

My Place in HIStory:

Discovering Your Calling



by Darrow L. Miller



My Place in HIStory: Discovering Your Calling
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HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Introduction

This downloadable workbook was designed as a supplement to the book *LifeWork: A Biblical Theology of What You Do Every Day*. This is not a “how to” or “10 basic steps” type of workbook that will provide you the answer to all your questions, instead it is a set of exercises that will lead you through a thoughtful inventory of your calling.

Purpose

The purpose of this workbook is to create a ‘Sabbath’ space in your life, where you can set aside being busy, taking time for quiet reflection. This set of narratives and exercises will help you discover the unique purpose for which the God of the universe has made you. God will reveal his purpose for you as you walk through life, seeking him and his call.

Within these pages, you will find tools to help you break away from the bondage of a materialist paradigm, allowing you to walk in a new world, the kingdom of God. In the materialist paradigm, we work for money so that we can buy things. We often spend our time moving at one thousand miles an hour and going nowhere. Now, there is time to stop and hear from God.

Individuality

God loves individuality and has made the universe with incredible diversity. As a human being, there is no one else like you. God has made you for a unique purpose in the advancement of his kingdom. This workbook will help you discover and embrace your uniqueness, showing you how to use your individuality to advance his kingdom.

Pray

Ask God to speak to you as you take time over the next few months to work through this workbook. Tell him that you want to know why he has made you, and that you desire to know his call and are committed to walk in it.

Order

This workbook is designed in a logical order. Take time to look through the materials and then determine how you want to approach them. You may want to work through them methodically or, perhaps, you will want to only work on those sections that you are most interested in. However you decide to proceed, be clear about it in your own mind. Set a time frame for how long a ‘Sabbath’ you will give yourself for this reflective process.

Accountability

Ask a friend to hold you accountable and let him know you would like to share with him what you are learning.

Keep a journal

In addition to these discovery narratives and exercises, some people may find it helpful to keep a journal of what God is teaching you.

Transparency

There are no right or wrong answers. The issue is for you to be as honest and as objective as you can. If you cannot answer a question, make note of it, ask God if there is something he wants to reveal to you and come back later.

Take your time

This is the first day of the rest of your life. Enjoy the quietness of your reflection.

THE ASSIGNMENT

One well-known persecutor of the early church was Saul of Tarsus.¹ While on his way to Damascus, he was confronted by his Savior, Jesus of Nazareth.² Jesus was going to save Saul, change his name to Paul and give him his assignment, the purpose for which he had been made. We find these remarkable words in Acts 22:10:

‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been *assigned to do*.’ (Emphasis added)

Paul had an *assignment*. It was God’s purpose, from his mother’s womb,³ for him to take the gospel to the Gentiles.⁴ The word “assignment” is the Greek word *tasso* and means, “to put in order,” “to station.” It means to appoint for a particular purpose, to ordain for a particular office. Paul had a kingdom assignment. He was saved, not only for heaven, but also for an assignment here on earth. Paul was to carry out that calling in the midst of the Greco-Roman world of the 1st Century.

The Call of God

Each believer has been created for a purpose. We find that purpose in the context of our calling. There is both a general call and a particular call on a believer’s life.

A believer’s *general call* is to salvation and the Christian life. We are called to the cross of Christ for our justification and to carry our own cross for our sanctification. We live out the Christian life within the framework of God’s three great mandates. The first mandate is the one given at Creation, the *Cultural Mandate*, to develop the earth.⁵ Christ gave the second mandate, the *Great Commandment*, to love one another⁶ and to love your neighbor as yourself⁷. The third mandate is the *Great Commission* to disciple nations.⁸ This general call creates the context for God’s *particular call* on each believer’s life.

The particular call is the unique purpose for which you have been made. It includes, but is not solely defined by, your vocation. We see this demonstrated in the life of the Carpenter of Nazareth. Jesus’ vocation was carpentry, but his purpose was larger than his vocation. He had been made for the Cross.

Jesus – The Cup

Jesus came to do the will of his Father in heaven,⁹ acknowledging that he brought glory to the Father by completing the unique work that the Father had for him to do.¹⁰ In the Garden of Gethsemane we see the struggle between the Father’s sovereignty and the Son’s real freedom. Three times Jesus prayed that “this cup” would be taken away, and yet Jesus also wanted the Father’s will to be done.¹¹ The Father’s plan was for Jesus to die for our salvation. But Jesus was no robot; he had to choose the Father’s will.

The word “cup” is the Greek word *poterion*, referring to a drinking vessel. It is also used metaphorically as one’s destiny or divine appointment, possessing joy or sorrows, agony or ecstasy, suffering or peace, adversity or prosperity. The cup given to us by God to drink is meant for the good of the individual or the community. Jesus’ cup bought our salvation and marked the

beginning of the restoration of all things.¹² Our cup can be seen as part of God's appointments or assignments, which we have the choice to accept.

The Kairos Moment

We are all aware that we live in *space* (in a house, in a city, in a nation, on the planet earth) and *time* (minutes, days, months, and years). The concept of time referred to here is clock, or chronological time.

Yet we live in a universe that God has made, where there are two other types of time: transcendent and kairos time. Transcendent time is timelessness, the realm of time that God inhabits. God stands outside of space and time, and yet he inhabits both.

Kairos time is the point where eternity breaks through into present time, the place where heavenly events and purpose break through into space and time. We are to live our lives with the backdrop of eternity. Kairos moments are divine appointments. We are to anticipate those pregnant moments of God's special visitation in our lives, since it is these places where the cup is extended, and where we must choose to do God's will, as Jesus did.

The Dance

In his science fiction book *Perelandra* C. S. Lewis describes God's breaking through into space-time history as the Great Dance. He writes:

In the plan of the Great Dance plans without number interlock, and each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed. Thus each is equally at the centre and none are there by being equals, but some by giving place and some by receiving it, the small things by their smallness and the great by their greatness, and all the patterns linked and looped together by the unions of a kneeling with a sceptred [sic] love. Blessed be He!

.... So with the Great Dance. Set your eyes on one movement and it will lead you through all patterns and it will seem to you the master movement. But the seeming will be true. Let no mouth open to gainsay it. There seems no plan because it is all plan: there seems no centre because it is all centre. Blessed be He!¹³

God and man are in a dance. The very nature of many dances is that there are two partners; one leads and the other follows. The movement is fluid, alive and dynamic. The relationship can be described as *sovereign-freedom*. Udo Middleman, of the Francis A. Schaeffer Foundation, has coined the term "Open Sovereignty"¹⁴ to describe this balance. In the dance, God leads. He is absolutely Sovereign, but not in a fatalistic or deterministic fashion. Man follows God's lead. He is free, responsible, and responds to God's lead. But man is not autonomous. As they dance together, history is made.

The beauty and symmetry of the dance stands, on the one hand, in contrast to a mechanistic, fatalistic and deterministic model of the universe. In this model, God's sovereignty leaves man a puppet, without freedom or responsibility. On the other hand, it contrasts to an autonomous, purposeless, anarchic view of the universe. In this view, there are no limits to man's freedom

and God is no longer sovereign. The wonder of revelation is that history is real. Man and God make history through the dance.

Our Purpose

God has made the universe for a purpose. There is an end to which all of history is moving. This end, this *eschatological* purpose, is the goal of all creation. Each individual has been made for a purpose that fits with God's eschatological purpose. This is the *anthropological* purpose, connecting the individual person to God's grand design. Part of the wonder of life is discovering that unique purpose and then walking in freedom towards that end.

God's purpose or intention for our lives is revealed in our design. Just as you can determine the purpose for the eyes or lungs by examining them, so the way we are made and the giftings we have, reveal God's unique purpose for our lives. The word *design* is related to the word *designation*, referring to direction or appointment.

There are no ordinary people. Or to put it differently, the wonder of the ordinary is that each person is unique, distinguished from all others in design, potential and purpose. Every person was designed for a purpose, has a name, a passion, and a personal story that connects to the Divine Story – HStory.

Each person has a destiny. This is not framed by fatalism or determinism, but lives within the context of the dance. Your destiny is a mystery to be uncovered, an adventure to be lived, and a journey to be walked. To fulfill our destiny, we are to be people who think new thoughts and dream new dreams. Your destiny is tied up with God's mission; your quest is linked to the advancement of his kingdom.

Your destiny is tied to God's *destin*-ation. God ordains, commissions, appoints and destines individuals for his destination, the consummation of history. Discovering our destiny is to know the destination – the City of God. Your destiny is to fulfill the unique purpose for which you have been made.

Each person has been made for a cause. That cause is God's Divine compulsion. When you discover that cause, you pursue it, you cannot do otherwise. For me, the compulsion for my life has been to leave the world with less poverty and hunger than the way I found it. My compulsion has led me, in each chapter of my life, to engage in some way with the fight against hunger.

"So he called ten of his servants and *gave them ten minas.*" (Lk. 19:13) In the parable of the Ten Minas, we will see that God has equipped us to carry out his task as we begin to identify our calling by examining how we have been equipped.

Capitalizing the Ministers

In the King James Version of Luke 19:13, "And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come,'" we notice there are three elements. First, Jesus called his ten servants. Second, he equipped them for a task. Third, he gave them the task: "Occupy till I come!" So far, we have examined the call and the task. We have seen that Jesus

calls us to redemption. This is the general call upon all believers' lives. Then we have seen that he calls us for a task. The task is to occupy territory for Jesus until he returns. God has a unique task for each Christian. The sum of that task is a believer's *lifework*. Now we will examine the investing.

God **invests** for the call, capitalizing the ministers for their ministry. The parable that has formed the framework for my book, *Lifework*, is commonly called "The Parable of the Ten Minas." What is a mina? What is the significance of the ten minas? What are some of the key elements of God's investment in our lives? And how can God's investment help us to understand our unique calling? These are some of the questions we will seek to address in this section.

The Greek word here translated "mina" is *mina*; it is found nine times in the New Testament and is translated "pound" in the King James Version.¹⁵ A mina was about three months' wages, so ten minas was the equivalent of two to three years' wages.¹⁶ The minas represent the capital or equipping that Christ invests into his servants.

The capital is of a general nature -- what some have called *common graces* -- for all human beings, in addition to *special graces* for those who have been redeemed by Christ. Common graces include time (the hours of our days and the days of our lives), reason and creativity, natural abilities, skills and training, and our interests. Special graces include salvation, the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.

Jesus invests in all people not for themselves, for their own personal consumption, but for his purposes. Like capital in a business, his investment is to be put to work. We may see this as a for-profit business. The business is the kingdom of God, the proprietor of the business is Jesus Christ and we are the employees or franchisers. The owner capitalizes the business (the minas) and expects a return on his investment: the advancement of his kingdom.

There is co-responsibility for the kingdom. Jesus has a task: 1) go to a distant country, 2) be appointed king, 3) and then to return in the future with the consummation of the kingdom. The disciples also have a task: to apply the capital to the business of the present work of the kingdom, "do business," "trade," "occupy." We are, in our occupations, to occupy territory for Christ and his kingdom so that when he returns, the place that you are working is kingdom ground.

Discovering Your Calling

How do we discover our calling? Perhaps the biggest element is to explore how we have been made.

General Considerations

As Wheaton College's Leland Ryken, Clyde S. Kilby Professor of English, points out: the Puritans looked at several tools for determining one's calling.¹⁷ These included inward - endowments and inclinations (nature); outward - circumstances; advice of others - parents, guardians, magistrates, pastors, godly men and women; education; and gifts that God has given.

As one begins to discover one's calling, it is important to remember that there is no one like you. Psalm 139:13-16 says:

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

You have been fearfully and wonderfully made for a purpose! For what have you been *designed*? What is the *purpose* for which you have been made? What is the *destiny* to which you are to move?

Puritan writer Richard Baxter reminds us of the simple splendor of our call when he said, "Choose not that in which you may be most rich or honorable in the world; but that in which you may do most good and best escape from sinning."¹⁸ Os Guinness writes that, "A sense of a calling should precede a choice of job and career, and the main way to discover calling is along the lines of what we are each created and gifted to be. Instead of the pragmatic - 'You are what you do,' the Kingdom calling says: 'Do what you are' ... The truth is not that God is finding us a place for our gifts but that God has created us and our gifts for a place of His choosing—and we will only be ourselves when we are finally there."¹⁹

The grand quest is for us to find the place for which we have been made. Our natural talents and spiritual gifts find their most full expression when we are walking in the midst of our destiny. If you are asking, "What is my assignment?" your answer should be, "What will allow me to make the greatest contribution to the Kingdom?"

To "occupy till I come," requires doing and being. In doing action, we are to mimic Luther in his desire to be found "planting trees" when Christ returns. We are to be who we are and to engage the world with our whole being. We are also to reflect on our being, to answer the question "what have I been made for? My design reflects my purpose." Our gifts are to be used for that purpose.

Walking with Jesus!

As modern Christians, we tend to speak in terms of being saved. When did Christ's disciples get saved? On the day that each met Jesus, he said, "Come follow me!" He *called* them, to join him on a journey. He called them to walk with himself. This journey is a grand adventure. Your life story, your history, is to connect with God's transforming story- HStory. And God is the author of both stories.

In C.S. Lewis's children's story *The Horse and His Boy*, Aslan the Lion, the figure of Christ, is talking to Shasta, the young hero of the story, over his concern for why Aslan had injured his friend and companion Arvis: "I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no-one any story but his own."²⁰ Lewis' understanding is that each of us has a story, and that God has come to tell us our story. What an incredible privilege. As we walk the crossroad with Christ, our own story is revealed.

It is my hope that the exercises in this workbook will help you define your calling, the assignment God made you for.

HOW CAN I KNOW GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE?

When a plane is preparing for a night landing, it is guided to safety by a set of landing lights. The pilot of the plane must first find the lights and then bring the plane into alignment with them. Once the plane is lined up with the lights, the pilot knows that he is on the correct path for landing the plane. Similarly, ancient mariners followed a series of lights to navigate safely into a harbor.

As we seek to follow the call of Jesus, there are a number of principals that will help us discover our landing lights and start to answer the questions, how do I know my calling? How do I discover my assignment? This is not a 10 step processes so much as it is a life long journey of discovery. It is not so much finding the road, as walking the road. In order to get started on the journey, let's spend some time looking at the principals.

First, have an attitude of, and be in, **prayer** to the One who has made you and called you. As you begin this journey, bathe the process in prayer. Ask specifically for God to reveal to you, the assignment he has for you.

Second, keep your eye on the **prize**. As the book of Hebrews reminds us "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us *run* with perseverance *the race* marked out for us. Let us *fix our eyes on Jesus*, the author and perfecter of our faith ..." (Heb. 12:1-2a, italics added) just like our forefathers before us, each of us is running a race. At the end of the race is the prize, Christ Jesus. In order to successfully maneuver through all the obstacles on the course, we must keep our eyes on the prize at the end. If we spend our time looking at the barriers thrown in our way, we may tremble in fear. But if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, we will have insurance for completing the race.

Third, study the **word of God**. The Bible is humanity's *owner's manual*. The One who made us gave us instructions on how life works. The Bible speaks truly, though not exhaustively, to all of life, not merely the spiritual realm. It speaks in principles that can be applied to all of life and so we study the word of God in order to be sanctified (Jn. 17:17). The scriptures reveal how we are to live a godly life in the midst of the world.

A number of years ago when I was the director of a student union at Northern Arizona University, one of our students expressed his frustration: "I just wish God would tell me what He wants me to be!" Robb was at the end of his junior year of university and was preparing to change his major for the sixth time, a young Christian who was earnestly seeking the Lord's will for his life. As a student pastor, I wanted to offer Robb godly advice. What did God want Robb to be? After a moment, I said to Robb, "God has told you what he wants you to be. It is written in black and white. He wants you to be a godly man!" Is that what Robb was looking for? No! But it is the answer that God speaks with clarity.

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus addresses the people's worry about the basics of life, food, clothing and shelter. He reminds us that God takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and provides for them; if he does so for these, how much more will be his provision for us. Then we find these most remarkable words of Jesus: "But seek first his kingdom and his

righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Mt. 6:33) Here we find the most remarkable principle: seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (God’s *general* will) and all these things (*particular* will) will be given to you as well. Sometimes there are things we will not find by looking for them; we only discover them by looking for something else. God’s particular will is one of these things. God promises to reveal his *particular* will as we seek his *general* will.

We can study the Word for guidance. By reading God’s Word we gain insights into how to make decisions, as God speaks through his Word to shed light on the decisions we are making. We can also study the Word for vocational insights, to develop, on a personal level, a *Biblical Theology of Vocation*. A separate booklet has been developed for this process, and is available at our website, http://www.disciplenations.org/books_download. In addition, considering how Jesus might have done your job, if it were his job, can complement this. What would his attitude have been towards this task? How might he have carried your work out?

Fourth, seek **Godly counsel**. You may ask friends and family members to reflect with you on what they observe as your gifts and abilities. Your pastor or other advisor may have insights that would help in discovering your call. As you seek Godly counsel, you may receive conflicting advice, forcing you to clarify the issues you are dealing with. If you have a consensus from the Godly counselors, you have one of your “landing lights” in view.

Listen discerningly to “prophetic” utterances. Is this of God or of man? Remember that Peter made such an utterance to Christ by saying he would never die on the cross (Mt. 16:21-22). Jesus responded with discernment to this declaration by saying that Peter does not have in mind “the things of God, but the things of men” (Mt 16:23). Test the utterance with the word of God to see if it is from men or God. Not all prophetic utterances are of God.

Fifth, take into account your **circumstances**. God ordains the circumstances of our lives, moving with complete sovereignty in history, opening and closing doors. But we, like the partner in a dance, are expected to walk through the door. God leads and we are to freely respond. There are both open and closed doors. Sometimes when we are at a crossroad, there is one open door, one clear path ahead. This is a good indication we are to walk through it. Sometimes there may be two or three open doors. When these occur, we are to use our sanctified common sense to make a decision which door we will walk through.

Sometimes in our search there are only closed doors (see Acts 16:6-10). A closed door is not “no answer.” It is another form of guidance, a marker that says “not this way!” God is often times pointing out the correct direction; by telling us what we are not to do.

Sixth, use **wisdom**. You are a free and responsible agent, not a robot or a puppet on a string. You are not a cog in a machine. You are a free, moral agent, whom God made to shape history. It is your decision! Stand in the glory of making the decision.

When making the decision, there are some questions to answer. Which of these opportunities has the most potential, not for money, security, safety, power, or worldly success, but *for the kingdom*? Which of these options am I most suited for? Are there things that others are unwilling or unable to do that I am qualified to do? There may be more than one good choice

before you. However, do not let the good get in the way of the *best*. Sometimes there are many good things that are the enemy of the best thing. Choose what you have been made to do.

My lifelong friend Dr. Bob Moffitt was faced with three excellent career choices a number of years ago. He struggled for many weeks with his decision. One day, the Lord used Bob's wife Judy to speak to him, when she said, "There are many things that you can do *well*. But what have you been *made* to do?"

Use *sanctified common sense*. Prudence—wisdom applied to practice—was a virtue of our forefathers in the faith. They sought to use sound judgment in their decision making process and we should follow their example.

Seventh, leave the prison of your **prerogatives**! Our prerogatives are our real and perceived rights or privileges, the things that we see as our due. Different people cling to different things. Some cling to status, to be a member of a certain class, caste or tribe. Some want to be comfortable, some to be successful, others want to be safe, while others want their health. Still others want their time and some their privacy. All of us have things that are important to us, things that we think we have a right to. It is these prerogatives that often keep us from seeing and doing what God has for us.

Our Lord and Savior set an example for us in the matter of rights as Paul records in Philippians 2:5-11:

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!"

Jesus was God, but he *did not consider equality with God something to be grasped*. He did not cling to his prerogatives. Nor did he defend his rights and privileges as being God. He held them loosely. Sometimes if we cling to our rights, we create barriers to God's most blessed and perfect will for our lives. We miss the discovery of the grand adventure by choosing to live in a box of our own making, the box of our perceived rights and privileges. We want our assignment, we pray for our assignment, but then when God is prepared to reveal it to us, we are unwilling to leave the prison of our prerogatives.

In Romans, Paul reminds us of our powerful response to God's mercy:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.
Do not conform any longer 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. (Rom. 12:1-2)

In direct response to God's mercy, we are to give our lives as a *living sacrifice*. This is the logical response to God's grace in our lives. It is unreasonable that we would continue to conform our lives to the world's patterns. When we give ourselves in this way, we are testing and approving what is God's good, pleasing and perfect will.

Last, look for the **peace** of the Holy Spirit. When the decision is made, then commit it to the Lord. The Holy Spirit has the ability to provide peace or to stir up tumult. Peace is the sign that you have made the right decision. An anxious soul may be the sign that it is not time to move forward with the decision.

Now that we have reviewed the eight general principles for knowing God's will, the next section will start you on the journey of identifying your assignment.

WHAT'S IN YOUR TOOL BELT?

Identifying Your Assignment

Before we move to the practical exercises that will help you identify your assignment, it would be good to examine two stories that may help us understand the uniqueness of each of our lives and callings. The first analogy is called *God's Amazing Tapestry*. The second is that of *The Tool Belt*.

God's Amazing Tapestry

Good friends and fellow-workers Trent and Christie Eastman told the following story. At the time, they were the Country Directors of Food for the Hungry in Bangladesh and they told this story as part of a training program:

We find ourselves, you and I, in the heavenly places – walking side by side and approaching the palace of the High King! Recognized at the door as His heirs we are admitted to the great hall where the tables wait for that day. We wander freely through majestic corridors until we come to the heart of the mansion—God's workroom. Come with me, let's go in...

On the far wall we see an immense TAPESTRY. It is so wondrous! It radiates the Creator's passion, love and creativity. We are drawn across the room towards this masterpiece, which God's own hand has wrought. The intricate designs coalesce, the picture becomes clear. We realize this tapestry records all of history. The Story!

ALL THINGS RECONCILED TO GOD!

As we reverently approach, we can see more and more details, the creation of the angels, the tree of life, and Noah's family seeing the first rainbow. There are the Israelites coming out of Egypt, David's songs and Hosea's unfaithful wife. We see kings worshiping God – Solomon, Joash, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Pachacuti—the lives of common people are also made out, woven together in God's vast design. There is Jesus playing with Joseph. There He is with the adulteress. There broken upon a cross. There are the Irish monks at Kells, the Byzantine tradesmen of Constantinople. Here is the Reformation. There the Wesleyan Revivals. Innumerable peoples – the Canaanites, the Chinese, the Incas, the Saxons, the Gauls, and the Santal. We see Napoleon's army marching across Europe, Kho Tha Byu and the Karen Revival, Hitler and Bonhoeffer, conflicts between India and Pakistan, the collapse of the Soviet Union. We begin to grasp what God has done, every scene captured and used to reveal the grand design.

ALL THINGS RECONCILED TO GOD!

And we are awed, both by God's patience and His mastery.

Coming closer we see where He is currently weaving and realize the tapestry is not complete. One edge hangs unfinished and there next to it is an assortment of thread and some tools.

Reaching out to touch the tapestry we find the entire tapestry is made up of small threads: brown; red; purple; brilliant white; some gold. Most are obviously common material: wool or cotton, and many threads are similar, yet each is unique. Then, you glance down and realize...***you are a thread too.***

What Kind of Thread Am I?

Read Philippians 2:12-15. What is the relationship between God's work and our desires?

Read Psalm 37:3-6 and add your observations.

Before going on, read 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. There are many places in the Tapestry that God could use a plain beige wool thread.

The Tool Belt

For a number of years I worked in building construction, where I quickly learned about tool belts. Each building trade had its own unique tool belt that carried the tools needed to carry out the trade. I functioned as a carpenter, so I wore a carpenter belt that provides home for a hammer, chisels, tape measure, chalk line, utility knife, files, nails, etc. An electrician carried a belt that held a variety of pliers, screwdrivers, wire strippers, wire cutters, cable cutters, electrical tape, electrical screws, etc. A plumber's belt held pipe wrenches, vise grips, pipe cutters, plumbers saw, fitting tube brushes, pipe dope, plumber's tape, etc. A sheet metal worker would carry adjustable wrenches, awls, drills and drill bits, calipers, metal cutters, etc.

If you were new to a job site, you could examine the various tool belts and toolboxes to get an idea of what the owner of those tools did for their vocation. A plumber would have a hard time working with the tools in a carpenter's tool box and belt, however, if you were a "jack of all trades" with the ability to work in a number of different building trades, you would know what the construction supervisor wanted you to do on any given day by examining the tool belt that he handed you each day.

So it is with us. God has endowed each one of us with certain gifts, talents and abilities for his purposes.²¹ It is as if he has given each person a unique tool belt, filled with tools for the task we

have been given. One of the ways to discover our calling is to look at the tools in our belt. What are the tools in your belt? The following exercise is designed to help you discover your call by examining how you have been equipped; to look at the tools God put in your tool belt.

The Tools in the Tool Belt

In order to examine the uniqueness of the “tools” in your tool belt, we will look at your:

- **Motivation**
- **Life History**
- **Design**
 - **Natural Talents**
 - **Personality**
 - **Spiritual Gifts**
- **Preparation**
 - **Enculturation**
 - **Training**
 - **Education**
- **Interests**
- **Stations**
- **Connections**

In each of these areas of exploration, you will find:

- **Definition:** This will define the term or phrase that you will be exploring.
- **Scripture:** This section will provide a scripture, relating to the area being explored.
- **Discovery Questions:** These questions are designed to help you reflect on the topic. Sometimes a question is stated in more than one way. When this is the case, you do not need to answer all of the questions, but only the ones that help you engage with the topic.
- **Discovery Exercise:** This is usually something for you to do to help you explore the theme further. These may take a few minutes or a few hours. They may involve you alone or involve other people.
- **Barriers to your Calling:** This section will give you an opportunity to examine the things, real and imagined, that keep you from fulfilling your calling.
- **Bridges to your Calling:** In this section, you will have the opportunity to explore the things that can help you fulfill your calling.
 - **Influencing the Domains:** Domains are variously identified with the Biblical phrase “the gates of the city,” or in modern terms “spheres of society,” and are critical areas in society such as science, health care, the arts, government, business, etc. This part of the exercise will help you think through how your calling can influence the domains of society. For more on the domains, please see chapters 18, 19, and 20 in my book *LifeWork: A Biblical Theology of What You Do Every Day*.

- **Prayer and Reflection:** Here, you will come before the One who has made you for a unique purpose, and commune with him as it relates to your vocation, hearing his voice.
- **Application:** Wisdom dictates that we apply what we are learning. This exercise will offer you the opportunity to do something specific in the next week.

How to Examine the Tools in the Tool Belt

- **Stop your busy life for a moment.** Take time to quiet your soul and listen to God. He wants to speak to you.
- Work at a **pace** that suits you. This is not something to race through. These exercises are meant to create a reflective season in your life. Some ways to set a good pace are:
 - Take a week to work through *each* exercise. Find a quiet place and time to do this reflection.
 - Take a week of personal retreat and do *all* the exercises while in a beautiful and quiet place.
- These exercises will be most meaningful to you when done as **individual reflection**, however, this can be done:
 - When two close friends, or a husband and wife, meet regularly to share their insights, pray with each other and hold each other accountable for the reflection process.
 - In a cell group or study group from church, the university, etc. with the group meeting on a regular basis to share, pray and hold each other accountable.
- Remember there are no right, or wrong, answers. There are only **transparent answers**. The more truthful you are, the more these exercises will benefit you.
- **Review** the section *How Can I Know God's Will for My Life?* These exercises are part of "lining up the runway lights."
- Remember that hearing the Voice and following the call is a **lifelong process**. What you are doing now is taking a season in time, a Sabbath, to consciously reflect on your vocational calling.
- **Pray** at the beginning of each exercise and ask the One who made you to reveal more of his unique purpose for your life.
- When you have completed all the exercises, review your work so you can begin to see the **big picture** of your calling and seek to find some logical steps to enable you to increasingly walk in your call.
- Decide how you want to proceed:
 - Do them **in order** as they have been written.
 - Do them in the order of relevance and **personal preference**.
 - There is no magic here. Do what works best for you!

Let's begin!

1. MOTIVATION

Definition: “That which incites to action; that which determines the choice, or moves the will,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. That which enflames the heart!

Scripture: Philippians 1:21: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Discovery Questions:

What enflames your heart?

What do you love to do?

If money and failure were not issues, what would you do with your life?

What motivates you? What energizes you?

What are you willing to die for?

What makes you come alive?

Discovery Exercise:

On a separate piece of paper, write a poem capturing the thing that enflames your heart.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What dreams have you had in the past that have died?

What destroyed those dreams?

Bridges to Your Calling:

What passions have flourished throughout your life?

What caused them to flourish?

Influencing the Domains:

What domain do you have passion for?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Thank You Lord for the passions You have given me for the things that enflame my heart.
Please reveal to me how I can best employ these passions for Your Kingdom.”

Application:

What one new thing will you do this week that springs from your hearts passion?

2. LIFE HISTORY

Definition: The unfolding of one's life in the context of HlStory.

Scripture: Romans 8:28: "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."

Discovery Questions:

How has the Lord worked to unfold your life?

What are the major milestones or turning points in your life?

What experiences have most shaped your life and why?

Discovery Exercise:

Use Appendix 1 to help you develop a time line of your life. How has God been working in your life to shape and prepare you for your calling? Begin with critical events in your grandparent's lives and move to your parent's lives and then on to you and your family today.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What experiences have proven a distraction to what you sense your calling is? If you do not yet have any idea what your calling is, feel free to return to this question at a later stage.

Bridges to Your Calling:

What experiences have done the most to build towards this calling?

Influencing the Domains:

How can these experiences help you impact the domains where you work and live?

Prayer and Reflection:

Reflect on how God has grafted your life into HlStory. "Lord, thank You for calling me into Your family and into Your purpose. Give me a heart for Your purpose and the courage to walk in it."

Application:

Identify an obvious next step in walking out God's purpose, and take it.

3. NATURAL TALENTS

Definition: “Faculty; natural gift or endowment,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. The skills and abilities one is born with i.e. music, languages, the arts, math and science, athletics.

Scripture: Exodus 35:35: “He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers—all of them master craftsmen and designers.”

Discovery Questions:

What are you good at doing?

What natural talents were you born with? Some examples include music, art, inquisitive mind (invention, discovery), analytical mind, oral or written communication, athletics, and languages.

What do people say your skills and talents are? What do they come to you for help with?

Discovery Exercise:

Use Appendix 2 to make a “T” chart listing your natural talents and weaknesses to be avoided. Ask several people, with whom you are close, to do the same for your life. Compare and contrast their insights with your own.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What keeps you from fully using your talents?

Bridges to Your Calling:

How might you further refine your talents through training or education?

Influencing the Domains:

How can your talents be used in your domain of labor?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Father, thank You for the talents and skills You have given to me. Please reveal if I have made any of them into an idol. I want to worship You and You alone.”

Application:

Pick one of your talents and use it specifically to bless another person this week.

4. PERSONALITY

Definition: “That which constitutes an individual, a distinct person, or that which constitutes individuality,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. It is your personality, *the propensity of your life*.

Scripture: Psalm 139:13-14:

“For You created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.”

Discovery Questions:

How would you describe your personality? Mark an “X” on each line.

Optimistic	_____	Pessimistic
Introverted	_____	Extroverted
Analytical	_____	Institutive
Head	_____	Heart
Indoors	_____	Outdoors

What insights have you gained from your reflection on these scales?

Finish the following statements:
Others would describe me as...

God might describe me as ...

Discovery Exercise:

On a separate piece of paper, draw a picture of yourself and your environment that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of your personality.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What elements of your personality need to be tamed in order to walk in your calling?
How will you bring discipline to those areas?

Bridges to Your Calling:

What key strengths of your personality can contribute to your calling?

How will you employ them?

Influencing the Domains:

How can the strengths of your personality contribute to the larger domain of your work?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Thank You Father for I am beautifully and wonderfully made...for a purpose.” As you pray, reflect on what the Lord may be revealing to you about the purpose for which you have been made.

Application:

Share your insights with a friend, family member or spiritual advisor.

5. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Definition: The *charismata* are gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to Christians to equip them to love and serve others.

Scripture: Romans 12:6a: “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”

Discovery Questions:

What are you doing that God seems to be blessing and multiplying?

What action gives you the greatest sense of fulfillment? How might you do more of this?

What are others observing about your spiritual gifts? What are they seeing?

Discovery Exercise:

Prayerfully study Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-30 and Ephesians 4:7-12. Begin to examine your own life to see which of these you might possess, and then make a list below of these gifts. Remember; these are examples of the gifts of the Spirit, not an exhaustive list.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What prevents you from using your spiritual gifts?

Bridges to Your Calling:

How can you see your spiritual gifts being more fully employed?

Influencing the Domains:

How can your spiritual gifts be manifest in the domain of your calling?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Thank You, Lord, for the extraordinary gifts You have given to me. Help me to see, with Your eyes, the needs in my community that You have equipped me to address.”

Application:

Begin to prayerfully walk in the world, asking Christ to allow you to see needs with his eyes. As you identify those needs, begin to respond to them with the gifts that he has given you.

6. ENCULTURATION

Definition: The process by which human beings learn their culture.

Scripture: Luke 2:52: “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Discovery Questions:

How does your language shape how you view the world?

What are some of the strengths of your culture, which lead to life? For example, a strong sense of community.

What are some of the weaknesses in your culture, which lead to death? For example, a culture of corruption.

Discovery Exercise:

Using Colin Harbinson’s understanding of the elements of culture found in Appendix 3, identify some of the natural, redemptive, demonic and distorted elements within your culture.

Barriers to Your Calling:

Identify the barriers in your culture that hinder you from fulfilling your calling.

Bridges to Your Calling:

How does your cultural background prepare you for your calling?

Influencing the Domains:

How can your particular experience be used in the domain of your work?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Thank You, heavenly Father, that You have made me to be a culture maker. Help me to bring Kingdom principles into my own culture.”

Application:

Identify one of the demonically distorted elements in your culture. What is one thing that you can do to oppose this distortion this week?

7. TRAINING

Definition: “To exercise; to discipline; to teach and form by practice,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. It refers to practical knowledge and applicable skills.

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6 (KJV) “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Discovery Questions:

What have you been trained to do? What on-the-job training, such as management or coaching classes, or vocational training, such as auto mechanics or bookkeeping training, or military training, have you received? List as many types of training as you can.

What skills have you acquired through life’s experiences (informal education)? For example, planting and harvesting, because you grew up on a farm; welding that your father taught you as a young boy; or, baking your grandmother taught you as you grew up. Note that these are *acquired*, not natural, skills. List as many as you can.

What do people at work or in your community come to you for? What do they ask you to help them with? What knowledge do they rely on you for? List as many as you can.

Discovery Exercise:

On a separate piece of paper, draw a time line that identifies the people who have been involved in training you and the skills that you have acquired from them.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What skills are you lacking that are required for your calling?
How can you get those skills?

Bridges to Your Calling:

How can these acquired skills reveal and contribute to your calling?

Influencing the Domains:

How can your acquired skills be applied in the domain of your work?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Father, thank You for all those who have invested in my life including my parents, grandparents and teachers.” Ask yourself whom you are in a position to train?

Application:

In this next week, make yourself available to share your knowledge or skill with someone in your community.

8. EDUCATION

Definition: “Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*.

Scripture: John 8:31-32: ‘To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and *the truth will set you free.*”’ (Italics added.)

Discovery Questions:

What subjects did you have the most interest in while in school?

What subjects did you excel in?

With what subjects did you most struggle?

What is the level of your formal education? What degrees have you earned?

Discovery Exercise:

List the ways that your formal education helped to develop godly character in your life:

List the ways that your formal education undermined godly character in your life:

Barriers to Your Calling:

Are there gaps in your education that need to be filled in order to progress in your calling?

If “yes,” what are the gaps?

Bridges to Your Calling:

What certificates, degrees or diplomas do you have that can create “passport”²² in your calling?

Influencing the Domains:

How will your credentials allow you to have a place in the gate of the city, in the realm of your domain?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Thank You Lord for the godly aspects of my education. How do You want me to use my education for Your kingdom?”

Application:

During this next week, a) develop a plan for getting the further education you need or desire, or b) develop a plan for using your education as a passport into the place or domain that God is calling you to.

9. INTERESTS

Definition: “To concern; to affect; to excite emotion or passion, usually in favor, sometimes against a person or thing,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. Something you have a concern for or want to share in.

Scripture: Matthew 25:34-36: “Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

Discovery Questions:

Is there a particular part of the world that you are interested in?

Is there a particular people group that the Lord has put on your heart?

What are your hobbies? What do you like to do during your leisure time? For example, do you swim, hike, paint, write poetry, do woodwork, or enjoy gardening?

What particular human needs are you most drawn too? Examples include the poor, the disabled, the weak and disenfranchised, children, or broken families.

What things or interests are you drawn to? For example animals, politics, art, philosophy, concerts, personal health, starting businesses', philanthropy, etc.

What sphere (domain) of society are you most drawn to?

Discovery Exercise:

Create a collage of pictures from magazines or newspapers that demonstrate your interests.

Barriers to Your Calling:

Are there places where your leisure is wasted or even destructive of time? For example, watching an inordinate amount of TV, gambling, etc. List as many as you can.

Bridges to Your Calling:

How can your interests be expanded into your *lifework*?

Influencing the Domains:

How can you connect your interests to the domain of your calling?

Prayer and Reflection:

Begin to pray for the particular part of the world, people group or sphere of society that you have an interest in. Ask the Lord to increase your burden and to open a door for engagement.

Application:

During the next week write to, or interview, someone who is working with the people group or sphere of society that you have an interest in, with the intention to gain a sense of the practical kingdom needs in that arena.

10. STATIONS

Definition: “The spot or place where one stands, particularly where a person habitually stands, or is appointed to remain for a time; Situation; position,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. This is an old word that we do not use very much anymore, referring to the “fixed things in our lives.”

Being married is a different station than being single. Being old is a different station than being a teenager. Having an elderly parent is different than having no parents. Stations create responsibilities that we might otherwise not have. Excessive debt, student loans, or an estate that needs to be liquidated are other examples of fixed obligations, which also define a person’s station.

Scripture: John 19:25-27: “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

Discovery Questions:

Are you single or married?

Are you male or female?

Do you have children? Grandchildren? How many?

Do you have elderly parents or others that are dependent on you for care?

What are some of the other “fixed things” that help define your station?

Discovery Exercise:

Create a collage of photographs from your own photo files or from magazines that identify the responsibilities that come with your current station.

Barriers to Your Calling:

How do elements of your station affect the timeframe of your calling?

What are the elements of your station that are the most difficult for you to bear?

Bridges to Your Calling:

How do elements of your station help define your calling?

Influencing the Domains:

How does your station help shape your domain of influence?

Prayer and Reflection:

“Lord, give me a light heart and a positive spirit for those elements of my station that are the most difficult. Help me to bear them with grace and patience.”

Application:

During the next week, do one special act of kindness for someone whom you are responsible for.

11. CONNECTIONS

Definition: “The act of joining or state of being joined; a state of being knit or fastened together; ... [T]he word is applicable to almost everything that has a dependence on or relation to another thing,” Noah Webster’s *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*. For our purposes, these are the people you are connected to either by nature, station or interest.

Scripture: Romans 12:5: “So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

Discovery Questions:

Who are you networked with? List as many people, groups or social organizations as you can.

What church and denomination are you a part of? What sets it apart from other churches and denominations?

What professional association, fellowship or alliance are you involved with?

With whom are you bonded? Name family and friends with whom you have the greatest communion.

With whom do you have rapport? What groups do you have an affinity for but with whom you may not be formally networked or affiliated?

Are there people in your church that share your burdens and with whom you can band together for ministry?

What are your strengths that complement others’ weaknesses? What are your weaknesses that you need someone to cover with their strengths?

Discovery Exercise:

On a separate piece of paper, create a web diagram, showing all the groups you are connected to. Include the expanded networks that these groups are connected to themselves.

Barriers to Your Calling:

What people or groups sap your strength? What people or groups seek to keep you from your calling?

Bridges to Your Calling:

What people or groups energize you or consciously seek to build you up?

Influencing the Domains:

What networks can you influence in the domain of your calling?

How can you begin to minister to and influence those groups?

How can you network with others of like mind to influence the domain of your calling?

Prayer and Reflection:

"Thank You Lord, for all the people and connections that you have blessed me with."

Application:

This next week, write a note of appreciation to one of the people or networks that you are connected with.

Congratulations on finishing these exercises. You have invested a large amount of time into the process of discovering what individual tools you have in your tool belt, and the next step is to now review all eleven sections, with an eye to see your big picture.

As you start to understand which thread you are in God's tapestry and how to better align yourself with your personal landing lights, it is important to truly integrate everything you are learning about yourself. The next chapter will lead you through an exercise to begin this integration process.

INTEGRATION

Noah Webster's *1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defines integration as "the act of making entire," and in this chapter we will take time to pray, reflect and begin to integrate all that we have learned.

Begin by prayerfully reviewing the work you did with the tools in your tool belt. Remember that you are seeking to have a greater understanding of how your Designer has made you, so that you can begin to understand how to walk in the midst of your calling.

Key Insights: In the chart below, list the five key things that you have learned from each "tool" you found in your tool belt.

The "Tool"	Key Insights
Motivation	- - - - -
Life History	- - - - -
The Design: Natural Talents	- - - - -
The Design: Personality	- - - - -
The Design: Spiritual Gifts	- - - - -
Preparation: Enculturation	- - - - -

Preparation: Training	- - - - -
Preparation: Education	- - - - -
Interests	- - - - -
Stations	- - - - -
Connections	- - - - -

Discerning What God is Saying: Look at the patterns you can now see at the end of this discovery process. These are all “you.” You are one whole and unique individual.

What are the key things that you sense God is saying to you?

How are all these things integrated to make you *you*?

How are you currently walking in your calling?

What are some logical next steps (education, training, actions, etc) you could pursue that will allow you to walk further in your calling?

WHICH GATE ARE YOU KEEPING?

As was discussed in the book *Lifework: A Biblical Theology of What You Do Every Day*, and in *The Assignment* section of this workbook, each one of us have been made for a unique purpose. Part of that purpose is to influence the society in which we live, by consciously seeking to live and work in the gates of the city (see chapters 18 and 21 of the book for more background).

When Christ gave his cultural commission in the Great Co-Mission (Mt. 28:18-20) the call was for the gospel of the kingdom to be taken to every domain of every nation. Christ's laws and ordinances are to be applied in every sphere, or sector, of society. These have been variously described as the family, the church, education, science/technology, media/communication, the arts, business/economics, law and politics, health care, sports, etc.

Most of us are involved in more than one sphere. We are all active in general domains common to most people - i.e. we are members of a family, members of a church, citizens of a nation – as well as members of a particular domain – your vocation. Depending upon our position, we all play different roles in different sectors of society. Let's look more deeply at these various domains.

1. Identify your sectoral interest and involvement.

List the general domains with which you are involved:

What particular domain (vocation) do you have a passion for?

Describe that passion.

2. Key Applications from your "tool box" towards your Vocational Domain

Take a few minutes to reflect on the tools in your toolbox, thinking about how you can employ them to influence or impact this domain. Then fill in the following table, giving simple, off-the-top-of-your-head answers where you can.

The “Tool”	Key Use in the Domain of Your Passion
Motivation	
Life History	
The Design: Natural Talents	
The Design: Personality	
The Design: Spiritual Gifts	
Preparation: Enculturation	
Preparation: Training	
Preparation: Education	
Interests	
Stations	
Connections	

Summarize what you have learned from this exercise:

The last three chapters have started you on the journey to discovering what tools God has provided you with and learning how these tools all fit together to point you in the direction of your calling. They have also provided you with a starting place to look at how you can use individual tools in the domain of your calling. Now, we will shift directions and look more specifically at the things which we rely upon for our sense of well-being and security, asking ourselves what role they are playing in our ability to fulfill our calling.

FREEDOM FROM PREROGATIVES

The following exercise was designed by my good friend and co-worker, Tom Steffan, as a way to start looking at what our prerogatives – our sense of rights or the things that we are due - are, and how they affect our calling.

1. Make a list of the *prerogatives* you depend upon for a sense of well-being and security. Here is one person's example:

Example

<input type="checkbox"/> Harmony with my wife	<input type="checkbox"/> Time with family
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular morning prayer	<input type="checkbox"/> My health
<input type="checkbox"/> Time alone	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading
<input type="checkbox"/> Respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Good food
<input type="checkbox"/> Hot showers	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding embarrassment
<input type="checkbox"/> Meaningful conversation	<input type="checkbox"/> My car
<input type="checkbox"/> Intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial control
<input type="checkbox"/> Men's group at church (<i>accountability, friendship</i>)	

The prerogatives that I tend to depend on for a sense of well-being and security:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Now go back and rank your securities from one to three:

- 1= I could give this up easily
- 2= I would struggle or resist giving this up
- 3= I will never give this up

3. After ranking your prerogatives, read the following story:

One night in Germany, during World War II, Nazi soldiers broke into a certain man's house and arrested his entire family. As they were loaded into a cattle car at the train station, he realized they were being taken to a concentration camp—he felt his world was collapsing all around him.

He prayed “God, as long as I have my family, we will survive this persecution, trusting you.”

When they arrived at the camp, men, women, and children were harshly separated. He lost sight of his wife and daughters in the hustle of the crowd. He never saw his family again. After several days he learned that his wife and children had been killed. All he had were the few photos of his family and mementos that he had grabbed the night the Nazis came.

He cried, “O God! As long as I have these treasures I can survive this place... trusting you.”

After a few more days one of the guards discovered his treasures and savagely stripped them from him. He had nothing now, except one button of the coat he'd thrown on that night, the last night he was a free man. He had ripped the button off the coat before giving it to the guards.

He clung to that button with all his might. He would hide it in his mouth when the soldiers searched his barracks. It never left his body.

He told God, “As long as I have this last reminder of who I was, I can trust in you.”

The day came when the button too, was discovered and taken from him.

After the war, this man wrote about his experiences:

“When that precious button was torn from me, I was finally free. Free to trust God, and give myself fully into his care.”²³

4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor also captured and killed by the Nazis, wrote a book titled *The Cost of Discipleship*, in which he makes the statement, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”²⁴

Many times in our lives as Christians we look for God's direction and blessing, while ignoring, or clinging to, sin in our lives. We are all good at justifying our lack of righteous deeds and concealing our outright sinful deeds.

Review the list of securities you made and then, in an attitude of prayer, answer the following questions:

- Is anything on your list an obstacle to your discipleship?

- What will it cost you to accept Jesus' call?
 - What, specifically, do you have to die to?
5. Read John 15:1-11. What would have to be pruned out of your life to make more time for you to disciple this nation?

FINDING WORK ONLY A KNIGHT CAN DO!

Let us end our journey of discovery with a wonderful story, *St. George and the Dragon*, a story that reminds us of the call of the kingdom of God. St. George's Christian virtues of truth, justice and courage are at war against the Dragon, representing the pagan virtues of sin and evil. Each time George has brought the peace of the kingdom to a place, he looks for a new work "which only a knight can do!"

To access this story, please go the follow website and read the full story of St. George and the Dragon: <http://books.google.com/books?id=queMnPXWisoC&pg=PA87&dq=%22St.+George+and+the+Dragon%22+%2B+Book+of+Virtues>

Much like St. George, we should be looking for work that only a Christian can do. Fortunately, the Lord has given us an awe-inspiring charge to disciple the nations, beginning with where we are RIGHT NOW. As the title of one of Charles Wesley's hymns reminds us: "We have a charge to keep!" We are called to be "salt" and "light" in the midst of our own cultures and are commanded to occupy enemy territory for Christ's return. Ours is a life of passion and not apathy; of work and not ease. There is a war going on for the hearts and souls of individuals, communities and nations. Are we engaged in the battle? Martin Luther's challenge is for us today:

If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved....²⁵

The war is to be fought within the context of our *lifework*, the call that God has upon our lives. Pope John Paul II captures the imagination of the world's youth when he writes:

I wish, finally, to address you, dear young people, and to repeat these words to you with affection: be generous in giving your life to the Lord. Do not be afraid! You have nothing to fear, because God is the Lord of history and of the universe. Let grow in you the desire for great and noble projects. Nourish a sense of solidarity: these are the sign of the divine action in your heart. Place at the use of your communities the talents, which Providence has lavished on you. The more ready you are to give yourself to God and others, the more you will discover the authentic meaning of life. God expects much of you!²⁶

The command has been given: "Occupy till I come!"

Resources for Further Study and Application

We hope this book has challenged and inspired you with a vision for advancing God's kingdom through your unique vocation!

To help you go deeper and apply the principles presented in this book, we invite you to visit www.MondayChurch.org. Here you find a host of resources including:

- A chapter-by-chapter study guide with reflection questions for reflection, discussion and application.
- A free, downloadable companion Bible study designed for individual and small group application.
- A personal inventory to help you discover your unique design and calling.
- Information on hosting a conference on how vocation relates to the advancement of the kingdom of God.
- Helpful suggestions for how pastors and church leaders can envision and equip their congregations to advance God's kingdom through their vocations.
- And much more!

www.MondayChurch.org



The Disciple Nations Alliance

Equipping the Church to Transform the World

The Disciple Nations Alliance is part of a global movement of individuals, churches, and organizations with a common vision: to see the global Church rise to her full potential as God's instrument for the healing, blessing and transformation of the nations.

The Disciple Nations Alliance was founded in 1997 through a partnership between Food for the Hungry (www.fh.org) and Harvest (www.harvestfoundation.org). Our mission is to influence the *paradigm* and *practice* of local churches around the world, helping them recognize and abandon false beliefs, and embrace a robust biblical worldview—bringing truth, justice and beauty into every sphere of society, and to demonstrate Christ's love in practical ways, addressing the brokenness in their communities and nations beginning with their own resources.

For further information about the Disciple Nations Alliance as well as access to a host of resources, curricula, books, study materials and application tools, please visit our website.

www.disciplenations.org

E-mail: info@disciplenations.org

APPENDIX 1: The Timeline of Your Life

There are two significant events between the fall of mankind and the return of Christ. The first is the birth of Christ and his work on the cross. The second significant event is your life. It is this second event that we want to focus on in this exercise.

Use the outline provided below to lay out your timeline. It will include your family and personal chronology, as well as a series of events. Please take as long as you need to create a comprehensive picture of how God has been shaping your life.

1. The Timeline
 - a. The Foundation Years
 - i. Family history of parents and grandparents
 - ii. Family context and birth
 - iii. Early years at home
 - iv. Primary and secondary school years
 - b. The Growing Years
 - i. Young adulthood
 - ii. Higher education or training
 - iii. Courtship
 - iv. Marriage
 - v. Children
 - vi. Early employment
 - c. The Maturing in your Calling Years
 - i. Key work experiences that have helped to define your *lifework*.
 - ii. Key relationships, mentors, books and ideas that have shaped your calling
2. Key Events – On your timeline, identify at least 2-3 positive, and 2-3 negative events in the following areas. Note why they were important in shaping your life.
 - a. Key Spiritual Encounters
 - i. God working providentially in your nation or community
 - ii. God working in members of your family
 - iii. Your hearing the gospel
 - iv. Your responding to the gospel
 - v. Places where you have seen the hand of the Lord working in your life
 - vi. Meaningful scriptural passages
 - b. Key Events
 - i. Personal: i.e. illnesses, accidents, awards and recognitions, milestones, travel, household/family moves
 - ii. Historic: i.e. political, economic, social, wars, disasters, technical milestones
 - c. Key People – Who are the people who God has brought into your life? How have they shaped your life for good or ill?
 - i. Family
 - ii. Friends
 - iii. Bosses or co-workers
 - iv. National or historic heroes
 - v. Authors

APPENDIX 2: T Chart of Natural Talents

Natural Talents	Weaknesses

APPENDIX 3: Key Elements of Culture

Dr. Colin Harbinson of StoneWorks distinguishes between four aspects of culture:

The Natural: the unique sounds, rhythms, colors, textures, tastes and smell. These are to be enjoyed and celebrated.

The Redemptive: these are the things that stem from moral and metaphysical truth found in each culture. These are to be celebrated and encouraged.

The Distortions and Demonic: these two stem from Satan's lies. These impoverish and enslave cultures. These need to be exposed, challenged, rooted out and replaced with moral and metaphysical truth.²⁷

In the tables below, identify key elements of each aspect of your culture, describing how each has shaped your life for good or bad. An example of each one has been provided to help you get started.

The Natural	
Element	How it's shaped your life
The smells of my wife's cooking	Has brought joy into my life and thankfulness to my wife for her gifts and service.

The Redemptive	
Element	How it's shaped your life
A work ethic	I have always worked hard and have given my employers my best.

The Distortions and Demonic	
Element	How it's shaped your life
Consumer society	I consume more than I need. Waste is more a part of my life than stewardship

NOTES

¹ Phil. 3:4b-6

² Ac. 22:6-9

³ Gal. 1:15

⁴ Ac. 22:21

⁵ Gen. 1:28

⁶ Jn. 13: 34-35

⁷ Lu. 10:25-28

⁸ Mt 28:19-20

⁹ Jn. 4:34

¹⁰ Jn. 17:4

¹¹ Mt. 26:39-43

¹² Col. 1:20

¹³ C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1996), 217-218.

¹⁴ Udo Middelmann, *Footnotes*; Vol. 10, No. 2; Summer 2002, 1

¹⁵ *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, s.v. "mna"

¹⁶ Text Note and Study Note from Luke 19:13 in *The NIV Study Bible*;) Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1985)

¹⁷ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 28.

¹⁸ Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, in *Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and Its Critics*, ed. Robert W. Green (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1959), 72, quoted in Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 31

¹⁹ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 46

²⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1954), 139

²¹ Ps. 139:13-16; Lu. 19:11-27; 2 Ti. 1:9

²² A "passport" skill or degree is one that may allow you into a country or work environment that is hostile to the gospel.

²³ Story drawn from training materials used at a Food for the Hungry workshop, Korea, 1994

²⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1977), 44

²⁵ Quoted in Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy*, (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1990), 11

²⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the XXXIII World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, August 15, 1995, www.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_15081995_world-day-for-vocations_en.html.

²⁷ Colin Harbinson, *The Arts and Cultural Restoration Booklet*, Notes for presentation, <http://www.colinharbinson.com/order/cultrestbook.html>