

# Principles for Transformation: Connecting Personal and Public Life

## How Do I Find My Calling?

By Dr. Art Lindsley



Being made in the image of God provides the basis for our work and vocation. If we are made in the image of God, we share his characteristics. Because God is creative, we can be creative in our work, and in fact, are called to such creativity. But how do we discover the work we are called to carry out? How does each of us find our calling?

I have interviewed hundreds of people in the process of conducting vocational profiles over the past twenty-five years. My favorite question is,

*If you could do anything you wanted to do, you had unlimited time to get further training, unlimited money, and you could not fail, what would you do?*

I have heard many fascinating answers to this question. One common thread through most of these answers is the desire to make a difference in life. One woman even confessed that her greatest fear was that her life would not make a difference.

Many people do not see themselves as significant, and do not have a vision for how God wants them to make a difference in the world using their unique gifts. I now want to explore how we can know specifically what work we are called to carry out. Here are three ideas to keep in mind when considering your calling.

### **1. We are called to be good stewards of our gifts.**

If you look at I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; Romans 12:6-8, and Ephesians 4:11-13, you will find various lists of gifts to be used in the Body of Christ. We are called to know what our gifts are, and use them vigorously for his kingdom. We are to use the same gifts in the world with respect to our work.

Our “natural” gifts are our “created” gifts – given to us by God. The Holy Spirit works to bring these gifts towards their full potential. The Fall has withered, misdirected and twisted our gifts, and the Spirit can redirect them to benefit both the Church and the world. The Fall can blind us to the very nature of the gifts we have been given. We need the Spirit’s help, and the help of others, to gain clarity on how to best use the gifts God has given us.

Many people are in jobs that do not fit them. In their book *Finding a Job You Can Love*, Ralph Mattson and Arthur Miller estimate that 50 to 80 percent of working Americans have roles that do not fit their desires or abilities. Vocational counseling could help a great deal.

## **2. God has made people for every position in the Body of Christ.**

He has also made people for every position on the corporate flow chart.

In the hundreds of vocational profiles I have done, I have found some interesting cases. Some people – relatively few – are made to be CEOs. Some are best as the second in command. Others love to assist their boss in order to make him or her succeed. Some are made to be inventors. Others love managing all the details of what someone else has started.

I interviewed one man whose greatest desire was to be a janitor of the local school and make its floors shine. Some love to star and others want to be out of the spotlight. It is imperative to know what you are made for and not to desire, envy, or covet another’s position. Few are made to be Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, or Ravi Zacharias. But you can find your place and delight in it.

## **3. Pay attention to your life history.**

When discerning your calling, it is helpful to give a thoughtful examination of your life.

Note what you have enjoyed doing and feel like you have done well. List at least three illustrations in each period of your life: grade school, junior high, high school, college, post-college. Then share about the details of what you enjoyed with a friend. Note the following:

- Any recurring subject matter
- What place you play on a team?
- What kinds of challenges trigger your motivations
- How and why you are motivated to learn
- What primary gifts you use, and what are the ends and purpose towards which you drive

There is a book that can help you do this – *Cure for the Common Life* by Max Lucado. This book gives the biblical background for calling and provides practical exercises to discern your motivated abilities pattern.

Also, there is no substitute for having a wise friend listen to you and reflect back like an accurate mirror what they see. Paying attention to the way God has created you and finding a wise friend willing to listen will reap dividends throughout your life as you seek to discover and pursue your calling.