signal" as you seek to hear and follow God's voice.

Guinness speaks to the clarity that hearing God can bring, "Faith therefore means restlessness. The Caller may be unseen and the destination unknown, but those who follow His call have a voice above and a vision ahead that subverts every status quo and unsettles every resting place."¹⁵ Hearing God's voice is crucial to understanding and living out your calling. After all, there is no call without the Caller!

Ingram says that it's not a matter of whether God is speaking to you, but if you will listen. He says:

"I want you to know, God not only knows your number, He knows everything about you. He created you. He made your DNA. And so, He has a direct line not just to your body and your ears—He has a direct line to your heart, because you are fearfully and wonderfully made, and He made you and designed you uniquely. You are not off a mass production line. ...But, He's going to call and let you know what that purpose is. And His call will have an incredible impact on your life and on the lives of others."¹⁶

While you are looking for details about your calling from God, it is important that you are obedient to what God has already told you to do. This is not a transactional approach, this is a transformational approach. It's not, "if I am good and perfect God will give me what I want." It's relational. "If I grow close to God, I will start to want more of what He wants."

Listening to God

In his book *Whisper*, Mark Batterson, a prolific author and the pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C., describes the ways God speaks and how you can listen to Him. Batterson lists seven languages that God uses to get your attention: "The first language is Scripture, and it's the Rosetta Stone. The other six languages we'll look at are secondary languages: desires, doors, dreams, promptings, people, and pain."¹⁷

This emphasis on different languages highlights the fact that most people are not all particularly attuned to hearing God's voice, or accustomed to hearing it in the same way. Pointing out each of these ways helps us see where God might be speaking. Let's look at each of these languages in more detail:

- Scripture: "The surest way to get into the presence of God is to get into the Word of God. It changes the way we think, the way we feel, the way we live, and the way we love."¹⁸
- Desires: "If you don't know what you want, how are you going to know when you get it?"¹⁹ Looking to Genesis's account of God creating the world, Batterson writes, "God delights in what He does, and He wants nothing less for us. He wants us to delight in His creation. He wants us to delight in one another. And above all, He wants us to delight ourselves in Him."²⁰
- Doors: God may open some doors and close others. Either way, this is a way of God communicating His will to us. "One of His dialects is doors: open doors and closed doors. In a sense, this third language is sign language. Jesus warned against signs and wonders serving as

the litmus test of faith, but that doesn't negate their value when it comes to navigating the will of God."²¹

- Dreams: "If there is a biblical precedent for God speaking through dreams, why wouldn't we pray for the same experience? Maybe we have not because we ask not."²² God gave people dreams throughout the Bible; He can give dreams to each of us. God often speaks through dreams to show us, warn us, and encourage us. And, "Nothing keeps us on our knees like God-sized dreams."²³
- Promptings: "When God prompts you to pray, pray. When God prompts you to serve, serve. When God prompts you to give, give. God is setting you up, but you have to obey the prompting. And your obedience — whether it's praying, serving, or giving — might just be somebody else's miracle."²⁴
- People: "We all have a cloud of witnesses, and that cloud consists of anybody and everybody who has influenced our lives. It's our family and friends, coaches and teachers, and pastors and authors. To believe that any of those people are in our lives by happenstance is to grossly underestimate the sovereignty of God. He wants to use them to speak into our lives, and He wants to use us to speak into theirs."²⁵
- Pain: You'll "learn to discern God's loving voice in the midst of the pain. Is there a lesson He is trying to teach you? Is there some part of your character that can't be cultivated any other way?"²⁶

Looking at this list of languages, how has God spoken to you in the past? Which one of these languages might you start being more attuned to in the future?

Pray and ask God to speak to you in whatever language He needs to to get your attention. Ask Him to help you see and hear His calling. Use the space below to write down what God speaks to you.

Hear God More Clearly

Douglas Koskela, a professor of theology and author of *Calling and Clarity*, emphasizes the importance of attentiveness and obedience to God. “We will be well-served if our lives are immersed in worship and the spiritual disciplines. Such practices cultivate the habit of obedience to God — a habit that will be crucial when God leads us out of our comfort zone. As we begin, then, let us always keep in mind that attentiveness and obedience to God are at the heart of vocation.”²⁷

If you are not obedient to what you already know, what’s to say that you suddenly will be obedient when God’s calling pushes you out of your comfort zone or asks you to do something new? Jamie Ivey, a Christian podcaster and author of *You Be You*, explains, “Much too often, I think, people try to figure out what God has called them to do without spending any time with Him. We expect Him to reveal things to us even though we’re not really investing into the relationship.”²⁸ If you’re not hearing clearly from God, it could be because spiritually you’re far from Him, and drawing closer will improve the communication.

Koskela explains the role that spiritual disciplines play in hearing God clearly this way, “It’s vital to keep your channels of communication with God clear and open.” Specific practices and actions that get you closer to understanding and living out your calling are often referred to as spiritual disciplines. As we go through several in the next section, keep this in mind: The spiritual disciplines are not a method of transforming yourself, nor are they a way of guaranteeing a particular result. In them you are coming before a living God who is not accountable to your demands or your sense of timing. Instead, these practices are a way of creating space in your life for God to work. They get you in the habit of waiting for God actively, humbly and expectantly.²⁹

You’re literally practicing being obedient to God in the every-day things. You’re connected to Him and prepared to be obedient to him because you’re listening and ready.

Developing and Applying Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are tools and channels that help you connect with God in an intentional way. That’s not to say that if you fast and pray one time you’ll hear clearly from God forever. There are no sure-fire magical solutions here. No formulas. No recipes. Scripture tells us that we can be certain, however, that improved intimacy and relationship with Him often leads to clearer communication from Him.

So, what should you do? What are the spiritual disciplines to engage in obediently and attentively as you seek to hear God’s calling? The following section contains examples of seven spiritual disciplines and accompanying exercises to help you put them into practice:

- Reading Scripture
- Prayer
- Community
- Music
- Thankfulness
- Giving
- Fasting



Pastor John Mark Comer refers to Christians as “apprentices of Jesus.”³⁰ If you look at the story of Jesus as told to us in the Gospels, the life of Jesus included many of the actions or practices we are about to discuss. Can you think of anyone who heard from God more clearly or followed God’s calling more obediently and directly than Jesus? If we want the same for our lives, modeling our behavior on the way Jesus behaved will take us there.

You should think of God’s calling for you, “As an ever-changing cycle of listening, learning, and moving.”³¹ This is an active process, not a passive one. So let’s get started!

Reading Scripture

If you’ve been around Christianity for any length of time, you’ll have heard someone mention reading the Bible. There are many different approaches to reading the Bible, all of which are appropriate at different places and times. What we are suggesting you develop and apply here is not an in-depth study of historical, linguistic, or archeological facts. We aren’t telling you to read the Bible through in a year...although if you do, that’s great!

“A Bible that’s falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn’t,” said Charles Spurgeon.³²

Rather, we believe that Scripture is the main gift God has given people to know Him better. If you’re trying to hear God calling, you’ve got to know Him and listen to Him. Thank God you are not starting from scratch! You already have so many words from God that clue you into what He wants for your life. Spending time reading His Word, called the Bible, is key to uncovering God’s calling for you and to knowing Him better.

It’s just like what Chris Lewis, the lead pastor at Foothill Church in Glendora, CA, says, “If you want to hear the voice of God, read the Bible. If you want to hear the voice of God audibly, read it out loud.”

Koskela describes what reading Scripture does to both your knowledge of God and your knowledge of self:

But to read the Bible as a spiritual discipline is to read it as a means of encountering God and being formed by God through that encounter. ...People who dwell in Scripture know who they are. They see the relentlessness with which God has called creation back to God’s self. They taste the joy of responding to that call by grace. They hear the commission to live as active signs of the reconciling work of God. When your senses are engaged by this kind of meditation on Scripture, you are able to begin to recognize the specific role you might play in the broader story.³³

Developing the discipline of reading Scripture for yourself is part of what helps you to become a mature Christ-follower. It’s not enough to rely on hearing the Word from a pastor, spouse, or friend. You must engage with it personally.

Author and speaker Priscilla Shirer explains, “The enemy wants you to think that it is a seminary degree that is required before you can actually have a fervent, ongoing relationship with God. Where you yourself can open up the Word of God and know that the Holy Spirit can illuminate the Scriptures and give you guidance, direction, insight, clarity, encouragement, and comfort. He wants you to think that that kind of fervent friendship with God is only for certain people. Because he knows that as long as you and I are not convinced that we can hear a fresh word from God for ourselves, then at best we will be handicapped in our faith, because we will always be waiting on someone else to spoon feed us the Word of God, instead of knowing that we can have confidence in our friendship and relationship with God himself.”³⁴

Jesus himself read and memorized Scripture. He was a student of the Torah or Old Testament and was a Rabbi or teacher to his followers. Knowing God's Word was one of the primary ways Jesus learned the Father's will for His life.

Lectio Divina Exercise

One common Scripture-reading practice is Lectio Divina, which is Latin for "Divine Reading." It has its roots in monasticism, but in recent years it has been more widely practiced in both Catholic and Protestant circles. The focus of this method is less academic and more on relationship with God and hearing what He may be speaking to you through reflection and prayer.

Interacting with Scripture in a manner such as Lectio Divina fits with the approach that Koskela advocates: "Often, a good way to foster this kind of prayerful reading is to engage a text of a manageable size. I often encourage students to read "shorter and deeper," meaning reading smaller chunks of texts more attentively and expectantly."³⁵

Some descriptions of Lectio Divina use words that you might normally associate with food, which lines up with how the prophet Jeremiah described hearing from God, *"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty."*³⁶ So you might think about enjoying your time in Scripture like you would enjoy a delicious meal.

The basic steps for Lectio Divina are as follows³⁷:

1. READ a brief passage of Scripture – "take a bite"
2. REFLECT and meditate on the word or phrase that caught your heart – "chew"
3. RESPOND in prayer to what God called to your attention – "savor"
4. REST in God, contemplating His Word to you – "digest"

Other Scripture Reading Exercises

- Read a chapter from Proverbs a day. This book of wisdom has 31 chapters, one for each day of the month.
- Choose a passage to read every day for a week.
- Creatively engage with Scripture. For example, Bible Gateway suggests 14 different approaches to Scripture engagement, and can give you many ideas of creative or new ways to dig deeper into God's Word: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/main/practices>
- Use an audio Bible (such as the YouVersion app), and listen to a passage, maybe multiple times. See what, if anything, sticks out to you from hearing it rather than just reading it.
- Choose a verse each week to memorize. Have someone listen to you recite it.

- Journal about your Bible reading. One popular way to do this is to apply the “SOAP” Method, which stands for:
 - Scripture: what verse or passage did you read?
 - Observation: what did you see? What’s happening? What is God saying?
 - Application: how does this apply to your life? What should you take away and make personal for you?
 - Prayer: talk to God. What concerns you? What are you thankful for? What does He want to say to you?
- The Navigators suggest “The Word Hand,” which uses the fingers on one hand to remember 5 ways to approach God’s Word: hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating.
- Check out other Bible journaling approaches here: <https://www.biblejournalingministries.com/soap-method/>

What Scripture reading exercise(s) are you going to try this week?

Prayer

In its most basic sense, prayer is talking to God. But it is also so much more than that. As Mark Batterson put it: “Prayer is the difference between the best we can do and the best God can do. But there is something even more important than talking to God. What is it? Listening to God. it turns a monologue into a dialogue, which is exactly what He wants.”³⁸

“In [Christ Jesus our Lord] and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

Too often, Christians talk about their fears, joys, and needs with everyone but God. Your mom knows, your friends know, your coworkers know, your spouse knows. But you've never brought your concerns to God. George Mueller addressed this tendency when he said:

Often individuals profess to trust in God, but they embrace every opportunity where they may directly or indirectly be able to expose their need, and thus seek to induce persons to help them. I do not say it is wrong to make known our wants; but I do say it ill agrees with trust in God to expose our wants for the sake of inducing persons to help us. God will take us at our word. If we say we trust in him, he will try whether we really do so, or only profess to do so; and if indeed we trust in him, we are satisfied to stand with him alone.³⁹

If we trust God with our life, we’ll talk to him about it early and often. It takes intentionality to develop the practice of prayer. “Here’s the seven-word prayer that can change your life: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”⁴⁰

Making Prayer a Priority

Just like you have to set aside time to talk to your friends and family, you have to make a conscious decision to make time for talking to God.

According to Batterson, "Listening doesn't happen by default; it happens by design. You have to go outside the camp and build a tent of meeting. You have to seek solitude, seek silence. You have to ruthlessly eliminate distractions. And you have to turn some voices down or tune them out all together. Why not turn off the radio and talk to God during your commute? Or fast from social media for a season? Or take a silent retreat?"⁴¹

If you're wanting to make prayer a priority, Batterson recommends a simple equation:

Change of Pace + Change of Place = Change of Perspective

The equation works because "sometimes a little change of scenery goes a long way toward hearing God in new ways. So does doing something you've never done before. If you want God to do something new, you can't keep doing the same old thing. You have to dare to be different, and that includes listening in a new way."⁴²

Let's apply that equation now. How are you going to change your pace? What time are you going to use for prayer this week, and how are you going to use it?

How are you going to change your place? Where are you going to pray?

How did your time of prayer change your perspective? Are your thoughts or emotions different? Write down anything that changed. Did you "hear" anything from God? Write down anything you sensed or understood from your time with God.

It can be tempting to attempt to live your spiritual life in isolation. Yes, silence and solitude as you spend time in God's Word and devote yourself to prayer is vital. However, ignoring the benefits of fellowship with others can be detrimental to your spiritual growth and relationship with God.

Community

You miss out on so much that God has to offer if you skip out on community. Todd Wilson, the author of *More: Find your Personal Calling*, explains, "The good works God has called you to do will be multiplied and made more effective if you are surrounded by a community of faith."⁴³ If that's the case, then what kind of community do you need? Ivey explains her approach to community this way:

So when I talk about surrounding yourself with community, I'm talking about solid community. People who won't just pat you on the back, but will push you to think. People who won't just pay you compliments but will make sure you're hearing the truth, whether cheerful or challenging. People who are really there, in flesh and blood, right beside you in close proximity, not just advice givers on Instagram who can't really hold you accountable. And maybe most important, people from different age groups, different life stages, people who come at life from different perspectives and can shine a light on those things that tend to hide in your blind spots. Your church certainly ought to be a primary place for you to locate this kind of solid community. You need to be interacting with people who understand your big calling for making God known and bringing Him glory. But you'll find them in other places too, from family and friends to like-minded gatherings of other people.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Wilson expands upon the importance of church as part of building and being in a community. He doesn't just mean filling a pew on Sunday mornings, but rather an active and involved presence in the lives of others through church. He says,

Do you believe that the potential of your personal calling is connected to the fullness of Jesus in your community? That God's perfect plan for your life in this generation is about the fullness of Christ touching you and the people around you deeply? If so, then you need to be a vibrant part of the church. Forget preconceived notions for a moment; set aside your vision of "church" with any negative association. Just take God at His Word — the church is the instrument of the fullness of Jesus intersecting with us. When seen in that light, calling and church are inseparable.⁴⁵

Do you have a community already? If so, write down with whom and where your community is below. If not, write down three places or groups of people where you could start to build your community.

Music

If your community already includes attending a church on a Sunday morning, there's likely a portion of the service set aside for "worship." That's because music is a powerful and effective method of declaring truth about God. While there are many other things you do in life that are clearly "worshipping God," singing corporate praises set to music is one very common way to do this.

Sing to the Lord, praise his name;

proclaim His salvation day after day.

Declare His glory among the nations,

His marvelous deeds among all peoples.

For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;

He is to be feared above all gods.

(Psalm 96: 2-4)

If you're only worshipping God through music once a week at church for 20 minutes, you're missing out on the fullness that this practice has to offer. Find a song or songs that help you feel God's presence or remind you of the truth about God's character. Listen to the song, have a car concert, sing it out loud alone or with others, or hum it as you go about your day. See what difference this makes.

Some song suggestions:

- *Promises* (Maverick City, feat. Joe L Barnes & Naomi Raine)
- *How Great Thou Art* (Hymn)
- *The Blessing* (Kari Jobe)
- *I Will Follow* (Chris Tomlin)
- *Amazing Grace* (Hymn)
- *Oh Come to the Altar* (Elevation Worship)
- *Word of God Speak* (Bart Millard and Pete Kipley of MercyMe)
- *Ancient Words* (Lynn Deshazo)
- *Do It Again* (Elevation)



Reflect on your time spent with God through music. Did it make a difference? How did it impact how you view yourself, God, or your circumstances? How did it speak to you?

Thankfulness

Thankfulness is closely linked with worship and prayer. It is also a powerful way to frequently and deliberately turn your thoughts toward good things God has done.

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Make a list of things that you're thankful for and add to it daily or weekly. Say a prayer or sing a song to thank God for what He has done and continues to do in your life.

What are you thankful for? How have you seen God's faithfulness?

To take your practice of thankfulness one step further, say a prayer out loud but only give thanks. Don't ask God for anything. It's amazing to see how many people are used to asking God for things while in prayer, but how often do we only give thanks to God? Try this several times this week, either alone or in a group setting. Observe what different this makes in your perspective and prayers.

Giving

In addition to giving thanks to God for your blessings, you can also give to others from the possessions and resources you've been given.

The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy, *"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*⁴⁶

While some scholars and theologians would argue that verses like this address only financial giving, according to Koskela, "the spiritual discipline of giving refers to offering time, money and things to God by way of one's neighbor. ...At its heart, the discipline of giving is about God's work of orienting your priorities rightly. It functions as both a signal and a catalyst."⁴⁷

Giving functions as a signal, "By showing you where your priorities really are. If you pay attention, you will begin to identify those areas where you are prone to hold back from offering everything back to God. 'For where your treasure is,' Jesus said in Luke 12:34, 'there your heart will be also.'"⁴⁸

Giving also functions as a catalyst, "By making a commitment to give even in those areas that are particularly difficult, you open yourself to a new possibility. That is, you welcome the work of God in realigning your priorities through the very acts of giving."⁴⁹

Giving reminds you who is in charge in your life. Randy Alcorn, in his book, *The Treasure Principle*, explains,

The act of giving is a vivid reminder that it's all about God, not about us. It's saying I'm not the point, He is the point. He does not exist for me. I exist for Him. God's money has a higher purpose than my affluence. Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater Person and a greater agenda. Giving dethrones me and exalts Christ.⁵⁰

So, we practice giving to help keep our priorities straight. We give because Scripture commands us to do it and describes many promises that come with giving. Giving keeps us from loving material things that are temporal when we serve a God who is eternal.

Giving can take a variety of forms, as Koskela explains, "The thing to remember is the amount of giving does not matter as much as the commitment to give consistently in all three areas (time, money, and possessions)."⁵¹ Let's look at each of these areas more closely:

- Time: Volunteering your time to serve your community, a friend, or a local organization.
- Money: This could be tithing (giving 10% of your income) and offerings to your local church or donating funds to a cause about which you are passionate.
- Possessions: Things God has blessed you with that you can lend or give to others.

Fill in the blanks in this sentence: I am committing to give this (time, money, or possession)

_____ to (church/organization/person) _____

_____ consistently every

(time period) _____.

How are you aligning your priorities with God's priorities in your time, money, relationships, and possessions? What may have been barriers to this happening in the past that you should guard against as you move forward?

Fasting

While fasting is not typically everyone's favorite spiritual practice, it has deep roots in the Christian tradition and should not be ignored. It is mentioned many times in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments, especially in the context of humility, worship, or seeking God's will. For example, Jesus instructs His followers:

*"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*⁵²

What does fasting mean? According to Koskela, "the practice of fasting involves refraining from eating food for a short period of time to focus on prayer and self-examination."⁵³

Two caveats must be addressed when it comes to fasting, one biblical and one medical. Biblically, you should pay attention to Jesus's advice, which warns against using fasting as a display of piety rather than using the time to focus on God more clearly.⁵⁴ That means paying attention to your internal motivations for fasting and asking God to help you keep this practice in the proper perspective. Medically, "It is wise to seek appropriate pastoral and medical advice before practicing fasting for the first time."⁵⁵ Fasting can be incredibly beneficial, especially as a spiritual discipline, but if your body or mind isn't in a healthy place to be fasting, please put your health first.

So, keeping these caveats in mind, why should you fast? Fasting is a way of setting aside time that wouldn't normally be available for the specific purpose of prayer. According to Richard J. Foster, "More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us...we cover up what is inside with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface... Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear — if they are within us, they will surface during fasting."⁵⁶

If fasting from food is not the approach you need to take, consider fasting, as Foster mentions, from another "good things" type of habit. Choose something that takes up your time and which you enjoy. So, that eliminates laundry and dishes, for example! Perhaps you will fast from television, dessert, sugar, time on social media, hanging out with friends, video games, recreational shopping, etc. Use the time and energy that you now have free to pray, read Scripture, and spend time with God.

Fasting can be uncomfortable! Pay attention to thoughts and feelings that surface, and give them to God. Look for ways that you can gain a fresh and honest assessment of yourself and ask God to give you clarity about His purposes for your life.

Day and time I am going to fast: _____

How I am going to fast (food or another "good thing"): _____

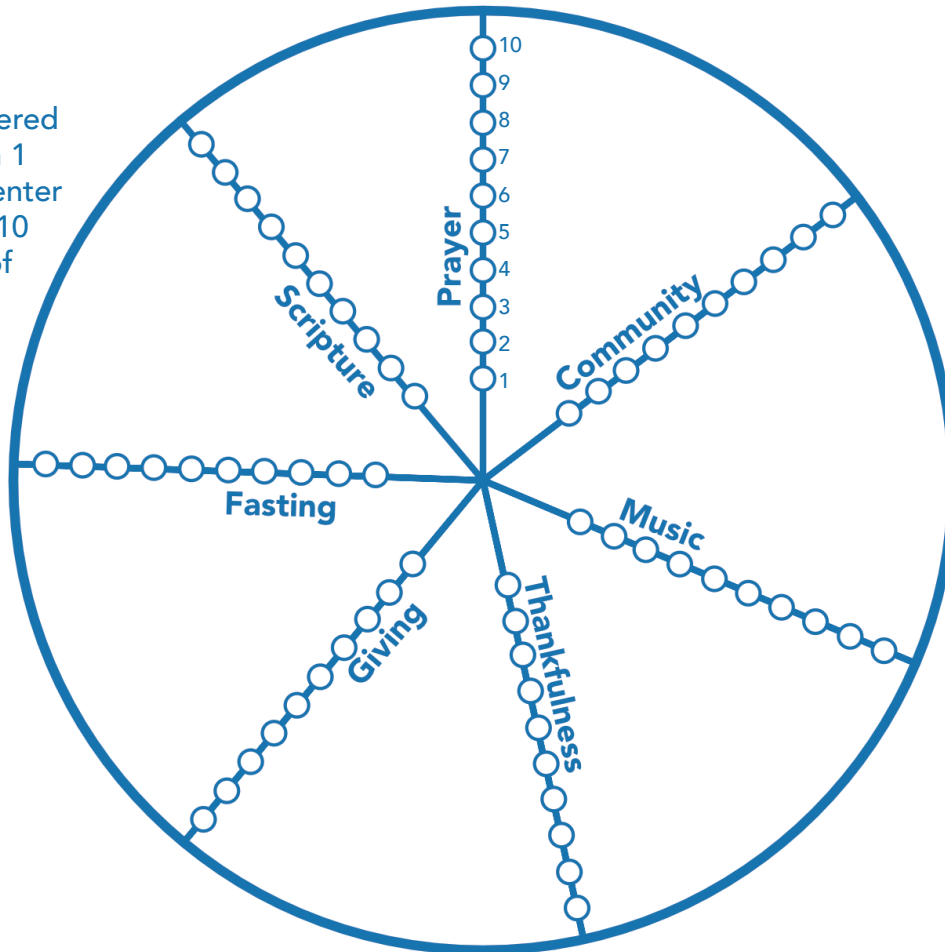
How did it go? What did I experience? What did I take away from my extra time with God through fasting?

Your Spiritual Wheel

Looking back at each of the seven examples of spiritual disciplines— Scripture, prayer, community, music, thankfulness, giving, fasting —take a moment to reflect on the strength of each one in your life, and why you would assess yourself that way.

Then rate each discipline on the scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being exceptional. Fill in the dot on the corresponding spoke of your spiritual wheel.

Circles are numbered from 1 to 10 with 1 being near the center of the circle and 10 being the edge of the circle.



Now draw a shape connecting the dots and take a look at the shape of your wheel. How well would your spiritual wheel roll? Is it even and strong all around? Or is it uneven—strong in some places but weak in others? Is it small and weak all over?

What steps will you take to strengthen your spiritual disciplines?

Putting It All Together: Take a Day with God

If you're looking for a great way to put these spiritual disciplines into practice or take your relationship with God a step further, consider taking a day with God. Again, you're following in the footsteps of Jesus here. Jesus would often take time away from his commitments and his followers to go up on a mountainside or a quiet place to pray.⁵⁷ Your day with God could be done many different ways, but here is one example:

- Set aside a date and time.
- Choose a place.
- Remove distractions, such as phone or internet access.
- Consider bringing a friend along for accountability who also wants to spend time with and hear from God. Jesus promises, *"Where two or three are gathered, there I am with them."*⁵⁸
- Consider practicing other disciplines such as fasting, worship, thankfulness, prayer, and Scripture reading during your day with God.
- Come prepared: bring your Bible and a notepad and be ready to listen and write.
- Listen to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to be near. Note anything you sense God communicating to you through His Word and His Spirit.

Calling Canvas Application #2: Connecting with God

Note in the Connecting with God area of the Calling Canvas (page 95) what practices you are going to use on a regular basis to stay connected to the Source of your calling.

Reflect and Review on Chapter Two

Key Takeaways from Chapter 2

Which of the practices in this chapter did you try? Did you take a day with God? What was the result?

Was there a practice that you found yourself unwilling or uninterested in doing? What was it and why? Consider intentionally exploring that one next.

Look back at the Relationship Depth Chart you made at the end of Chapter One, where you ranked your relationship with God. What number did you choose and why?

Now, circle where you want to be in your relationship with God?

1 (very far) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (very close)

What concrete steps (such as the ones listed in this chapter) will you take to increase the depth of your relationship with God? We suggest getting as specific and tactical as possible with your steps. Successful plans often follow the acronym SMART, as in "specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based."⁵⁹

Chapter 3

***What
is
Calling?***

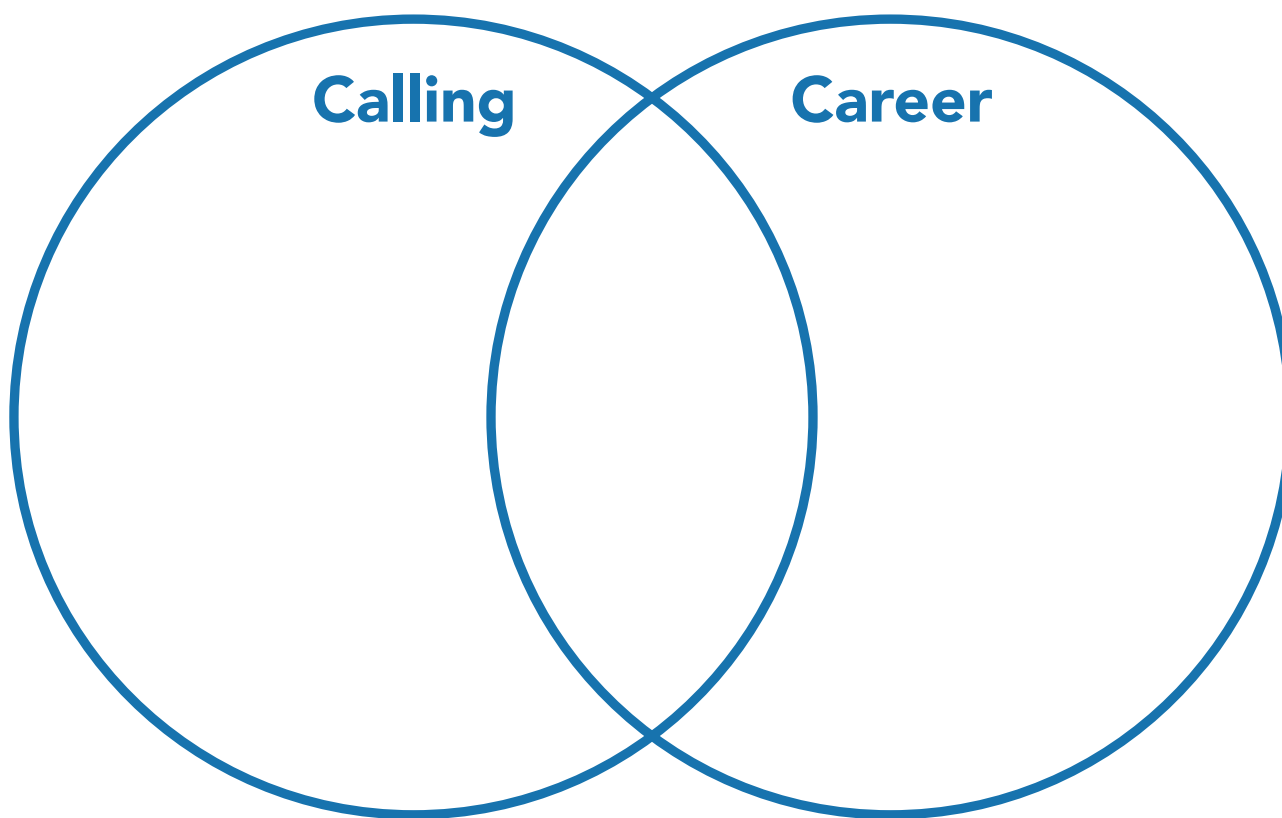
We began with your starting point, and discussed several ways to connect with and hear God clearly. In this chapter, we're going to dive deep into some terminology that thinkers, writers, and theologians have used over time to describe the nuances of hearing God and understanding your calling. So, buckle up for some definitions and big ideas in this chapter. Then, in the following chapters, we'll get to some more practical exercises to help you understand your identity, gifts, and calling better.

Comparing and Contrasting Calling and Career

Our first major distinction to address is, how does "calling" compare and contrast with "career"?

Pastor Chris Brown explains: "The moment you become a Christian, you have a new framework that supersedes your old way of thinking. There's a new job description for our life in Christ: 'you are here to reach others and have an impact.' It becomes that our career is what we do for a *living*, our calling is how we *live*. That means that, frankly, someone else can do our career. But no one else can do your calling. Our career is temporary, our calling is eternal."⁶⁰

Understanding the difference between these terms and concepts is crucial when discussing hearing God calling. Before you read the next few sections, write your own comparisons and contrasts between Career and Calling in the chart below:



What Does "Career" Mean?

Career can be defined as, "an occupation or profession, especially one requiring special training, followed as one's lifework."⁶¹

Or, as Timothy Butler, a Harvard Business School business psychologist, explained in an interview with *Fast Company*: "Career is the term you hear most often today. A career is a line of work. You can say

that your career is to be a lawyer or a securities analyst — but usually it's not the same as your calling. You can have different careers at different points in your life. A job is the most specific and immediate of the three terms. It has to do with who's employing you at the moment and what your job description is for the next 6 months or so. These days, trying to describe what your job will be beyond 12 to 18 months from now is very dicey."⁶²

The word career is never used in Scripture. Scripture does, however, refer to several occupations, such as shepherd, fisherman, carpenter, craftsman, prophet, king, soldier, tentmaker, or seller of purple. The concept of having a career has evolved over the past several centuries. To actually have a choice to pursue a line of work versus work as something that you are born into or are forced to do is a relatively new paradigm. Some additional definitions of job and career:

"A career is the pursuit of a life-long ambition or the general course of progression towards lifelong goals. A job is an activity through which an individual can earn money. It is a regular activity in exchange of payment."⁶³

"A job you do for others, while a career is what you do for yourself. People with a career orientation tend to have a long-term vision for their professional future... Those who experience their work as a calling are most likely to feel a deep alignment between their vocation and who they are as a person. They feel a personal and emotional connection to their work."⁶⁴

What Does "Calling" Mean?

"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

When it comes to calling, many words, concepts, and frameworks have been used over the years. Let's explore how a few authors and theologians describe calling.

First, a classic definition: "Calling is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to His summons and service."⁶⁵

The words "vocation" and "calling" are often used interchangeably. For example, Ingram said, "A vocation is what God calls me to do to fulfill His highest purposes in me, and through me, for His glory, and my joy."⁶⁶

The origins of "vocation" are as follows:

"If you look at the derivations of the words 'career' and 'vocation,' you immediately get a feel for the difference between them. Vocation comes from the Latin 'vocare,' which means 'to call.' It suggests that you are listening for something that calls out to you, something that comes to you and is particular to you. 'Career' comes originally from the Latin word for cart and later from the Middle French word for race track. In other words, you go around and around really fast for a long time-but you never get anywhere."⁶⁷

The origin of the word "calling" comes from the Greek word *kaleo*, which means "to call, invite, summon." It refers to a personal relationship with God and the good works He has prepared for you.⁶⁸ Other words that relate to calling in Scripture are "purpose" and "chosen."

Consider the way Butler describes vocation and calling:

Vocation is the most profound of the three, and it has to do with your calling. It's what you're doing in life that makes a difference for you, that builds meaning for you, that you can look back on in your later years to see the impact you've made on the world. A calling is something you have to listen for. You don't hear it once and then immediately recognize it. You've got to attune yourself to the message.⁶⁹

A calling has to be listened for. You have to attune yourself and listen. According to Pastor Brown, your calling is specific and is a combination of:

- Who you are
- What you have
- Where you are⁷⁰

Concerning living out your calling, Mark Batterson wrote: "It's not about what you do. It's about why you do what you do. Ultimately, it's about who you do it for. In God's kingdom, it's our motivations that matter most."⁷¹

Here are some Scriptures that specifically address calling:

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters" (Colossians 3:23).

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

"The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

"God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called" (Ephesians 4:4).

"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7).

10 Truths of Calling

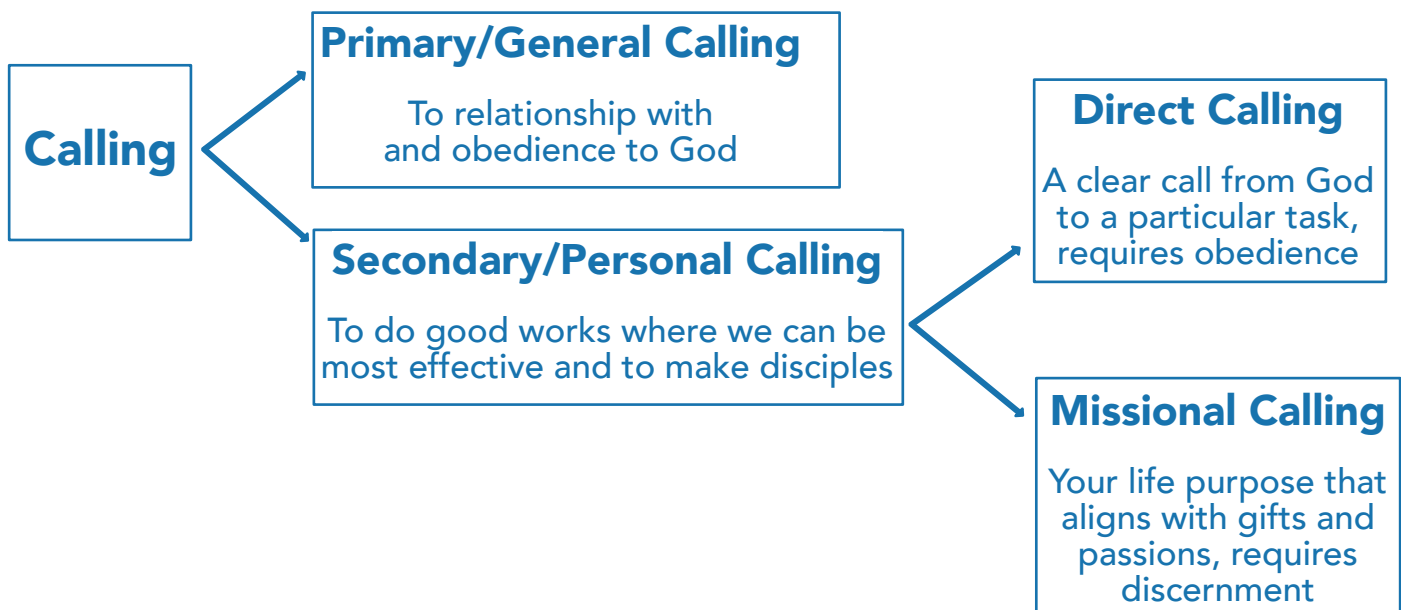
In his book *More: Find your Personal Calling*, Todd Wilson shares ten truths that lead to clarity of calling.⁷² These points show a progression from developing faith and trust in God to having a clearer picture of God's calling for your life. If you're interested in knowing more, we highly recommend reading his book.

Clarity of calling emerges when we learn to:

1. Trust deeply the author of our story.
2. Step forward in faith, even when we cannot see clearly.
3. Abandon the earthbound kingdom of me in order to gladly serve in the eternal kingdom of God.
4. Submit to the Lordship of Jesus.
5. Embrace our mission to carry the fullness of Jesus to every corner of society.
6. Live in common with a healthy, local community of faith.
7. Take personal responsibility for the unique role Jesus gives us.
8. Trust the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.
9. Be disciples of Jesus who make disciples where we are.
10. Fulfill our unique personal calling to play our role in God's mission where we can be most effective.

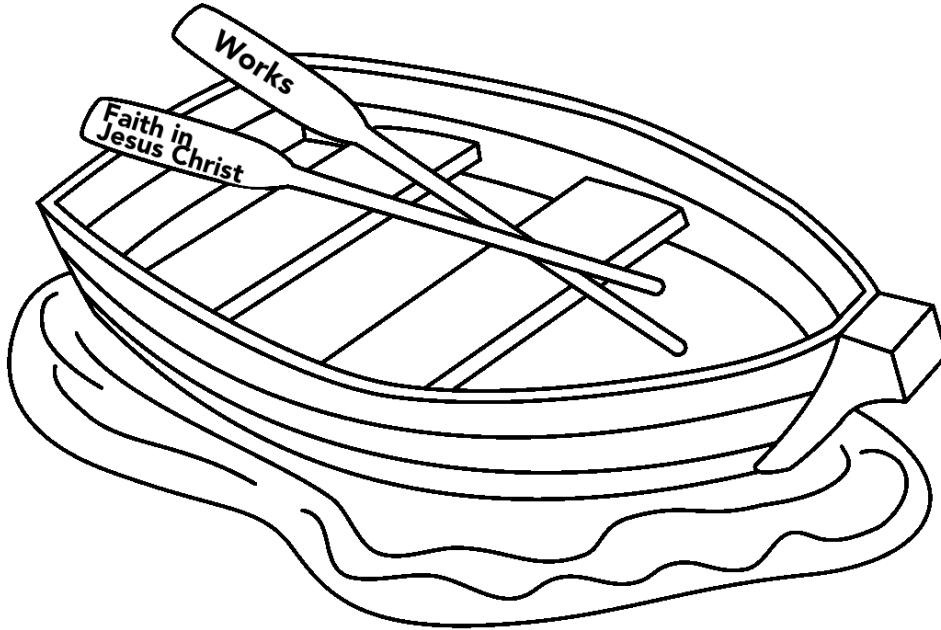
With these preliminary points in mind, we are now going to dig deeper into the meaning of the term "Calling" and what that means for you.

Defining Calling



Primary and Secondary Calling

Os Guinness divides calling into primary and secondary areas, as illustrated in the chart on the previous page. Your primary and your secondary callings work together like two oars in a rowboat (see illustration). If you are putting all your energy into one area, and not the other, you'll likely end up going in circles. But if God is working with you in both areas simultaneously, you will end up where He (and you) want to go.



Cotton Mather gives us a picture or model for how the two elements of calling should integrate. He says: "A Christian at his two callings is a man in a boat rowing. If he mind but one of his callings, be it which it will, he pulls the oar, but on one side of the boat, and will make but a poor dispatch to the shore of eternal blessedness. It is not only necessary that a Christian should follow his general calling, it is of necessity that he follow his personal calling, too."⁷³

Guinness says, "Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by Him, to Him and for Him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia). Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for Him."⁷⁴

"Secondary callings matter, but only because the primary calling matters most." Guinness explains. "This vital distinction between primary and secondary calling carries with it two challenges—first, to hold the two together and, second, to ensure that they are kept in the right order."⁷⁵

Within both the primary and secondary callings, according to Wilson, we have areas of identity, mission, and position:

Our general or primary calling is to be disciples who make disciples where we are! This element of calling is the fullness of Jesus flowing in us and through us to others.... Personal calling represents the unique, divine equipping God gives each believer to help carry the fullness of Jesus to the world....We simultaneously have the responsibility to use our unique giftedness, given by Jesus himself, to do good works where we can be most effective in taking the fullness of Jesus into every nook and cranny of society. [It] equips us to play a unique part in accomplishing God's mission in our community.⁷⁶

Similarly, pastor and author Andy Crouch writes about the three callings of a Christian: to bear the image of God, to restore the image of God, and to make the most of today.⁷⁷

In this first way of breaking down calling to understand it better, we learn that your primary calling is to be disciples, meaning to have relationship with and obedience to God. In comparison, your secondary calling is to use your gifts to do good works and to be effective at *making* disciples wherever you are.

Direct versus Missional Calling

Meanwhile, Koskela takes these calling definitions one step further when he splits out secondary calling into two distinct parts: direct and missional callings.

Direct calling is, “a clear calling from God to a particular task that a person may not be prepared for or want to do.” Direct calling is distinct because it “is generally apparent right away. The key question is whether we will be obedient to that calling.”⁷⁸

Direct calling is like Moses hearing God at the burning bush.⁷⁹ The only thing that you know for sure in an instance of direct calling is that it was clearly God telling you to do something. You might not love what he’s telling you to do, you might not feel equipped, but you know your marching orders.

Moses’s calling was clear, he knew he needed to obey, but he did not necessarily feel like he was up to the task. Moses progressed quickly from the moment of direct calling to action. But, sometimes even a direct calling takes a while to be fully realized. David was anointed by Samuel and told very clearly and directly as a teenage shepherd he would be a king, but then continued tending sheep for years while he waited on God’s perfect timing. He didn’t become King of Israel until he was thirty years old.⁸⁰

In contrast, Koskela defines missional calling as, “the specific guiding purpose God has given for [your] life that aligns with [your] gifts and passions.” He goes on to say, “a missional calling generally takes time, prayer, and the involvement of one’s community to discern. The key questions are what God is calling us to and how we might live that calling out in particular situations.”⁸¹

Joseph may have felt the pain of trying to discern missional calling. Even though as a young man he had prophetic dreams from God, it took many years for those dreams to come to fruition. In the meantime, he had to use his gifts and skills in each new situation where God placed him. He was talented—he could interpret dreams, had administrative skills, and God gave him success in his endeavors. But he also ended up enslaved and then imprisoned before becoming the second most powerful man in all of Egypt.⁸² If you asked Joseph in the middle of his story what his calling was, he could point you to pieces of the puzzle, but the end goal wasn’t yet clear.

Missional calling—that space where you’re holding the pieces of your life, identity, gifts, skills, passions, values, and so on—might feel like a puzzle without the picture, or a LEGO set without directions. It’s natural to feel this way in regards to missional calling precisely because it does take the most working out, discernment, and processing to discover and apply to your life. You have all the pieces, but what do you do with them? How do they fit together? What direction is God going with your life?

Understanding calling in light of both primary and secondary calling is helpful. “Vocational frustration often comes in those times when you have not yet fully discerned your missional calling and no direct calling is evident.” Koskela explains, “In those times, your general calling is actually a great gift, as it provides guidance for how you are to live in the present. However clear or unclear you may be on what the future holds, you know what God wants of you right now.”⁸³

Without the foundation of your primary calling to God, the process in the discerning of your missional calling is impossible. God has been abundantly clear about how He wants you to live in the area of primary calling. He's given you Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and so much more that reveal how to know God and do His will.

Jamie Ivey describes her approach of living life open-handed and obedient to God this way: "We are 100 percent sold out to where we are, and we are 100 percent open to wherever God wants us to be. Which makes for the best life of all. When you live out your gifts, talents, and passions 100 percent, you allow yourself to go and be exactly where and who God wants you to be. It takes the fear out of wondering if you're in the right place because you'd go there in a second if that's where he pointed you."⁸⁴

Calling Framework Summary Chart

In this chapter, we've referenced several sources of information that we've drawn from to understand how calling should be defined and applied. For your reference, here is a brief summary of the perspectives of the scholars, authors, and speakers we've drawn from and what they each have to say about calling.

	Primary/General Calling	Secondary/Personal Calling
Rising to the Call by Os Guinness	As followers of Christ... by him, to him and for him.	Everyone, everywhere, and in everything we should think, speak, live, and act entirely for [God].
More: Find Your Personal Calling by Todd Wilson	To be disciples (BE) who make disciples (DO) where we are (GO).	To do good works where we can be most effective in taking the fullness of Jesus into every nook and cranny of society.
Calling and Clarity by Doug Koskela	Scripture offers a comprehensive and compelling vision of God's desires for all people... you will find that God has been abundantly clear with regard to the kind of life God wants all of us to live.	Direct calling: to a particular task that a person may not be prepared for or want to do. Usually clear. Missional calling: the specific guiding purpose God has given for [your] life that aligns with [your] gifts and passions. Usually takes discernment and is not always clear.
Whisper by Mark Batterson	The goal of hearing the heavenly Father's voice isn't just hearing His voice; it's intimacy with him. That's why He speaks in a whisper. He wants to be as close to us as is divinely possible.	Ultimately, all of us need to find our voice...the unique message God wants to speak through our lives. But finding our voice starts with hearing His voice.
How to Land the Job of Your Dreams by Chip Ingram	The 5 P's of God's call 1. To a Person (Himself) 2. To a Purpose 3. To a People 4. Into a Process 5. To Different Places	Work flows out of a relationship with Christ (inward) to external activity that we do (outward) that impacts culture and community (onward) to the glory of God, and that is upward.

Reflect and Review on Chapter Three

Key Takeaways from Chapter 3

What's one thing you learned about calling from this chapter?

If you were in a boat with your primary and secondary calling as your oars, would your paddling be reaching your destination? Or would you be going around in circles? Where are you lacking clarity and what steps can you take to help?

Chapter 4

***What
is my
Identity?***

Your Identity

Often, as soon as we meet someone new, we ask them a series of questions to identify themselves. We don't directly ask them, "Who are you?" Instead, we use other questions to sort of frame out who they might be, like "What's your name? Where are you from? What do you do?" And sure, these facts are part of what help us get to know someone else, but they also only tell us so much. Especially in our present culture, it is incredibly easy to get one's career or job title all wrapped up in one's identity and sense of self. But that's not healthy, and can lead to some serious consequences. For example, if you have a job and it feels like your identity, you may tend toward workaholism. If you lose a job that was your identity, you might feel lost, depressed, or purpose-less. Besides that, it's a lie. You are so much more than what you do! Your identity is bigger, deeper, and more beautiful than that. In this section, we're going to look at two healthier ways to find and form your identity, which all comes back to the idea of being a *disciple who makes disciples*.

The 5 P's of Calling

As you consider how you could succinctly answer the question, "Who are you?", here are some perspectives that might help. First and foremost, your identity should be placed in the truth that you are called to be a Christ-follower and a beloved Child of God. You're a disciple—a learner or follower of Jesus. If you anchor your identity in this solid foundation, you won't be searching or shaken by circumstances in your life. This is a constant identity that never changes, despite other shifts in employment, relationships, or hometowns.

That brings us to this teaching by Chip Ingram, which breaks down the 5 P's of Calling into: a person, a purpose, a people, a process, and a place.⁸⁵

1. God calls you to a Person

Your first call is into a loving relationship with God, "Through the work of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit," Ingram says.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people" (Ephesians 1:18).

"God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

2. God calls you to a Purpose

Secondly, Ingram explains that God has called us to the purpose of Christlikeness.

"...Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

Ingram says, "He wants you to think like Jesus. He wants you to drive your car the way Jesus would drive your car, if He was in your body. He wants you to prioritize your time and treat other people the way Jesus would. The whole goal is that you literally, progressively, become more and more like the Son of God."

3. God calls you to a People

God calls you to a people, which means being an active and engaged member of a community. When you do that, "People's lives are changing because they're rubbing up against the Christ in you, and your gifts, and you're rubbing up against the Christ in them."

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1).

4. God calls you into a Process

"You will be about as holy as you want to be," quips Ingram when he explains that you are called into a process of holiness and transformation. This process relies on God's Holy Spirit and God's Word to bring you back into the image of God as was originally intended.

"For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

5. God calls you to a Place

It's easy to think that you cannot fulfill God's calling because of your position. That was the way the Corinthians felt when Paul was writing to them in this passage:

"Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

"Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them" (1 Corinthians 7:17-24).

These Corinthians were literally slaves, and Paul is telling them to not worry about their place or their position, but that they should remain in the situation where God called them.

Ingram says, "It's never too late. See, most of us, when we think about work and calling, jump to 'Am I

in the right place? Should I be in full-time Christian ministry, or not?' I've got news for you: You are. You are. It's just how you do it. God wants YOU, first and foremost."

When it comes to your place, you are to be like Ruth, who famously said to her mother-in-law Naomi, *"Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live."*⁸⁶ If God tells you to go somewhere, you should go. And if He tells you to stay, you should stay. But do not worry too much about the location of your calling, you can live it out wherever you are.

Thinking about these 5 P's, ponder how being called to the person of God transforms your perspective on the people and place that surrounds you. What did you learn about the process and the purpose to which you're called?

The 6th "P"—What's your Passion?

The Mad, Sad, Glad Exercise

We have one more "P" to add to this conversation, and that's passion. Passion includes our God-given desires that spur us into action. In this exercise, practice paying attention to emotional cues, which can help you find what you are passionate about.

Sometimes desire gets a bad reputation, but as author Emily Freeman says, "Desire is only toxic when we demand our desires be satisfied on our terms and in our timing. Knowing what we want and getting what we want are not necessarily the same thing."⁸⁷

Meanwhile, Batterson says that God speaks to us through our emotions: "Our hearts should break for the things that break the heart of God, but they should also skip a beat. Whether it's the voice of sadness, anger, or gladness, don't ignore those emotions. God is speaking to you through them."⁸⁸

So, what makes you mad, sad, or glad? Or as career coach Joe Colavito puts it, "What disturbs you?"

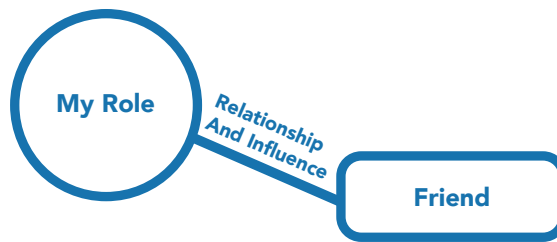
What makes you mad? What disturbs you?	
What makes you glad? What delights you?	
What makes you sad? What disappoints you?	

How might God be speaking to you through each of these emotional cues? What action might you take based on what you discovered here? Those things that make you passionate inform to whom and where you're called, and are part of what make you unique.

Mapping Your Mission Field

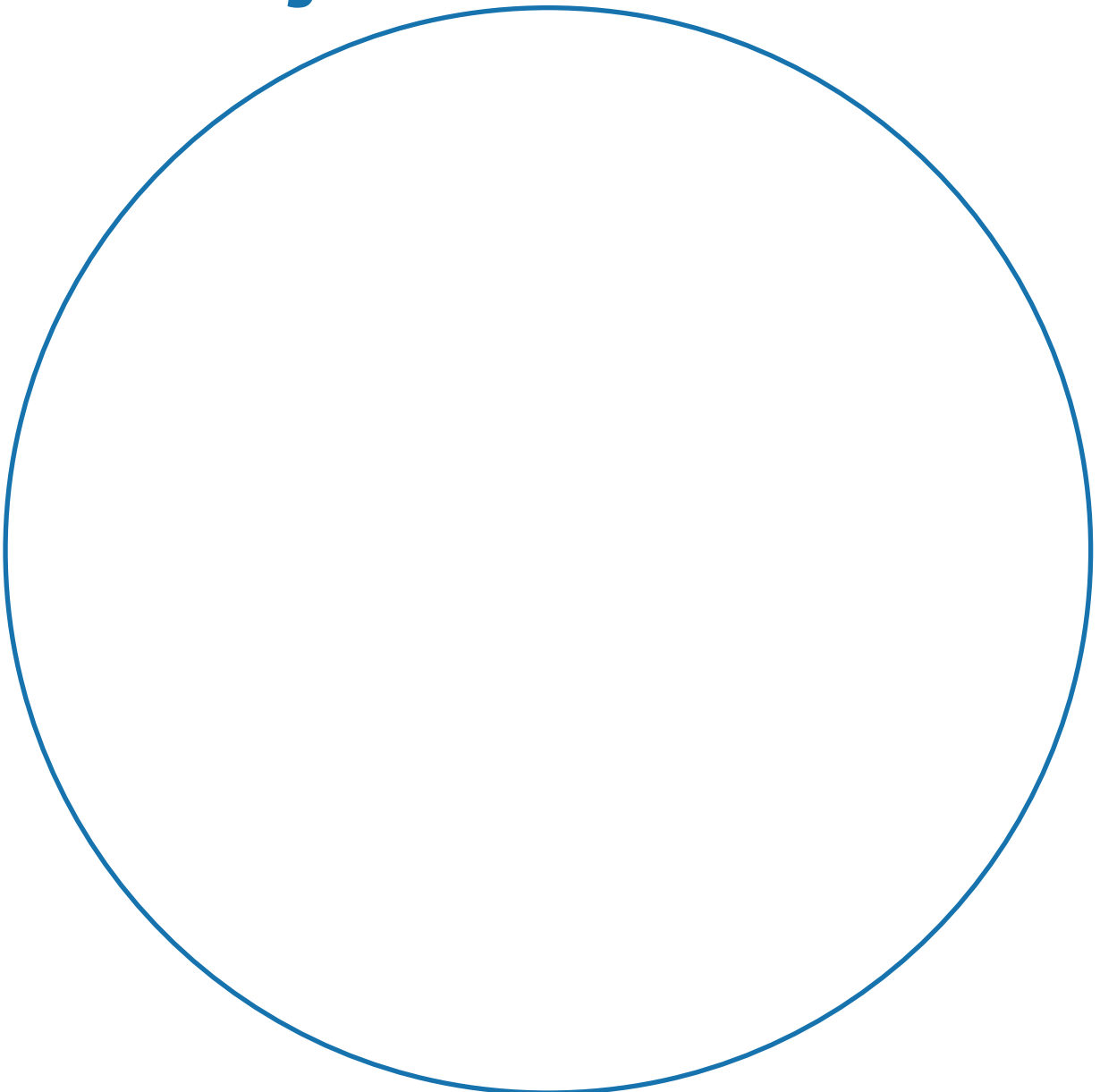
The second area of identity to examine is how you view the roles and relationships God gives you. Each of us have many roles and spheres of influence in our lives that give us the opportunity to reach others with the glory of God and His kingdom. As we're told in Matthew 28:19, we are to make disciples "as we go" (more proper Greek translation) through our lives, not just our traditional thinking of picking a spot to evangelize. For you, that could be as a spouse, sibling, child, parent, uncle or aunt, boss, coworker, frequent customer, friend, teammate, coach, and so on. Let's map out what your mission field looks like, using an exercise created by Todd Wilson.⁸⁹ These relationships are our best opportunities to "go and make disciples" as Jesus commanded us.

- In the circle on the next page, write all the titles and roles you currently play in your life. Draw a circle around each of these roles.
- Then, surrounding each role and title, draw lines and add the names of specific people you have the opportunity to relationally influence because of that role. Each line is a relationship.



- Now, think creatively about any new roles or titles you don't currently have, but could take on that would strategically give you access to relational influence. Add those to your mission field map as well.
- Take some time to consider this map. Pray over it and come back to add to it as current or future roles and relationships come to you.
- This map represents your current mission field. Many people will end up with over 50 names to consider! Use it to discover and consider specific opportunities to engage.

My Mission Field



Digging Deeper into Missional Calling

Your missional calling means that you need to be aware of the relational aspect of what God wants for your life and pay attention to how it weaves into His plan for you. Ultimately, God wants all people to know and follow Him. According to Wilson, your calling has an implication for what you should BE, what you should DO, and where you should GO. In his words, calling is the same for everyone who is a Christ follower, and is as follows: "I am a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples wherever I am!"⁹⁰

When you deny yourself and give your life to God, you become part of a greater family of believers called to love Him, love one another, and pursue good work. Calling looks different for everyone because of the unique gifts God gives to each person. However, the overarching principle to which each individual's calling aligns is to love God and love others. To be a disciple who makes disciples.

In some ways, understanding your missional calling takes discernment and may be an unclear process. At the same time, it is very simple: you're supposed to do what you do best where it's needed most, doing it all for the glory of God and for the purpose of drawing as many people as possible close to Him. This is simultaneously the easiest and most complicated job description you'll ever have.

Mark Batterson explains where your priorities should be like this: "In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus revealed a supernatural sequence that is inviolable. He said, *'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.'* I'm afraid many of us read this backward. We want everything the world has to offer, and then we'll seek God. But that isn't the way it works. You can't seek God second or third or tenth and expect Him to give you the desires of your heart."⁹¹

Deputized as a Full-Time Christian

Your missional calling isn't a part-time gig, either. Chip Ingram tells a great story about a speaking engagement where he was preaching about people being full-time Christians in their lives and workplaces. In a humorous but powerful moment, he "deputized" everyone. He had them all stand up, and said, "I 'are' the spiritual sheriff, and I now make you deputized. You are full-time Christian workers in the body of Christ."⁹²

Then Ingram continued sharing about what he meant by being deputized as a full-time Christian, living out your faith in the workplace and at home, not just at church. He explains:

God called you, as much as He called me, to fulfill the Great Commission. And you have a vineyard... your neighborhood and your job site are your primary vineyards to fulfill the work of God, not your church building. You will show people more of Christ by how you live your life, how you treat fellow workers, by your attitude, and the quality of your work, than anything you'll ever do in your entire life. Because 60 to 80 percent of your waking hours are—where? Right there.⁹³

John 6:27 is a chance to think about for whom and how you do your work:

"Do not work for the food that perishes, but work for the food that doesn't perish, doing My work unto the Lord."

Meanwhile, Luke 9:25 is a parallel passage that encourages putting your work into eternal perspective:

"So what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"

[illegible]

Calling Canvas Application #3: Identity

Think about who you are—your identity—in Christ, in your roles, and in your relationships. Then examine what opportunities for discipleship and ministry your unique identity gives you. Take your reflections on the Mission Field Map and The 6 P's exercises and write down your *roles and relationships* in the Identity box of the Calling Canvas on page 95 at the end of this book. Those should inform to whom and where you hear God calling you to serve.

Good Works

God cares deeply about what you do with your days and your life. Ideally, you would love to find a place where your God-given talents also earn you money that you use to make a comfortable living. Sounds great! However, that doesn't happen for many people. God cares much more about you using His gifts to glorify Him than He does for our comfort and ease. God also cares much more about our lives holistically being lived as an outpouring of our calling, rather than focusing too narrowly on what we get paid to do or what our 9-to-5 career occupation may be.

That's not to say that God doesn't care about our employment. Christians can easily fall into the fallacy of thinking of work as a necessary evil. That's taking it too far the other direction. Work existed in the Garden of Eden before it was corrupted by sin. After all, "God is a Worker. It is good. God called us to co-create, to build, to make, to shape, to subdue. But the Fall has introduced that work is going to be hard ...and that produces frustration for us, and a tendency to think it's a necessary evil, or it's the answer."⁹⁴ So, work is part of what you do to reflect the image of God. and whatever your employment status is, you are called to serve the Kingdom of God, not the Kingdom of You.

God promised to provide for you. He is aware of even the littlest of your concerns. You aren't promised to be rich, successful, or famous. But you are always promised the sustaining power of God. He cares about you more than he cares about grass and flowers! Jesus says, *"If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?"*⁹⁵

Trusting the call and provision of God is counter-cultural. As a Christ-follower, your calling exists in whatever situation you are planted. You are called by God to do good works in your home, your workplace (or lack thereof), your church, your relationships, and your life. Worry comes from a sinful desire to be in control, usurping that role from God. Instead, you are to work for the LORD, care for others, represent Him, and bring others closer to Christ whatever your worldly circumstances may be.

When Your Calling is Unclear

You are about to jump into quite a few thought-provoking and practical exercises in Chapters Five and Six that are intended to help you hear and discern God calling. As you consider the idea of God calling, you may be discouraged if your understanding of your calling is not clear. It's common to look for a definitive calling that informs every moment of every day. And some people have that!

But let's also consider that quite a few of the people in the Bible lived faithfully obedient to God's commands for many years, only to be known for one moment in one passage of Scripture. Or think about a famous person of history who is known for one major accomplishment, even though his or her life was full of many other things.

It's important to realize that you don't know the whole picture yet. Sometimes clarity comes in retrospect. You may not feel a huge, clear, direct calling in every step of your life. That's normal. Pastor Larry Osborne describes God's calling as being more like a game plan than a blueprint: "A game plan is more directional, a set of principles and guidelines. A coach has a set of plans, values, and a general way of doing things. But it adapts as the scoreboard changes. He doesn't individually instruct every player at every moment. It unfolds on its own."⁹⁶



Thomas Edison likely did several amazing things in his lifetime. But how is he remembered? For the lightbulb. Most people know relatively little (at least without much research) about his life as a husband, father, and friend, or his spiritual state. Yet, his single contribution was life-changing. You probably have a lightbulb shining nearby as you read this. While you don't always acknowledge Edison's contribution every time you turn on a light switch (we're acclimated to this modern convenience), if the power goes out and you can't see anything, you might start thinking about how much you appreciate his contribution to society. Can you imagine if Edison gave up on this pursuit? How different would your life be? So, even though it was for one shining moment that Edison is remembered, it is no less significant.

Consider the woman in the Bible who was healed from a 12-year bleeding disease when she touched the hem of Jesus's clothes.⁹⁷ She certainly had great suffering for many years. But what do we know about her calling? Would she say her pain was worth it? We know she was part of an amazing miracle that we're still talking about two thousand years later. Certainly she didn't know beforehand that would happen. She couldn't just analyze all her strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and desires and say, "This is my sweet spot," until after it happened. Her healing wouldn't have happened unless she drew close to Jesus, listened to her desire to be healed, and took action. She did what she knew to do. Part of her purpose was to bring God glory by getting healed. And her healing also likely freed her to accomplish other meaningful things in her everyday life that we never hear about.

So if you don't have a clear picture of your calling or are struggling to fill in some of these exercises, what should you do in the meantime? Osborne says, "If you don't know what He wants you to do tomorrow, simply make sure you do what you know He wants you to do today."⁹⁸

Sometimes we forget about all the direction and clarity God has given us on a particular issue. We keep asking for more guidance, and God's response is, "Have you done what I already told you yet?" Don't get so hung up on what you don't know about your calling that you lose sight of the truth you do know.

Understanding Your Gifts

Why is it important to understand your giftedness? Wilson writes, "We simultaneously have the responsibility to use our unique giftedness, given by Jesus himself, to do good works where we can be

most effective in taking the fullness of Jesus into every nook and cranny of society.”⁹⁹ Knowing your gifts helps you be more effective in living out your calling.

When it comes to the relationship between giftedness and calling, “Giftedness does not stand alone in helping us discern our callings,” Guinness says. “But to focus on giftedness as a central way to discern calling reverses the way most people think. ... A sense of calling should precede a choice of job and career, and the main way to discover calling is along the line of what we are each created and gifted to be. Instead of, ‘You are what you do,’ calling says, ‘Do what you are.’”¹⁰⁰

Guinness continues, “In the biblical understanding of giftedness, gifts are never really ours or for ourselves. We have nothing that was not given us. Our gifts are ultimately God’s, and we are only ‘stewards’ — responsible for the prudent management of property that is not our own.”¹⁰¹

Your call, ultimately, is to bring God glory. Understanding your unique gifts and abilities helps you understand that call, and the next chapter contains several exercises to help you do just that.

Reflect and Review on Chapter Four

Key Takeaways from Chapter 4

What’s one relationship or role that you’re thinking about differently when examined in the context of your calling?

What is one thing about you that you know is a gift from God?

How would you describe the relationship between calling and work in your life? What about how your calling relates to family, family, hobbies, or free time?

Chapter 5

***What is
Unique
About
Me?***

Finding your Unique Distinctions

Entrepreneur Jason Cohen defines a competitive or unfair advantage as “that which cannot be copied and cannot be bought.”¹⁰² In the next few sections, we’re going to look at parts of your gifts, your experience, and your personality that are uniquely yours as designed by our infinitely creative God. When combined, these distinctions can help you see what you do best, and how that can be matched to what people need most.

While the exercises that follow do not claim to be the secret sauce to perfectly discover, discern, and define your missional calling once and for all, we hope that the following pages will allow you the time and space to work through this process. We want to help you lay out some of those puzzle pieces you're holding and start putting them together.

By drawing close to God and understanding what gifts he’s given you, we hope that your calling will become increasingly clear. It’s time to start experimenting with your calling. Ask the Holy Spirit to make things clear to you. There is so much to discover and apply.

Fingerprints of Calling Exercise

“See your life as a book to read,” says Wilson. “As you look at the chapters God has already written in your life, pay particular attention to those moments you recall with vividness. These are often turning points in our lives that can give solid insights into who we are at our core. These turning points are like the fingerprints left at a crime scene ready for discovery.”¹⁰³

Let’s take a moment and look at some of the “fingerprints” of God’s calling or crucible moments in your life.

A crucible is defined as “a place or situation in which people or ideas are tested severely, often creating something new or exciting in the process.”¹⁰⁴ You may refer to such moments as “life changes,” but these effects could also be forged over a period of time, such as how your parents view you, or an important relationship with a friend or loved one.

Use the space below to brainstorm your fingerprint or crucible moments. You may find it helpful to plot some of these dates on a timeline as you continue reflecting on them. Here are some suggested topics¹⁰⁵ to get you started:

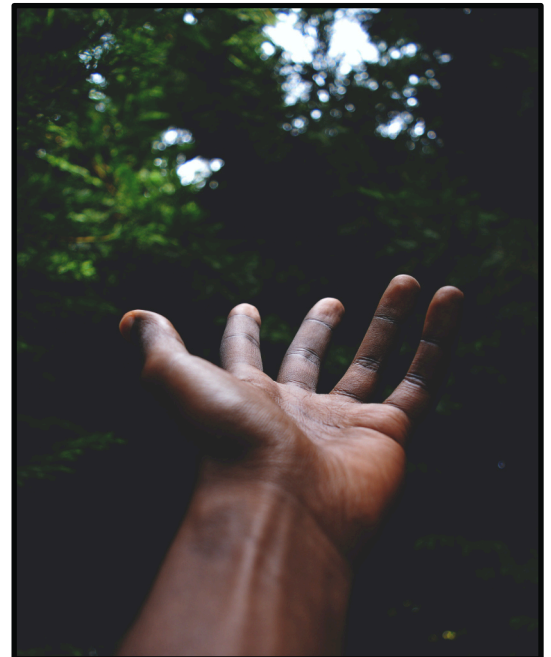
- Significant life events (e.g. births, deaths, marriage, spiritual conversion, etc.)
- Jobs and work experience

- Moves (especially the ones that changed the context of your local mission field)
- School/education
- Awards, achievements, certifications, promotions, and notable affirmations (anything acknowledging a distinctive accomplishment)
- “I remember when” moments (the vivid ones that you remember even years later)
- Health issues and illnesses
- Seasons of spiritual highs and lows

- Volunteer and community service activities

- Hobbies and extracurricular activities

After writing down your answers in each of these areas, reflect on what patterns or “fingerprints of calling” begin to come to light. Do you see any hints to when or where God is calling you? Write your initial thoughts here:



This is an exercise that you will likely come back to several times as your picture of yourself and God’s calling become increasingly clear. Are there any of these events that you vividly and easily recall above others? Which ones do you find yourself thinking back to repeatedly? What feelings come to the surface as you reflect on these moments? Write any further reflections here:

Examine your Experience

Using the list of experiences you just made in the “Fingerprints of Calling” exercise, take a moment to reflect on and to list what God taught through each of these experiences.

How has God been preparing you for what he’s called you to? As you think through your experiences, Ingram encourages you to:

List the things you’ve done, not simply occupation or jobs, but accomplishments and milestones. Think of some of the trauma you’ve been through. Think of some of the hurts. God’s going to use all these things. Those weren’t random things that happened to you. He has been working all things together for your good, for you who are called according to His purposes, because He loves you. It’s all a part of that tapestry that is His workmanship that is you, that He prepared before the foundations of the earth that you should walk in those good deeds.¹⁰⁶

For example: Mowing grass taught me hard work and entrepreneurship, or my sales job taught me how to handle rejection and read people. Moving many times as a child taught me how to handle change well and make new friends. A hurtful experience taught me to forgive and have healthy boundaries.

My Experience

What God Taught Me

Now, looking back through the roles you’ve had, the experience you gained, and the lessons you learned, Do you see any patterns? Are there signs of God’s thought process and handiwork? Write down any observations you have:

Ask Others Exercise

Communal discernment is critical to the process of understanding your calling. Koskela says, “You are ultimately responsible for hearing and responding to God’s call on your life. But the process of hearing well entails listening to the insights others have to offer.”¹⁰⁷

So who should you ask? “Variety is key,” Koskela continues. “Think in terms of people who have known you for a long time as well as those who are deeply involved in your life now.”¹⁰⁸ Parents, siblings, or childhood friends have known you longest and can remind you of what you were like early in life. Newer connections might see a passion or ability you’ve discovered in recent years more clearly. Your current and former colleagues may offer a different point of view than your family or friends do.

Meet with several people and ask them some of the following questions. We encourage you to take the questions below, or some modified ones of your choosing and put them into an email or Word document to send to the list of people that you’ve just developed. With a brief introductory note or a phone call, ask them if they would consider giving you a significant gift...the gift of feedback. Let them know what you plan to use the feedback for, and manage their expectations by setting out a time limit of 15 minutes for them to spend on the feedback. (You’re looking for indicators, not a novel). By asking them to answer the questions on paper, you’ll be giving the time to think through and respond appropriately. Of course, if you’re able to meet with them and discuss their feedback more fully, that will be even more insightful. Pay special attention to similarities and differences between each person’s input as you gather their responses.

- What do you see as my biggest accomplishments?
- When have I appeared most joyful and fulfilled?
- What do I do best? What do you see as some of my gifts? What do you see as my abilities, talents, knowledge, skills?
- What words come to mind when describing my personality?
- What do I seem to like best—people, places, things and activities?
- What do I value—life purpose, issues I think are important?
- How would you describe my spiritual gifts and calling?
- What are my blind spots—what can I improve?
- Are there jobs or careers you think would be a good fit for me? If you were going to pick a job for me, what would you pick and why?
- What kind of contributions could you see me making to God’s kingdom?
- When you think about the story of my life and what God might be doing with my experiences, are there any themes or patterns you see?

Spiritual Gifts

Scripture contains several lists of spiritual gifts, qualities, or roles that God has given you to use for His purposes. For example:

*"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*¹⁰⁹

Inspired by this Scripture, the Fivefold Ministries Inventory (or APEST test) is available to identify which of these descriptions —Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher—best describes you.¹¹⁰

Mike Breen, one of the creators of the inventory, explained why he believes understanding your identity in this way is important:

"Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are not gifts restricted to the leadership of the church but are available to everyone. The biggest change that I noticed in the people who received and applied this teaching was the growth in their confidence, and this in turn led to great breakthroughs in the mission of the church. It was almost as though this newly expanded identity gave them not only a bigger and more complete view of themselves but a greater sense of their own personal worth and value to God's kingdom."¹¹¹

You can choose one of these options for taking the inventory:

- <http://www.fivefoldsurvey.com/surveys> is a free option
- A more robust version is also available at <https://5qcentral.com/tests/> for \$8-\$10

My primary spiritual gift is: _____

One way this spiritual gift is apparent in my life is:

It is important to note, just because you might get a result of a Pastor or Evangelist does not mean that you ought to quit your job and start a church. Rather, this knowledge ought to help you understand your communication style, your natural gifts, and how your passions might fit with your calling. It can help you better see how you will use your gifts for God's glory and to make disciples.

These five are not the only spiritual gifts evident in Christ-followers. Passages like Romans 12:3-9; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; and 1 Peter 4:10-11 describe spiritual gifts given by God's grace to believers. Galatians 5:22-23 lists the *"fruit of the Spirit,"* which is evidence of God's work in one's life. We encourage you to pray, read God's Word, and seek wise counsel to help identify the gifts God has given you and the evidence of the Holy Spirit working in and through you.

Understanding the unique qualities and gifts God has given you can help you see where you might fit in a community, organization, or job. If you're looking for more insight on your unique personality, gifts, and talents, you may consider exploring some other assessments, including [Clifton Strengths](#), [Enneagram](#), [Myers-Briggs](#) or [16Personalities](#), [DiSC](#), or [YouMap](#). The more self-awareness you gain, the clearer your picture of yourself as a unique child of God with specific calling and gifts will become.

This is Why I'm Here: Personal SWOT analysis

"Do you know how freeing it is to know 'This is why I'm here'? To know my purpose is this: This is what I'm good at, this is what I'm not good at, this is where I need help, and this is where I need to step out and let God use me. It's absolutely revolutionary."¹¹²

A company or start-up will often use a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to assess their position. By visually capturing these categories, strategists can then see more clearly the competitive landscape in which they find themselves. They can then create strategies to best move forward from wherever they are. We're going to do a similar exercise here, except you will examine yourself!

Ask God to help you see yourself clearly and honestly. Using the grid below, reflect on each of the following areas:

Strengths: <i>What I'm good at</i>	Weaknesses: <i>What I'm not good at</i>
Opportunities: <i>Where I need to step out and let God use me</i>	Threats: <i>Where I need help</i>

The X-Factor

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

Take what you've learned so far and summarize those points in the exercise below. Explore all 6 factors to discover and develop how you best serve others.

Gifts

1. Experiences—Your history—personal, educational, vocational
2. Abilities—What you do best—talents, knowledge, skills
3. Personality—How you do best what you do—natural behavioral traits

Passions

4. Interests—What you like most—people, places, things, activities
5. Values—What is important to you—what guides your decisions

X-Factor — Spiritual Gifts and Calling

6. X-Factor — Your spiritual gifts—Where you hear God calling. An "x-factor" is "a circumstance, quality, or person that has a strong but unpredictable influence."¹¹³

Where might the Holy Spirit amplify that in you and ignite your x-factor? How are you going to use the gifts you have to meet the needs of others?

Consider this quote from Ingram: "There ought to be excellence. If your Boss is Jesus, you don't turn in junk. If your Boss is Jesus, you do the best research. If your Boss is Jesus, you do the very best job, with the money that you have, to say, "This is our gift to You. And when people see it, it ought to reflect Your excellence."¹¹⁴

What impact does this have on what you define as "your best"? Are you pursuing excellence? Or do you need to re-examine how you work and live in light of Jesus being your Boss?

Calling Canvas Application #4: Unique Distinctions

The exercises you just completed are intended to help shed some light on the qualities and characteristics which, when combined, help you articulate what makes you unique, desirable and valuable.

Look back at what you learned by examining your background (Fingerprints of Calling), your experience, what others say about you, your spiritual gifts, and your strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats. To sum this all up, make a list of some of these things you've identified about yourself. Think about the ways these distinctions come together to make you, well, YOU. Narrow your list down to what feels the most important or unique about you.

Here's a short exercise that we've found helps bring all of these attributes together.

Picture this: You are the job candidate, and you've just entered my office. I am the hiring manager. As you came in, you noticed three other people sitting in reception waiting to see someone. Based on their dress, demeanor, and some anxious looks, you've deduced that they are potentially competitors...other job candidates. As it turns out, you are correct—and they are interviewing with me right after you for the same job for which you're interviewing.

They all look like sharp, competent people. Now, what will you have to say that will distinguish yourself from your competitors? What are your distinctive "features" (thinking of yourself as a product you're

trying to sell) that will enable me, as the hiring manager (buyer), to pick you over them?

The reality is—you are unique! No one else in the world was created just like you! Psalm 139:13-14 says *“For You God created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”* In addition to your DNA being unique, no one else in the world has your personal history!

Well, you might think, “I’m a hard worker, a wonderful team player. I’m innovative, and I excel at figuring out complex problems!” That’s great, but the other people are planning to say the same thing. Uh oh!

So, how can you, as the job candidate, best express your personal “features” in a way that’s distinctively clear and concise to me, the hiring manager? What I’ve found is that this little exercise is very difficult for people to do. As with many things in life, making the complex simple is an art form, usually accompanied by trial and error.

Perhaps try this angle. What’s something that you possess that you are very glad you purchased? What are the features that motivated you to buy that particular model or brand? For example, I own a pickup truck. And what I love about my pickup is that it has seats that can heat or cool, it has all-wheel drive that is automatic, it has a leather interior, and I like the styling on the front grill. Notice that I didn’t just give broad brush attributes, like good gas mileage, dependability, and looking cool. I wanted to get specific in the combination of features that brought me to purchase that particular pickup truck.

Similarly, how might you describe your specific features that make you distinctive? Reflect back through the previous exercises and the experiences that God has permitted into your life.

Here are some practical steps that will help:

1. Pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you begin this exercise. Remember that He wants you to be everything God created you to be! :) So He can certainly bring to mind the descriptors He’d like you to use!
2. Without judgment, start a page of bullet points with phrases that describe what you think your features are. Try to make them as specific and distinctive as possible, but with the main goal of getting words on a piece of paper. For example, for me, I was professionally certified as a CPA, and I have 25 years of HR experience. How many “retreaded” CPA’s do you know? Probably not many! So that could potentially be one of my distinctive features.
3. Once you have 25-30 words/phrases, go through and highlight those that don’t seem that distinctive. For example, anyone can say they have “good work ethic,” so you can strike that off your list.
4. For those highlighted words, reflect why you wrote those words down. For example, perhaps you wrote “good communicator” because you have 10 years of professional internal and external communications functional experience? OK, now that’s much more distinctive than “good communicator!” Good job!
5. With what you’ve now refined from general phrases into specific phrases, capture those on a clean piece of paper. Start to share them with some trusted friends and get their reactions. Perhaps ask them to circle the top 5 that they think best describes you. Additionally, they will probably have some different ideas, based on their perspective and how they view you. Embrace their ideas, as they will probably more closely resemble the lens of the hiring manager that you’re trying to “sell” in that interview!

Now that you’ve gone through this exercise, what are those top 3 distinctions that help you sell what you can do best to help the company with what they need most?

Remember, no one on the planet is equipped like you! BUT, you’ve got to be able to express your unique distinctions in a way that helps others see you clearly as the best person to help them do what they need most. While we’ve described this exercise in terms of a job interview, your list of distinctions does not necessarily have to be job-oriented. Ask God to reveal what he’s uniquely given you.

Once you have 3 to 5 distinctions narrowed down, write them in your Calling Canvas on page 95.

Reflect and Review on Chapter Five

Key Takeaways from Chapter 5

Chapter 6

***My
Values,
Purpose,
and
Calling?***

Before we dive into the next few exercises, let's quickly summarize what you've accomplished so far:

- You've outlined your starting point for this exploration
- You've identified ways to connect with God and which practices could help you tune in to what He has to say to you
- You've gotten overview of what "calling" means and the different ways theologians and pastors have defined it
- You've looked inward to who you are and what your identity is in Christ Jesus
- AND, you've done a lot of reflection and work to ascertain your unique distinctions, in essence what makes you, YOU!

Next, we're going to bring three more applications quickly into your Calling Canvas: values, purpose, and calling. Similar to an organization's mission, vision, and values, these three elements are at the core of revealing how we do things, why we are here, and what we are here to do.

Identifying Your Personal Core Values

Let's start with values. You've probably familiar with the term. You've heard of organizational values, family values, or even the political catch-phrase "American values." And most people claim to have values, but find it hard to define or articulate them if asked what they are.

Here are a variety of definitions you could use to describe personal core values:

- Our values guide our actions through the decisions we make
- They help us do the right thing even when nobody's looking
- Decision-making guidelines that us connect us to our true selves
- Words that most deeply strike you as impossible to live without honoring
- Words that make you tick

Why are personal core values important? Because they are the core of who you are. When you combine the descriptions above, you could say values provide the foundation of what guides you to make the decisions you make in life.

Another popular way to describe the importance of core values is: Show me someone who doesn't know what they stand for, and I'll show you a person who doesn't stand for anything. If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

Personal core values are the critical foundation to your character. As John Blumberg, author of *Return on Integrity*, states, "Nothing in an organization or in our personal lives holds us more accountable to

the joy of who we really are than our core values. They don't guide us to soft and easy decisions. Rather, they keep us strong in the midst of the most tough decisions—and show us how to proceed through those tough decisions—carrying them out with a grace that fully honors the values we have come to understand and embrace.”

Take a few minutes to explore and determine what your individual values are, starting broadly and then funneling into a deeply personal focus.

To begin, take 60 seconds to write down as many words as you can that you think would be good options to consider as your own personal core values. No need for definitions of those words at this point, and if you already think you know your values, I'd encourage you to add to them through this exercise to see if you might further refine and define them.

Great. By now, you probably have about 10-20 words written down. It was probably easy to come up with the first several, but then the next few words got more difficult, right? That's normal. Most of us have thought for years that we have core values, but we haven't given ourselves the gift of time to really delve into them.

To take it a step further, let's explore three different avenues to help expand your views, deepen your understanding of personal core values, and allow your brain time to marinate on the words that will best describe them:

1. Return to this exercise every day for a week and write down new words that come to mind.
2. Engage with some friends or family and ask them if they've ever identified their core values, and if so, if they would be open to sharing them with you. If they do, and you hear words that you like, add them to your list.
3. Scan through a list of words that have been written down by others. You can find one such list from John Blumberg on his website: <https://www.blumbergroi.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/BlumbergROI-CoreValues.pdf>.

After exploring these three avenues, let's say you have about 20-30 words written down that are coming closer to representing your personal core values.

Now it's time to narrow down that list to just five words and definitions for them.

Take 60 seconds to consider which 10 words you like the best to describe your own personal core values. Circle them. Don't overthink the process. That's why you only have one minute!

Did you find that easy to do? Or did you have to wrestle between a few words to get it narrowed down?

Now let's do it again, this time with 30 seconds. From your list of 10 words, determine which 5 words would make up your personal core values.

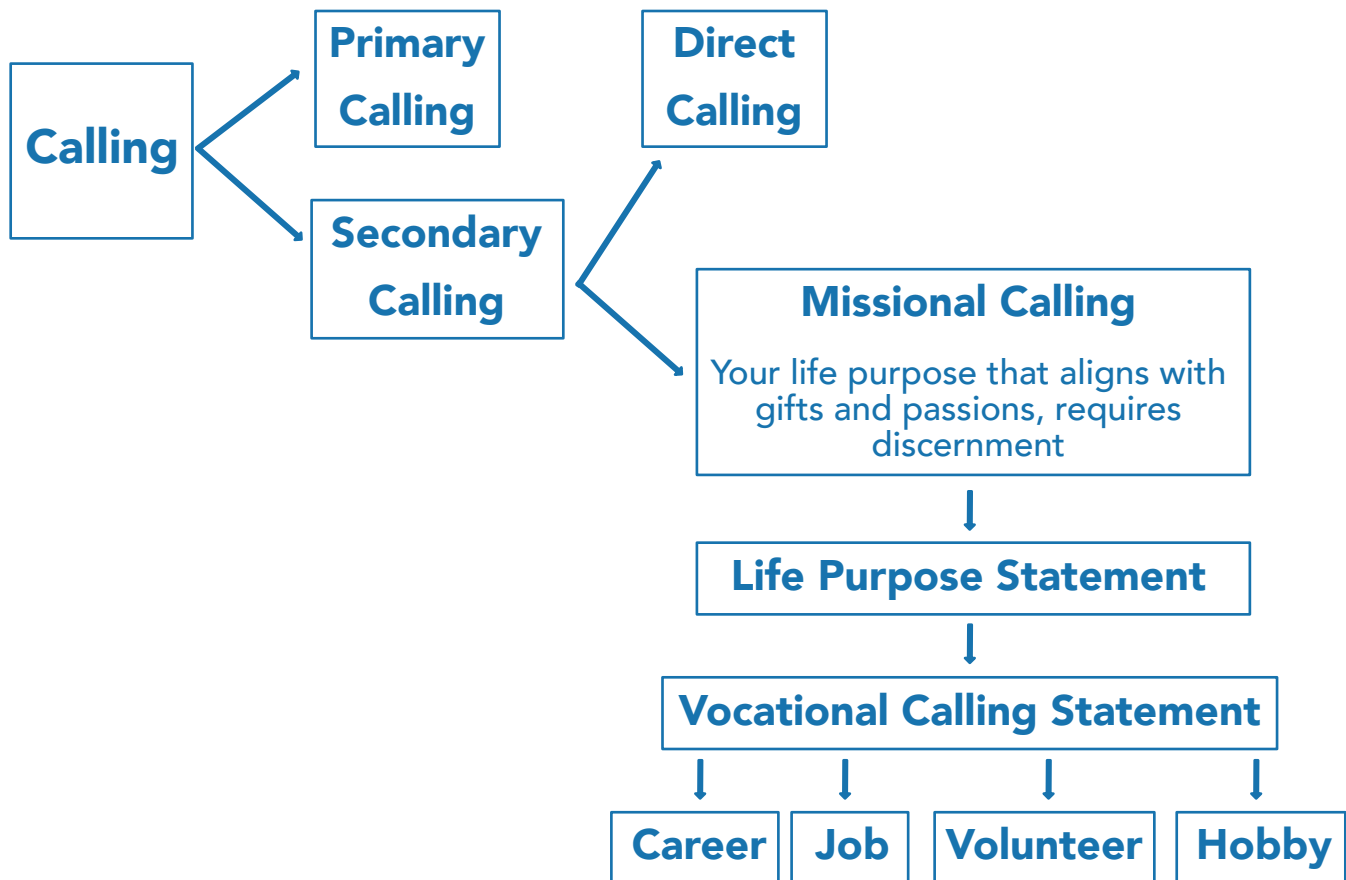
Lastly, take a minute to determine some quick definitions for your words. For example, if you chose integrity, it could be described as "being open and honest at all times." If you wrote down stewardship, perhaps it's "paying blessings forward."

Calling Canvas Application #5: Values

You've now arrived at an initial set of personal core values. How does that feel?

Feel free to let your brain simmer on these words and definitions. Revisit them often. Continue to shape them to best represent who you are and how you do things. But for now, go ahead and add them to your Calling Canvas on page 95.

We hope that you'll keep the values you've identified at the forefront of your mind. As you hold them at your core, may they be tremendously useful to guide your decision-making processes and help you align with your purpose and your calling. Speaking of your purpose and calling, you're going to articulate and flesh out those two concepts next.



Why You Need A Purpose Statement

"Purpose is an individual's unique design to change the status quo for others. It focuses our attention and intention." ~ Joe Colavito.

Richard Leider, best-selling author of 11 books on the topic of purpose, is considered by many to be the founder of the Purpose movement in America. Much of his work originated from dealing with people who weren't fulfilled in their employment and were wondering if changing jobs might create the catalyst for working with deeper meaning.

Leider describes one's purpose as a mindset and a practice. It is definitely not a goal, but the aim of your life...a directional journey that you're on. It answers the question of "Why do I get up in the morning?"¹¹⁵

Here are a few extracts from his *An Incomplete Manifesto for Purpose*¹¹⁶ that you might find useful to lay the groundwork for the practical exercise below:

1) Everything that exists has a purpose; we were born for a reason; a loving Creator created us and all beings to fulfill specific purposes in a mysterious world; our purpose in life might be revealed by our Creator... but it might not.

3) Science can now explain that purpose is fundamental to health, healing, happiness, and longevity; our "default purpose" to "grow & to give" to life through compassionate service to others-is good for wellbeing and for society.

4) Compassion is the soul of purpose; compassion is the main lesson that we are here to learn; it, alone, is the greatest of all the gifts we have to offer. The opposite of purpose is narcissism-excessive interest in oneself; self-transcendence is the essence of human existence

7) Purpose is a verb; it is an active, aspirational aim; the power in purpose is activated when we wake up in the morning with our purpose foremost in our minds and when we go to bed at night knowing that we worked toward it.

Given this backdrop, and leveraging the “default purpose to grow and to give,”¹¹⁷ let’s now take advantage of the way that our brains work to get a more specific, unique purpose for you! Naming it and being able to articulate it will allow you to act on it.

Our brains are constantly at work, and studies have shown that the neurological pathways our brains create form patterns for us to function effectively and efficiently. Simply put...we do what makes sense to us.

Writing Your Purpose Statement

Every morning for the next seven days, answer the question, “Why am I getting up this morning?” and then every evening answer, “Why did I get up today?” Write down your answers on the next page. Don’t look at the answers you gave previously, and don’t worry about being concise — that will come as the week progresses.

Day 1:

AM _____

PM _____

Day 2:

AM _____

PM _____

Day 3:

AM _____

PM _____

Day 4:

AM _____

PM _____

Day 5:

AM _____

PM _____

Day 6:

AM _____

PM _____

Day 7:

AM _____

PM _____

Now, using what you've learned about why you get up in the morning and what the aim of your life is, start drafting your purpose statement. Each of you will find yours evolve in different ways. You may want to put it aside for a week, and then come back at it again to wordsmith it, or you may share it with a few friends to get their reactions to it. You may also want to try using it as a lens to see how your work and personal life "fit" within it.

Leider also suggests a simple "napkin test."¹¹⁸ The idea being that considering gifts plus your passions and values add up to your purpose—"What gets you up in the morning"—and it's all short enough to be written down on a napkin.

- Gifts: What skills and abilities do you have that your hand turns naturally to? You probably can't recall learning it, as it comes to you so easily.
- Passions: What interests and focus do you find yourself inevitably drawn to? You love to do it, and it may have no seeming economic value, but you can't stop pursuing it.
- Values: What is at the core of who you are? What words or phrases do you use to help you make life's decisions?

Using Dave as an example, here's how this all might evolve for you:

Day 1

AM: I get up to grow and give

PM: I got up and grew in my relationships with others and gave of my time, talent, and treasure to help people that are in transition

Day 2

AM: I'm getting up to glorify God as I seek to help others that are unemployed or unfulfilled.

PM: Today, I got up and helped someone figure out their aspirations and what they want to be when they grow up. That conversation gave me tremendous energy and a sense of purpose. My background and experiences seemed to have formed in a unique way to offer insights to others. I strongly desire to see people enjoy their work, and to get energy from their work.

Day 3

AM: This morning, I'm hoping to develop new practical and tactical ways to help people discover more about who they are, so they can apply that knowledge to get more in tune with what they want to vocationally do. I want people to get joy from their work, with the knowledge that our work was given to us as a form of worship to our Creator.

PM: I experienced so much energy from helping other people decipher their work experiences, skills, and abilities in a way that they hadn't seem to recognize before. I had the opportunity to encourage people in their faith with the knowledge that God created them for good works (Eph. 2:10). I grew in my depth of understanding for how many people are unfulfilled and not aware of their own distinct skills and abilities.

Calling Canvas Application #6: Purpose Statement

After multiple iterations, Dave has now defined his life purpose statement as: "To glorify Christ by helping people and organizations achieve their aspirations and His purpose." I find that this fits my volunteer work with Crossroads Career, and my vocational work as a consultant on the subject of corporate culture.

Write your working version of your Purpose Statement in the corresponding box on the Calling Canvas on page 95.

Vocational Calling Statement

Now that you've outlined your values to guide how you make decisions, and you've generated a life purpose statement, the broader aim of "why" you live your life, it's time to get more specific on the "what" and "where" for your life. This is God's specific designation and assignment for you. It's the action-based or tactical extension of the first part of your calling statement, which is, "I am a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples wherever I am." As Wilson explains it, each of us can say with confidence, "I am uniquely made to do good works and deeds where I can be most effective."¹¹⁹ Delve further into your vocational calling by asking these questions:

1. Who am I created to BE? What is my *unique identity*? (See Calling Canvas Application #3)
2. What am I made to DO? What is my *unique mission*?
3. Where do I GO or fit? What is my *unique position*?

I am a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples wherever I am. I am _____(name),
a _____ (unique identity) of Christ Jesus, called to
_____ (unique mission) , among
_____ (unique position).

Examples:

- Tim, an entrepreneur of Christ Jesus, called to create and develop technology, among businesses and ministries in the US.
- Annie, a communicator of Christ Jesus, called to write and speak through books and the internet about the joy and fun available in God's kingdom.
- Travis, a teacher of Christ Jesus, called to teach and educate students, among the public schools in Spokane.

As you continue to pray and ask God about your calling, your understanding of your unique identity, mission, and position may change over time. Feel free to continue to tweak your calling statement as you grow and develop. In fact, this is a great exercise to revisit on a regular basis and can serve as a reminder or an opportunity to refocus.

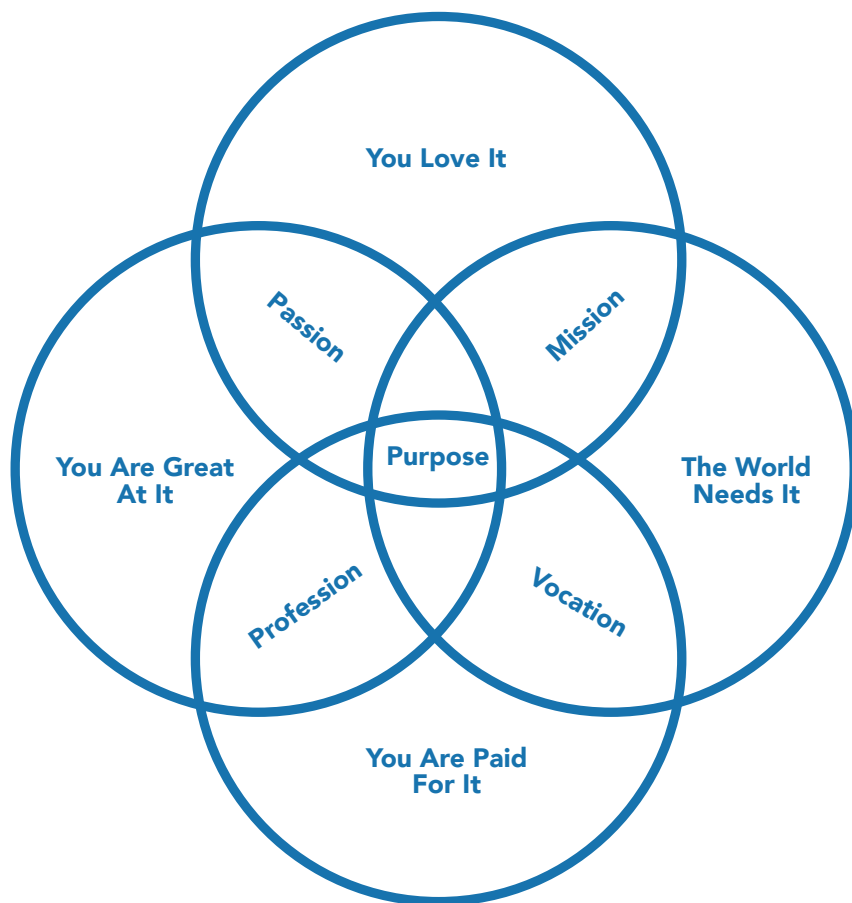
Calling Canvas Application #7: Calling Statement

Write your Calling Statements in the center of the frame on the Calling Canvas on page 95. This is the focal point that will help take you from where you are to where God is calling you (with His help). When all seems confusing or you've lost your way, think back to this calling statement, and ask God to help you focus on Him and how He's calling you.

Career, Job, Volunteer, or Hobby?

So, you're understanding your calling more and more as we work through this material together. Now, what does it mean for your job or career? Your calling may align easily with a job or career, or it may not. You may have the choice to move to a position more aligned with your calling, or you may not. As we discussed on page 34, a job is how you make a living, whereas a career is how you make a life. Volunteering is giving of your time and effort to help others, while hobby is a pursuit outside of one's regular occupation.¹²⁰ Your exploration of your calling may lead you to start volunteering in a space that needs your gifts. Or you may start a side-project or hobby that allows you to more fully express what you feel God is calling you to do. Here are some examples of possible combinations:

- Dave, who works in a Fortune 500 Company as a Chief Culture Officer, while also volunteering with Crossroads Career to help others who are unemployed like he once was.
- Laura, who is a passionate communicator, works part-time as a content creator to allow time for her hobby of podcasting.
- Rachel, who is pursuing a doctorate in chemistry, but also loves to write poems and fiction.
- Bob, who is working as a college professor, but also volunteers as a Bible quiz coach.
- Esther, who works full-time for a missionary-sending organization and loves to host game nights to fellowship with friends.
- Ryan, who works as an accountant and leads a men's group at his church.



All these people are using their aptitudes in a career-oriented way, but also are looking beyond their source of income for other opportunities to fully live out their callings. Ask God to help you decide what combination of career, job, hobby, or volunteering is right for you.

Reflect and Review on Chapter Six

Key Takeaways from Chapter 6

How is the Lord calling you today to carry out His mission where you are?

Is anything standing in the way of you using your God-given identity and calling to its fullest potential?

Think about the people God has put in your life (your family, community, workplace, etc.). Who is God placing on your heart that needs to know of His love and kindness? How has God equipped you to minister to them?

Chapter 7

Targeting My Sweet Spot

The Sweet Spot

Look at everything you just added to your Calling Canvas! Hopefully you're starting to get a fuller picture of the amazing way God has created you and the good plans He has for your life. You truly are a masterpiece created for good works. But it's not enough to make those initial observations. You've got to do something with the insights you've gained. Targeting your sweet spot is one way you can apply your Calling Canvas to your life. Wilson explains, "Every sweet spot exhibits a design, a purpose, and a positioning."¹²³

One more metric you can use to determine how your calling is being applied in your life is to look at your sweet spot. Wilson explains, "Every sweet spot exhibits a design, a purpose, and a positioning."¹²³

There's a story Dave Sparkman tells about a pastoral search committee meeting in which one of the members said, "I want a pastor who is like my hunting dog." Surprised, Dave asked him to explain his strange statement. He said, "I have two hunting dogs. When it is hunting season and I take them out to the hunting grounds in my truck, they are eager and ready. As soon as I open the door, they jump out with their tails wagging faster than a helicopter's blade. They are born to be bird dogs. I want a pastor who is just like that. I want him to be so glad to be in the pulpit that you know he was born to do it. A pastor who is natural, effective, and in his sweet spot. So, like my hunting dog."

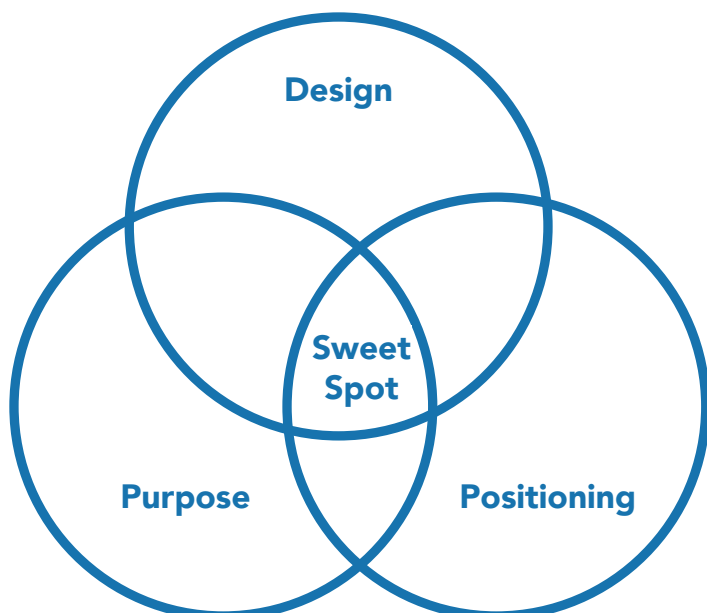
One great question to ask is, "What did God create me to do?" Ingram explains, "That's a different question than 'what I think will make me happy,' or, 'what will help me make the most money.' The world says you are what you do; work is your identity. God says do what you are; work is a stewardship. What freedom! He wants you to do what you are."¹²⁴

Batterson elaborates on the definition of your "sweet spot" this way: "Life is too short not to love what you do, so do what you love. The key is finding the place where gifts and desires overlap. God-given gifts are what you are best at. God-ordained desires are what we're most passionate about. And the place where those gifts and desires overlap is the sweet spot."¹²⁵

When discussing moving into your "sweet spot," we recognize the tension between the idea that you can do good works wherever you are planted, and the ability many readers have to freely decide to change their place. Either approach should, of course, be done in obedience to God. If God says "go," then you go. If He says "stay," then you stay. Wherever you are, you steward your resources, make disciples, and do good works for God's glory. But if you have to answer the question, *Where should you be?* the answer is "in the sweet spot." Take a moment to think about what that intersection looks like for you:

God's Design for Me _____

God's Purpose for Me _____



God's Positioning for Me _____

God's Sweet Spot for Me _____

Seeing growth and measuring success are key in any endeavor, especially one with such a significant impact on your life as living out God's calling. Being in the sweet spot of your design, purpose, and positioning is good for everyone. You're fulfilled, passionate, effective and natural.

Staying In Your Sweet Spot

Staying in your sweet spot and living out your calling is an everyday practice, not a one-and-done. Stopping at this would be like going through all of the work to plant a garden, and then walking away before you see the fruit of your labors. To be successful, you'll need to weed, prune, and tend in your newly planted garden. Likewise, if you're aiming for a target, you have to constantly adjust, refocus, or calibrate to stay locked in and reach your destination. So here are several ways you can stay connected to God and stay locked into your targeted sweet spot of calling.

Journaling

When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, they were instructed to pile up twelve stones on the banks of the river, "to serve as a sign among you."¹²² Whenever they saw them, they were supposed to remember how God stopped the flow of the river and led them across. These became known as "stones of remembrance." We encourage you to take a similar approach.

Too many times people have a great idea, but they don't write down the vision, and therefore nothing comes of it. Putting pen to paper (or typing words into a document) lets you move forward with it in a way that thoughts alone do not.

Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it." (Habakkuk 2:2)

Remember earlier when we looked at the "Fingerprints of Calling" throughout your life? That was just the beginning of the story. Each day you're writing another scene or chapter in your life story. In your journal, write down the moments where God's calling is clear. Celebrate the victories! Also chronicle when things are difficult and the way seems unclear. Over time you will see the fingerprints of God all over your life, and you will be able to look back and see your progress.

Prayer

Just like in the workplace it's important to meet with your boss regularly and check in on projects and performance, you also need to check in with God regularly. He knows you better than you know yourself, and He isn't afraid to shine the bright light of truth on your life. Ask God to show you where you've been obedient and faithful when it comes to calling, and also to illuminate what still needs attention.

Accountability

If you have not already surrounded yourself with other like-minded people, now is the time. Remember who you asked during the Ask Others exercise on page 58? Maybe they are good places to start. Or it could be the Community you identified on page 24, whether that is a small group through your church, or a couple strong Christians with whom you have coffee once a month to check in. However you accomplish it, having others keep you accountable lets everyone see how far you've come and where you still need progress. Simple questions like, "Where have you seen me grow and improve?" and, "Where do I still need work?" go a long way to help you stay focused and moving forward.

Being a Disciple Who Makes Disciples

If you're living out your calling, part of that is being a disciple who makes disciples. Are you personally in a healthy and growing relationship with God? Are you looking for ways to disciple others? Have you introduced the people in your life to Jesus Christ? Look for ways to help them see their unique identity and calling like you have. The people whose lives you have touched are markers of fulfilling your calling.

Calling Canvas Application #8: My Sweet Spot

How will you put each of these ways to stay in your sweet spot into practice? In the My Sweet Spot section of the Calling Canvas on page 95, write down your Sweet Spot (the combination of your design, purpose, and positioning) and the ways to target and stay in it (journaling, accountability, prayer, making disciples).

Reflect and Review on Chapter Seven

Key Takeaways from Chapter 7

Chapter 8

***Putting
It All
Together***

One of the main challenges living out your calling in your daily life is the dreaded dilemma of how to make good decisions. It's one thing to know what your calling is, and an entirely different set of skills to make decisions within that framework that honor God and fit your needs. Continuing our gardening analogy from the previous chapter, the process of godly decision-making is where we start to protect and harvest what our seeds and cultivation has produced. This is where your Calling Canvas comes to life everyday.

It all seems pretty black and white when you ask a question such as, "Whose voice are you listening to: Godly wisdom or lies of Satan?" Of course you desire to listen to God and not to Satan! But good decision-making is often more nuanced, and can be full of challenges and gray areas. And Satan is very good at twisting the truth and getting you to listen unconsciously to his lies. The fact that you've left complacency behind and started intentionally living out your calling means that the enemy of our souls now sees you as a threat. Don't be surprised if you face increased challenges or obstacles in this season. That's why listening to God, discerning His will, and making good decisions is so important.

Let's examine some steps to making better, more godly decisions. Then we'll look at some advice that can help you better discern the will of God, and what to do when you face too many choices and feel overwhelmed. Finally, you'll learn how to challenge lies with the truth when you're derailed or your judgement is clouded.

Making Good Decisions and Discerning God's Will

One of the common misconceptions when it comes to understanding God's will in career and calling is that "being in the will of God" always means that your job will be a perfect fit and that everything will work out amazingly. Or that you'll always have a crystal clear sense of your calling and purpose. This is not necessarily the case. The Bible gives more examples of people being jailed for their faith, toiling long hours, and getting called across the world to serve God than it does of people working in cushy 9-5 jobs which are a perfect fit and come with great benefits.

Yet, Jesus told his disciples, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*¹²⁶ Jesus said this right before He died on the cross, knowing all the challenges that would soon come the disciples' way. So, while the next step for you in the decision-making journey might not be all your dreams coming true and ending up in the perfect job, it will be the right, peaceful, and best decision if it comes from trusting God and finding direction in Him.

In the introduction to *Decision Making and the Will of God*, Haddon Robinson writes, "Instead of wondering, 'How do I find the will of God?' A better question to pursue is, 'How do I make good decisions?' ...The Bible does not provide a map for life—only a compass."¹²⁷ We believe that having a clear direct calling from God is a real thing, and there are times when God makes His will extremely clear. But what do we do when that's not the case? How do we make good decisions?

"When you understand your calling, it will affect your decisions, such as where to go to school or what to study, whom to marry, what job to take, and how to spend money," Pastor Chris Brown explains. "No matter what decision you are facing, your calling provides a framework for your life choices."¹²⁸

How Do We Know God's Will?

What is God's will? How can I tell if something I'm considering falls inside God's plans for my life? Based on a sermon by Pastor Brown, God's will can be broken down into four areas.¹²⁹

1. God's will is for us to know Him.

To be children of God we need to be adopted into the family of God, admit we are sinners, and have a relationship with God.

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

2. God's will is for us to surrender (to Him) daily.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12: 1-2).

3. God's will is for us to give thanks always.

There is always something to be thankful for. This keeps us from getting caught up in bitterness because of the challenges of life. Thankfulness lets us be love and light to others.

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

4. God's will is for us to reach others.

The reason we are still here is to bring our knowledge of God to others. Christianity is neither a spectator sport nor a solo sport. We are made for being in a community. There are just two kinds of people in Christianity: there are missionaries and mission fields.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

Brown goes on to explain that God's will is a general direction; it is how we all must walk. God's will is relational, not necessarily rational. We think it should take us from point A to point B, using human rationale. Yet, God is far more concerned about where we are in Christ than where we are in life. Jesus says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*¹³⁰

Often we try to find God's will as a specific entity or in a certain place. This is the same problem that the book of James addresses when it says:

*"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"*¹³¹

However, Brown explains, you could say that God's will is like an umbrella. Obedience is living inside God's will. He just wants you to stay inside, under the umbrella, and not step back outside into your old sinful nature. Within the umbrella, there's still so much freedom to go and do and be whatever we want in the Kingdom of God.¹³²

This lines up with this word picture found in *Decision Making and The Will of God*,

If you visualize an archer's target, the outer circle would represent the moral will of God, and the bull's-eye would be the very center of His will—or his individual will. It is important to live and make one's decisions within the larger circle of God's moral will. But finding the 'dot' in the center, God's specific individual will, is essential in making correct decisions in daily life.¹³³

In God's will — the big circle — there is a calling for each of us. Each of us is unique and created especially for something — the bullseye. Maybe you already know what your gifts are and see how you can use them. Or maybe you're still figuring that out, and if so, that's okay.



Do The Next Right Thing

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3)

In his book, *Do The Next Right Thing*, Roger Thomson says, "You may not have a perfect choice, but there is always a way to retain purpose and hope in every situation."¹³⁴ Thompson identifies Eight Spiritual Handholds that he drew out of his study of 2 Peter 1:

1. Faith
2. Goodness
3. Knowledge

4. Self-control
5. Perseverance
6. Godliness
7. Brotherly kindness
8. Love¹³⁵

These spiritual handholds can be used to help you to identify and do the next right thing and to be effective and productive in life. It's like when you're cooking, you want to start with putting quality ingredients into your recipe and thereby creating a delicious outcome. Your input determines your output. It's the opposite of the adage, "garbage in, garbage out." The power of God gives us everything we need for life if we are obedient to Him.

When you make decisions, are you making them from the perspective of these spiritual handholds? Or out of some other thought or feeling?

Led by Love

Making good, godly decisions can be challenging. You really want to be right and desperately fear being wrong. However, using fear as a motivating factor is not what you are called to do as a follower of God.

*"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"*¹³⁶ Paul wrote to the Romans. "Abba" is the name for a father in Hebrew. So Paul is saying that you do not have to be afraid because your good Father is right there with you.

Likewise, 2 Timothy 1:7 says, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* God has equipped you to make good decisions, not ones made out of fear.

Sometimes people are unemployed so long that they start feeling like they don't even know what they want anymore. Often this is because they have tried to go it alone, have gotten farther from God, or have been relying on their own energy and power to endure this time. Being far away from God makes things more confusing and leads to a sick heart.

When you stay close to God, it reminds you of who you are. Thompson says, "While I struggle, I still know who I am."¹³⁷ That means you can always know your "position and identity as a child of God," even when you are still struggling with your condition and your need to attain maturity and satisfaction in this life.

Your decisions should be led by love, author Emily Freeman says. She explains from her own experience, "When it comes to hard decisions, I no longer wait two weeks to ask this question. I ask it at the first sign of hesitation. Am I being led by love or pushed by fear? The answer to that question isn't always clear, but I continue to carry it with me into every difficult decision."¹³⁸

In your decisions, are you being led by love? Or pushed by fear?

Mark Batterson's Five Tests To Use When Discerning The Will Of God

Continuing with the idea of making good decisions and learning to understand when God is speaking to you, these 5 tests can be very helpful in discerning the will of God¹³⁹:

1. The Goose-Bump Test: "The will of God should make your heart skip a beat. You certainly have to pass that feeling through the filter of Scripture, but the quickening of the Holy Spirit often causes goose bumps. ...When you go after a God-sized dream or a God-ordained calling, you should get goosebumps every now and then. The will of God is not drudgery."¹⁴⁰
2. The Peace Test: "You know in your heart of hearts that it's the right thing to do. It's a peace that literally passes understanding."¹⁴¹
3. The Wise Counsel Test: "Surround yourself with people who have been there and done that. Surround yourself with people who bring out the best in you. Surround yourself with people who have permission to speak the truth in love. Simply put, seek wise counsel. This test will save you some trials and get you out of others."¹⁴²
4. The Crazy Test: "By definition, a God-sized dream is always beyond our abilities, beyond our logic, and beyond our resources. In other words, we can't do it without God's help. In my experience God ideas often seem like crazy ideas. ...Faith is the willingness to look foolish."¹⁴³
5. Released-From and Called-To Test: This principle can be summarized by the verse, "*What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*"¹⁴⁴ Batterson explains, "The will of God is like a lock with two pins. The first pin is 'called to;' the second pin is 'released from.' When you're released from a current responsibility but not sure what you're called to, it can feel like a spiritual no-man's-land. You're not sure what to do next. Until God gives further instruction, I would suggest doing what you heard him say last...You can't pray for open doors without accepting closed doors. After all, one usually leads to the other. In a sense, the closed door equates to 'released from' and the open door equals 'called to.'"¹⁴⁵

The next time you are faced with a decision where you need discernment, ask God to make things clear to you. Pay attention to the different ways you might hear from God in response.

A Living Sacrifice — Four Major Elements in Determining the Will of God

Adapted from a sermon by Pastor Jeff Chaussee¹⁴⁶:

How do you personally determine the will of God in a particular area? What's your process?

Did you know that Romans 12:1-2 gives us a process for scriptural decision-making? You are in danger of being deceived if you aren't using Scripture as the basis of your decisions. Praying for God's direction will not yield results if you don't obey His precepts. God does not contradict himself and wants you to know His will. He's not hiding it for fun. He doesn't want you confused. He wants you to glorify Him. But it has to come His way.

Determining the will of God comes through a sanctified reasoning process of a mind that is filled with the precepts of God and separated from the world. The idea is to examine or scrutinize something by a fixed set of standards. You are to ask what scriptural reasoning process has brought you to this decision and what proof you have of that. To answer all these questions, you have to know the heart of God.

Here's some faulty processes that on their own do not reliably lead to good decision-making or discerning rightly God's will:

- "I feel peace about it?" That's not bad, but that doesn't necessarily prove anything. The peace of God is real, but not the infallible test.
- "I prayed about it." Yes, do that. But don't stop there.
- "All the pieces fell in place." That doesn't necessarily prove anything.
- "My pastor said..." hopefully they are correct, but they are not infallible.
- "I found this random Scripture verse." Or "I know the Bible says....but God told me..." That's scary language.

Now, here are four major questions to ask yourself when determining the will of God in a particular area, based on Romans 12:1-2:

1. Submission

The question: Am I resigned to do the will of God in every known area, no matter what it is?

No one can answer this for you. This is probably the most difficult question. Are you able to truly say, "Lord I am willing to do Your will, period"? This is the kind of question that led to Jacob wrestling with God. It's the question that Abraham was struggling with on Mt. Moriah when preparing to sacrifice Isaac.

Submission comes even before you know what the will of God is. It's not, "Lord, show me your will so that I can think about whether or not I want to do it." The attitude is "Lord, show me your will because I am going to do it." It's inviting God's scrutiny, like it says in Psalm 19:14, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD."* God wants fellowship, not pretense.

2. Separation

The question: Am I actively separating myself, as much as possible, from any and all influences that are conforming me into the image of this world and causing me to think unlike God?

You aren't to use the lost, dead, blind logic that you used before you were a Christian. *"Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world,"* (Romans 12:2) Paul instructs. Satan wants to neutralize you and teach you to think unlike God about everything. God wants you to think like Him.

3. Sanctification

The question: Am I putting in work to become more like God?

Transformation is far beyond human ability. God is doing his part, and if you are going to grow, you also have to put in effort. No one just "falls into" more faith. Being continually transformed is the goal. By renewing and renovating your mind, reading the Word, praying, and seeking godly counsel, your thoughts become more and more like God's thoughts.

4. Sound Reasoning

The question: Can I prove that this is the will of God? And how so?

"Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

In this passage, "good" means well-pleasing, or bringing joy, to God. It's complete, not lacking anything. Seeking the will of God is God-centered, not man-centered. Someone who really wants the will of God wants to make decisions that reflect the perfect moral character of God. They don't want the bits and pieces of God's will. They want all of it.

The biblical instruction to "prove" isn't magical, mystical or nebulous. It means to test, scrutinize, and determine if it is genuine, like you would with a precious metal. "Prove" is also not emotional. It's not "that you may feel the will of God." Emotions are not bad, but neither are they trustworthy. You might not feel like doing the will of God sometimes. Even Jesus prayed to "let the cup pass from him," because in his humanness he didn't want it.

What basis have you been using for decision-making? How will you change your process in light of these four major questions from Romans 12:1-2?

Comparison is the Thief of Joy: What to Do With Too Many Choices

Theodore Roosevelt famously said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." Especially in the information age, where more data is at your fingertips than ever before, possibilities are virtually endless. Many consumers are faced with too many choices on every side. Options often abound in everything from cereal to clothing, jobs to education.

Researcher and professor Barry Schwartz wrote a book titled *The Paradox of Choice* in which he examines the proliferation of choices that affluent people face and the unique challenges to happiness and contentment this abundance presents. This often leads to buyer's remorse. According to Schwartz, having more choices actually leads to less satisfaction, because somewhere in your mind you are aware that there are other choices out there that might be better. So instead of spending your energy appreciating and investing in the choice you have made, you spend your energy thinking about other choices we could have made and how they could have been better.

The proliferation of choice is very much a first-world problem. Those with too little also struggle with choice and potentially comparison, but for different reasons. If you don't have the choice to choose, this is also a difficult place to be. You might not be able to choose between several different career paths, because only one is open to you. It's a luxury to be able to decide between two (or more) good things.

Schwartz observes that there are two types of people when it comes to searching for options and making decisions:

- Maximizers: "If you seek and accept only the best, you are a maximizer. Maximizers need to be assured that every purchase or decision was the best that could be made. Yet how can anyone truly know that any given option is absolutely the best possible? The only way to know is to check out all the alternatives."¹⁴⁷
- Satisficers: "To satisfice is to settle for something that is good enough and not worry about the possibility that there might be something better. A satisficer has criteria and standards. She searches until she finds an item that meets those standards, and at that point, she stops."¹⁴⁸

Both groups may have good tastes and a genuine desire to make a quality decision. However, "To a maximizer, satisficers appear to be willing to settle for mediocrity....A satisficer may be just as discriminating as a maximizer. The difference between the two types is that the satisficer is content with the merely excellent as opposed to the absolute best. I believe that the goal of maximizing is a source of great dissatisfaction, that it can make people miserable—especially in a world that insists on providing an overwhelming number of choices, both trivial and not so trivial."¹⁴⁹ What starts out as a desire to just make a good decision can lead to overwhelm and dissatisfaction with the choices made.

Which type do you identify with? Are you a Maximizer or a Satisficer? How does this affect your decision-making? Are you satisfied with your decisions after you make them, or do you experience regret?

Interestingly, the proliferation of choice is somewhat removed when you are looking to God for direction and wisdom. Using the truth of God's Word as a guide can serve as a criteria to eliminate many choices. Being obedient to God when you are given a direct calling or instruction also removes some of the unwanted consequences of choice. If you believe that the choice you made is the one that God wanted you to make, you spend less time regretting other choices and more time investing in the path you have chosen with His help.

Additionally, according to a podcast interview with Schwartz by Dr. Caroline Leaf, there are a few strategies you can enlist to help avoid buyer's remorse:

1. Good enough is almost always good enough—Stop seeking to find “the best” and focus more on “good enough.” That’s sufficient in almost all decision-making.¹⁵⁰
2. Choose when to choose—“To manage the problem of excessive choice, we must decide which choices in our lives really matter and focus our time and energy there, letting many other opportunities pass us by.”¹⁵¹
3. Put arbitrary limits on how much searching you will do—Having more options does not mean you’ll make a better decision. Maybe you set a limit of two stores, three websites, twenty houses, or twenty minutes of internet searching before you will make a decision. Maybe you set a deadline of next Thursday to make an important life choice. To combat the insane number of choices available and the temptation to look at “just one more” before deciding, it’s okay to limit your searching.¹⁵²
4. Have realistic expectations—We may not find the perfect decision. And even if we do find something we love, it may not provide the same pleasure over time because we tend to adapt. That super comfy sweater or couch just becomes normal. That amazing, expectation-shattering job opportunity becomes just a job.¹⁵³

What steps do you need to take to make better decisions? Are you stuck looking for “the best” or are you satisfied with “good enough”? Are you putting off making a decision out of fear of choosing wrongly? How does considering your faith in God and hearing His calling affect your decision-making?



Fighting Lies with the Truth

When you are in a place of uncertainty in career or calling, it can be easy to get caught up in doubt and fear. These lies can try to distract or derail you from the good work of living out your calling. In her book, *Get Out Of Your Head*, Jennie Allen lays out these questions that you may ask yourself when fighting the enemy and his lies with God's Truth:

1. What is the thought?
2. Is it true?
3. What does God say about it?
4. Will I believe God or believe the lie?¹⁵⁴

For example, in the chapter titled "Run Your Race," Jennie debunks the lie of "I can do whatever I want" like this:

Lie: I can do whatever I want

Truth: God has set me free to serve others, not indulge myself

Scripture: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather serve one another humbly in love" (Galatians 5:13).

Choice: I choose to seek the good of others over my own comfort. I choose intentionality.¹⁵⁵

Now it's your turn to fight the enemy with the truth:

What is the thought? What is the lie you're being told or that you're believing right now?

What does God say about it? What do you know to be true from Scripture?

What is the truth?

Will you believe God or believe the lie? What choice are you making?

You can repeat this process anytime you're encountering lies from the enemy. If left unchecked, these lies can cause damaging spirals of fear, anger, doubt, and anxiety. Cutting off the downward spiral of lies by using the truth can change the direction of your thoughts and actions. Ultimately God can change your trajectory to an upward spiral of growth through the power of His truth.

Reflect and Review on Chapter 8

Key Takeaways from Chapter 8

If you picture God's will as an umbrella or a target, are you currently living inside the boundaries of His will? Or outside of them? Talk to God about His will for your life. Is there anything you need to change?

Do you feel like you make good decisions? Why or why not?

What's one thing you're going to do differently the next time you have to make an important decision?

Is fear standing in your way of making good decisions?



Calling Canvas

Starting Point

Connect with God

My Values

My Sweet
Spot



Identity

Unique Distinctions

The Calling Canvas

This is where you'll be writing down what you learn from the marked exercises throughout this book, like you would do a paint-by-number or put together a puzzle. Our hope is that this finished grid will serve as a portrait of the masterpiece that you are in Christ Jesus. May it remind you where you've been, where you are, and where you are going.

You might not have a clear picture all at once. This process can be repeated as needed. The lean methodology that inspired this exercise is based on building, measuring, learning, and repeating. Keep coming back to these exercises and staying in relationship with God, and your calling will become clearer over time.

Calling Canvas Key

1. Starting Point, page 15: *Where am I right now? Where do I want to be?* This is your accurate assessment of where you are now in terms of your mindset about calling and career, especially as identified in the Five Paradigms of Work And Is Your Vocation A Magic Show? Exercises.
2. Connect with God, page 30: *When do I connect with God? What practices am I going to use on a regular basis to stay connected to the Source of my calling?* Ways to connect include: Reading Scripture, Prayer, Community, Music, Thankfulness, Giving, Fasting, Take a Day with God, etc.
3. Identity, page 49: *Who am I? What are my roles and relationships that combine to form my unique mission field? What do you care about that no one else does?* Think about who you are—your identity—in Christ, in your roles, and in your relationships. Then examine what opportunities for discipleship and ministry your unique identity gives you. Take your reflections on the Mission Field Map and The 6 P's exercises and write down your roles and relationships in the Identity box of the Calling Canvas. Those should inform to whom and where you hear God calling you to serve.
4. Unique Distinctions, page 62: *What makes me unique? What do I have that no one else has that cannot be bought or copied? Where might the Holy Spirit amplify that in you and ignite the x-factor? How are you going to use the gifts you have to meet the needs of others?* Combine what you learned from the Fingerprints of Calling, Ask Others, Spiritual Gifts, and SWOT reflect on your God-given and unique combination of gifts, experiences, talents, etc.
5. Values, page 68: *How do I make decisions? What do I prioritize when making decisions and informs my purpose?* Fill in your 3-7 values from the Values exercise.
6. Purpose Statement, page 73: *Why am I here? Why do I get up in the morning? What guiding principles, values, and identity determine why I do what I do?* Your Purpose Statement is bigger than your job, career, or vocation. It's the guiding principles that help you understand your identity and meaning. It's not what you do, it's why you do what you do.
7. Vocational Calling Statement, page 74: *What am I supposed to do?* Fill in the blanks, "I am a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples wherever I am. I am _____(name), a _____(unique identity) of Christ Jesus, called to _____(unique mission), among _____(unique position)."
8. My Sweet Spot, page 80: *What is my Sweet Spot and how do I stay there? What methods will I use to keep my focus on my calling and remember instances of faith and obedience?*

Continuing the Journey

Congratulations! Blessings to you for completing this workbook. It's time to take a break and celebrate. Reward yourself or your group with fun, fellowship, and/or food.

While you've reached the end of this book, you are at just the *start* of a life-long journey of hearing God calling and following Him. Here are some ways to keep going on this path of obedience, service, and self-awareness:

- Continue practicing the spiritual disciplines from Chapter 2. Your relationship with God is the key to seeing and knowing His calling for your life.
- Revisit any sections of this workbook on which you feel like you should have spent more time or you need a refresher. This book is a tool, not a checklist.
- Make a tradition of reviewing your Calling Canvas every 6 months. Revise, add, and clarify it as you gain a deeper understanding and experience of your calling.
- Invite a friend or small group to go through this *Hear God Calling You* workbook with you. If you benefited from it, chances are others will too.
- Consider volunteering with Crossroads Career or supporting the ministry financially. You could have the opportunity to help others hear God calling, maximize their potential, and/or get the right job.
- Check out the ["Step 1 - Upward"](#) and ["Step 3 - Aptitude"](#) resources from the Crossroads workbook, *You Were Created for Good Works*, which intersects well with the topics discussed in *Hear God Calling You*.
- Explore other Crossroads Career resources that might help you on your journey on the [website](#), [blog](#), [app](#) and [Job Board](#):
 - Access our 7-step action plan, career, and job resources
 - Post, pray, and praise on our confidential Prayer Network
 - Listen to the podcast and watch webinars
 - Finding a local or online group
 - Events with Ministry Partner Network: <https://crossroadscareer.org/events/>
 - Ministry Partner Locator: <https://crossroadscareer.org/locations/>
 - Search Job Connector for thousands of employer-posted jobs and:
 - Set up email job alerts
 - Apply for jobs and track applications
 - Create, keep, post and send resumes and cover letters
 - Use the Interest Profiler and Skill Matcher assessments

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