
DISCOVER YOUR CALLING

IN 31 DAYS



by Lindsay Fooshee

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1 DISCOVER YOUR CALLING

Are you wrestling with any of these questions right now?

- What am I supposed to do with my life?
- How do I focus my time and energy?
- What is the best use of me and my talents?
- How do I decide when to say “yes” and when to say “no?”
- What have I been created to do?
- What’s next for me?



If so, I'd like to invite you to join me on a journey to discover your calling.

Here's where we're going:

1. For the next 31 days, answer one question per day. That's it.

2. Grab a journal or your laptop and take a few minutes to think through and write your answer to the day's question. (Actually write it down or type it up. Don't just think about the answer. This is important.)



3. At the end of the 31 days, I'll show you how to use your answers to discover your calling.

4. If you want to get even more out of the journey, grab a friend (or a spouse, teen, neighbor, coworker, or small study group) and invite them do it with you! Your conversations about what you're learning will greatly improve the whole experience, not to mention your results.

Here's where I'm coming from on this:

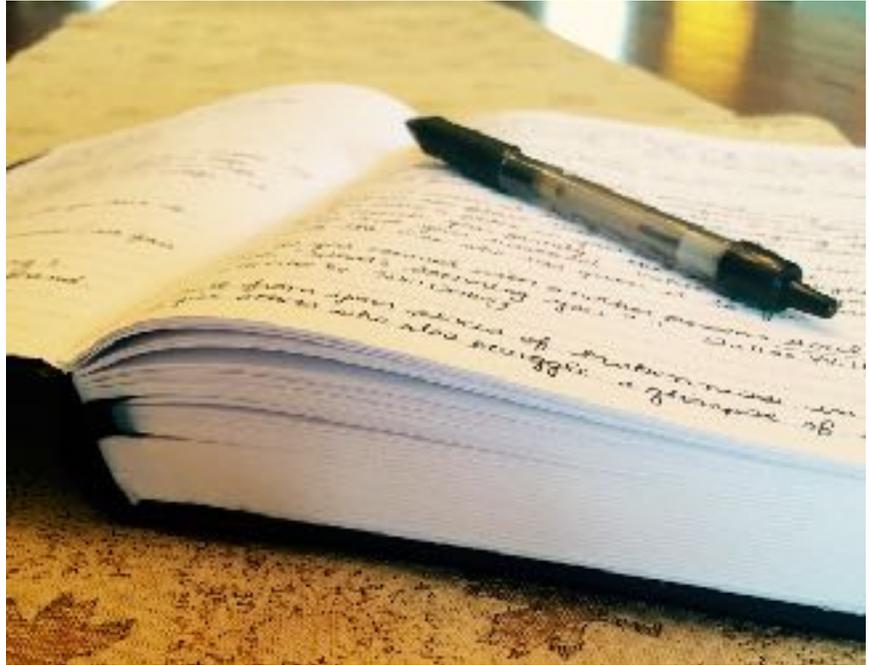
1. I believe you have been created by a God who loves you very much.
2. I also believe that your intentional Creator has designed you in a unique way, to do unique things (that's your calling).
3. I have come to realize that when you are living out your unique calling, you will smile. And so will He.

I have been walking on this journey of discovering my calling (and helping other people discover theirs) for over 10 years now. I have compiled material over the years from my personal experiences in seminary, career counseling, life coaching, and teaching. I have taught this material in a college classroom, in a church setting, and in small discipleship groups. I'm looking forward to sharing some of what I've learned with you through this 31-day journaling experience. And I'm really looking forward to hearing how it impacts you.

Here's where you (and God) are coming from on this:

All you need to have are questions, an open mind and heart, and the faithfulness to think through and answer all the questions. (And that journal I was telling you about.) You don't necessarily have to know God personally to come on this journey, but I will warn you... I think

He's coming after you. He already knows you really well (because He made you). And He wants you to know Him, too. The fact that you're reading this tells me that He has called you to something important, and He wants you to know what that is.



So, if you're up for it, grab your journal and join me for the next 31 days to discover your calling. Good things are coming!

Ready to get started?

Daily Journal Question #1:

What questions regarding your calling are you wrestling with right now? Narrow it down: at the end of the month, what's the one question you would like to have answered? Go find that journal and take a few minutes to write down or type up your answer to this question.

2 CALLED

You have been called.

Chosen. Selected. Set apart.

But the story of your calling began long before you were born.

God created a perfect world, back in the beginning. The people God created to live in this world knew Him intimately. They were even accustomed to taking late afternoon strolls with Him through the beautiful garden He gave them to work in and enjoy. They knew God completely, and they were completely known by Him. *Everything was as it was meant to be.*



Enter, the villain. He invades the scene in the form of a snake and lures Adam and Eve away from walking with God, feeding them enough lies and forbidden fruit to convince them to walk with him instead. They fall for it, and everything falls apart. The man and the woman turn on God, turn on each other, and as a result, must leave their lovely home. As the world fills with more people, the world fills

with more deception and lies, leading to more broken relationships and a broken creation. *Nothing is as it should be any longer.*

But the Creator God is not content to leave the story here. He is not into tragic endings, you see. Instead, He sets about rescuing the world and bringing His people, whom He still loves very much, back to Him. In order to be close to God, however, their wrongs must be made right and their debt cancelled. The problem is, however, his wayward children are completely unable right their own wrongs. They're unwilling, even. They need someone to help them.



So God sends the only one qualified to right the wrongs of the world: his Son. Jesus came to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we could never live. He cancelled the debt we owe to God by dying the death we should have died. He is the reconciler. The wrong-righter. Because of what Jesus has done, we can be close to God again.

One day, there will be a new garden. A new paradise. And those of us who have trusted Jesus to save our lives will once again be able to walk with God in the cool of the day. Once again, *everything will be exactly as it was created to be.*

Until then, God is undertaking a “supreme reformation project” in our world (Cornelius Plantinga). God is working to make everything right again. And guess what? He invites us to work alongside Him. In fact, he’s created you with a certain job in mind. There’s a particular contribution to the project He has designed you to make.

Want to know what that is?

That’s your calling.

Daily Journal Question:

When was the last time you had the feeling that everything was right with the world? That everything was as it should be? What were the circumstances? What were you doing? Take some time to write or type your answer in your journal.

3 WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

Yesterday...

We defined “calling” as *your unique contribution* to God’s “supreme reformation project” that is underway in our world.

So, our task is to discover what your unique contribution *looks like*. To “get at” that idea, we’re going to start with some really fun questions.

We’re going to start with what makes you happy.

Does that sound like a weird or even sinful place to start? It shouldn’t. Like I mentioned on Day 1, when you’re living out your unique calling, you will smile. And so will God.

It makes sense if you think about it. As our Creator, God spent time creating



each of us in a unique and particular way. David, the Psalm writer says it this way:

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.
(Psalm 139:13-16)

You are an intricately fashioned creation, wonderfully crafted by our master Creator God. When you function in the way he designed you function, it only makes sense that you will feel *glad*. That it would feel *right*. And it only makes sense that it would bring your Creator pleasure, too.

There's a great moment in *Chariots of Fire* when Eric Liddell, Scottish athlete and missionary to China, is trying to explain to his sister why he wants to run in the Olympic Games, delaying his move to China while he trains and competes. She feels that running competitively is a waste of time, but Eric disagrees. He tells his sister with confidence, "I believe that God made me for a purpose. For China.

But He also made me *fast*. And when I run, I feel His pleasure. To give it up would be to hold Him in contempt.” Eric Liddel knew his calling. He knew what God made him for. And as he lived out his calling, he felt the *pleasure* of his Maker.

Have you ever felt the pleasure of God?



Daily Journal Question:

Have you ever had a moment when what you were doing felt so right that it made you happy? Maybe it was even a moment when you felt God’s pleasure, too? Describe the moment in your journal.

4 YOUR DEEP GLADNESS

Vocation

The word “vocation” is a little outdated; we don’t seem to use it much anymore. I like it, though, when I’m trying to explain the idea of calling and where it came from.



When we hear the word “vocation” we usually think of a *job*. If someone asked, “what is your vocation?” You would probably answer by telling them what you do for a living. *I’m a dental hygienist... I’m a teacher... I work for the bank.*

But the word has a fuller meaning than that. It carries with it the idea of suitability or aptitude; your vocation is something that you are particularly suited to do. It may or may not be a paying job, but it is the kind of job that you are “made for.”

The word “vocation” also implies dedication and commitment. It’s not just a job; it’s something worthy that you give your life to. In the 15th century it began to carry the idea of a spiritual profession. If you had a “vocation,” then you worked for the church.

“Vocation” comes from the Latin *vocare*, which means “to call.” So “vocation” is simply another word for *calling*. But those called to vocational ministry in the church are not the only ones who have a calling. As we saw on Day 2, we are *all* called. We all have a calling. A vocation. Something meaningful that’s worth giving our lives to. A unique contribution to what God is doing in our world.

Frederick Buechner defines “vocation” as “*the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.*” In other words, whatever makes you happy is what God will use to change the world.



We started talking about what makes you happy yesterday, and now we’re going to take it a little further. For the next few days, we are going to dive into the idea of your *deep gladness*. Let’s see what God has placed within you that he wants to use in the lives of the people around you. Let’s see what you’re particularly suited for. Let’s see if we can find something worthy enough to give your life to.

Daily Journal Question:

What is your deep gladness? As a first step to answer that question, take a few minutes and make a list of everything you enjoy. Don't edit or think about it too much! Just make a crazy fun list of everything you can think of that makes you glad.

5 WHAT ARE YOU GOOD AT DOING?

Brainstorm

Yesterday you made a list of things you *enjoy*. Today we're going to brainstorm what you're *good at doing*. Maybe this list will help get you started (It's not my list. I'm terrible at spreadsheets. And even worse at basketball.):

- Listening.
- Balancing the budget.
- Organizing details.
- Giving gifts.
- Spreadsheets.
- Bringing people together.
- Basketball.
- Remembering people's names.
- Creating beautiful spaces.



This list will be a little different than yesterday's list. It's a harder list to make. It feels self-serving, like you're bragging. But you need to make it. The skills you have are important to discovering your calling.

How do you know what you're good at doing? Here are some clues:

- You're already doing it.
- You get asked to do it often.
- You get good feedback after you do it. People will often say, "you're good at that."
- You don't have to think too much when you're doing it. It comes "naturally" so to speak.

So, go ahead. Write it down. Even if it seems insignificant, put it on the list. If you're having trouble, ask someone close to you, "*What am I good at?*" Sometimes others can see what we can't see in ourselves.

Daily Journal Question:

What are you good at doing? Take a few minutes and make a list of everything you can think of that you're good at doing. Include it all; nothing is insignificant!

6 YOUR UNIQUE DESIGN

Look for What Overlaps

Now you've got two lists in your journal. One describes things you enjoy doing. The other describes things you're good at doing.

Today, we're going to see where those lists overlap.

- What are the things that you enjoy doing AND you're good at doing them?

There should be things on your "enjoy list" that you're not particularly good at. For example, I really *enjoy* watching a good British drama, but I'm not particularly *good at it*. On the other hand, there are also some things I'm *good at* that I don't really *enjoy*. I'm *good at* balancing the budget and managing money, but I don't *enjoy* it. I don't like sitting down to pay the bills or to reconcile our income and expenses. Money management won't make it on my list today.

I spent the day at my friend Susan's house yesterday. You don't have to be there long to realize that Susan is very good at working with flowers and using them in her home. And she really enjoys it, too. Susan could definitely add "creating beautiful spaces" to her list today.

Today's list is the cream of the crop. Each item on the list has to meet BOTH criteria: 1) you enjoy it AND 2) you're good at it.

So go for it! This list will get you closer to understanding what some people call your *motivated abilities*. They are the things you're able to do, and you actually want to do them.



Daily Journal Question:

Look back over your lists from Day 4 and Day 5. Make a new list today of the things that occur on BOTH lists. Today's list could include things like activities, jobs, hobbies, skills, or even themes and ideas. Look at both lists carefully and be thorough!

7 YOUR SWEET SPOT

Look for Your Themes

For the past few days, we have been diving into your *deep gladness*. Yesterday you made an important list. On this list are the things that you *enjoy* doing AND you're *good* at doing them.

These are the places where you've found your sweet spot.

Today I'd like you to look over that list with a magnifying glass. Look for some common *themes* you see in your sweet spot moments. For example, as you look over your list, what are the circumstances surrounding your moments? Are you outside or inside? With people or alone? Working with objects or ideas? See what themes surface as you examine your "sweet spot" moments. These themes will be important to discovering your calling.

Funny thing about these themes... you've probably been carrying them around awhile. Themes are versatile, flexible things. They can show up when you're on the playground in the 3rd grade and again



in a college classroom and again in your first “real job.” They will show up at home, at work, at church, with your co-workers, your family, and your friends.

In other words:

You are who you are no matter where you are.

Your sweet spot themes will show up in all kinds of places and circumstances, because you carry yourself with you wherever you go! My husband is a great example of this. He is an entrepreneur and has loved starting new projects ever since he was a little kid. Here is a description of his “sweet spot” in his own words:

It was not just another October day in 1980 for me. On this defining day, every teacher in each classroom collected entries from the students for the school's annual Spaghetti Fund-Raiser Poster Contest. The call was to recruit and deploy an army of little advertisers to storm the town and build our elementary school's revenue. Little did I know that it would be a significant event in discovering my calling.

The previous day, I had stared at a blank poster board, tapping the table with my Crayola marker. As I dreamed, many visions came to mind. Landing upon the best, I roamed the house and found a

Frisbee and a saucer. Surely they would do the trick! Placing the Frisbee upon the table, I traced an enormous belly. The saucer outlined a nice head. Fifteen minutes later, I sat back and looked upon my creation. I loved it! And, days later, so did the judges. My jolly, spaghetti-eating, semi-obese man landed me first prize. In the days following the announcement, my poster was displayed in the school office's front window. I walked by it for many days, proudly admiring my work.

Every day since, I'm looking for a similar challenge. I believe that I'm called to create something that winsomely draws people together to build something significant. Through the years, I've applied my calling in many ways: from designing and building a house for our family to starting a church to bless our community. I guess you can see that the challenges have gotten bigger than a school poster contest. But that fall day was perhaps the sweetest. It was the first day that I responded to the call.

As my husband began to look for his "sweet spot," he found the theme of "drawing people together to build something significant."

Your turn!

Daily Journal Question:

Look closely at the list you made on Day 6. This list should describe “sweet spot” moments in your life. What themes do you see on the list? What do your “sweet spot” moments have in common?

8 WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?

StrengthsFinder

As we continue on the journey to discover your calling, it's time to shift into a discussion about your strengths. We began to scratch the surface of your strengths on Day 5 when we asked the question, "What are you good at doing?" Today we're going to join the millions of people who have used the Clifton StrengthsFinder to help them understand their talents and strengths.

I have used the online StrengthsFinder assessment for many years now in my classes on vocation and calling. It is a proven, valuable tool, and most people find their results fascinating. Here is what the Gallup organization has to say about their StrengthsFinder test:

Gallup research proves that people succeed when they focus on what they do best. When they identify their talents and develop them into strengths, people are more productive, perform better, and are more engaged.

Gallup's Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment is the first step in helping people identify their talents.

Clifton StrengthsFinder results give people a way to discuss and develop their unique combination of skills, talents, and knowledge — also known as strengths.

Gallup created the science of strengths. From more than 50 years of research to our bestselling books, Gallup's StrengthsFinder assessments have helped millions of people discover what they do best.

So, let's do it! Find about a half hour of quiet, shut the door, and take the online StrengthsFinder assessment. [Click here](#) to get started. This will take you to the Gallup Strengths Center home page. From there, click to purchase the Clifton StrengthsFinder. It will cost a minimal amount to take the assessment and receive your top 5 strengths along with all the accompanying reports. We'll be using and assessing your results over the next few days. It is well worth the money.

Daily Journal Question:

What are your strengths? In order to answer this question fully, [click here](#) to take the Clifton StrengthsFinder online assessment.

9 UNDERSTANDING YOUR STRENGTHS

Highlights

Now that you've taken the Clifton StrengthsFinder online assessment, we are going to take a few days to unpack and better understand your results. Here's your assignment for today:

Print your Signature Themes Report as well as any attachments Gallup sent you (i.e. "Strengths Insight Guide"). You can find these links next to your results when you log in to your account.

Dig out your favorite highlighter and make sure it works.

Highlight any word, phrase, or sentence on your reports that particularly resonates with you. These words and phrases should stand out to you as "true" and "right" as you understand yourself and how you operate.

Many people feel like the Gallup organization is "reading their mail," particularly when they read their Strength Insight Guide. It is often crazy-accurate. So, have fun getting to know yourself and your strengths a little bit better today!

Daily Journal Question:

What portions of your strength reports stand out to you as “true?”

Take a highlighter and mark any word, phrase, or sentence that you think particularly describes you well.

10 USING YOUR STRENGTHS AT WORK

Reflect Upon Your Work

Now that you've taken the online strengths assessment and highlighted the parts you feel describe you well, we're going to take a couple of days to think through how your strengths show up in your everyday life. Hopefully you're gaining a better understanding of what your individual strengths look like, and you can probably already see how you're using them.



Today we're going to look closely at your "work life." Whether or not you have a paying 9-5 job, I want you to take a close look at the work that you do with the bulk of your time.

Brainstorm how you use your strengths in your workplace. Do you use some of them? All of them? None of them?

Think through a typical day on the job and see where your strengths show up. Write a paragraph describing how you currently use your

strengths in your workplace. I asked my friend, Amber, to do this and this is what she came up with:

I am currently using several of my strengths as an Office Manager. I love making things as efficient and simple-to-follow as possible. This means that we follow routines and systems that I have designed where we need a little more structure (Consistency). I also enjoy checking back in on those systems and processes and making them even more efficient. I can practically look at situations and see what needs to be done next (Discipline). Oftentimes after a staff meeting, I have a to-do list and knock it out as quickly as possible. I have a difficult time not taking action after we discuss an idea or plan – it is instinctual for me to take action and get to work – even if the plan isn't perfectly made yet (Activator). The driving force behind all of my strengths is a need for things to be 'as they were made to be' (Harmony)- I seek a steady rhythm and appreciate when all things fall into place exactly as I planned them. Underneath all things work-related and life-related, I feel responsible for the decisions I make and I will do anything to stay true to my word. My friends and co-

workers describe me as honest, dependable, and practical.

Your turn!

Daily Journal Question:

How are you currently using your strengths in your job? Write a paragraph describing how you live out your strengths in your place of work.

11 USING YOUR STRENGTHS AT HOME

Reflect Upon Your Homelife

Over the past few days, you have been gaining a better understanding of yourself and your strengths. So far you have:

1. Taken the Clifton StrengthsFinder online assessment
2. Printed your personalized reports
3. Highlighted the words and phrases that particularly describe you well
4. Written a paragraph describing how you use your strengths in your place of work

We are going to spend one more day investigating our strengths before we move on to the next step in discovering your calling. Like we learned on Day 7, *you are who you are no matter where you are.* So it makes sense that you use your strengths no matter what environment you're in.

Yesterday we thought about how we use our strengths in our places of work. Today we are going to investigate how we exercise our strengths at home. How do you use your strengths in your home? With your spouse? Kids? Extended family? Home management?

Note: If your workplace is primarily in your home and with your family, then you may have already written about this yesterday. If so, feel free to choose another environment today such as church, your community, or your friendships. This may also apply to you if you are single and don't spend much time at home right now.



Sometimes I think that it's difficult to exercise my strengths at home. My strengths seems to be "mind oriented" and my home life is very relational and task-oriented. Here's the rundown on my personal 5 strengths:

- Intellection
- Connectedness
- Learner
- Context
- Input

It's easy for me to see how I use these strengths in my writing and in a school setting. But at home? With 2 teenagers and 2 toddlers? Am I using my strengths at all in this place where I spend so much of my time? I have to believe that I am... and maybe there are ways I can use them more.

For the sake of an example, I am going to take my strengths one-by-one and reflect on how I use them at home as a mom and a wife and how I might use them more:

Intellection: I spend A LOT of time thinking. I could literally lie in bed in the morning for an hour or more just... thinking. But with a 2-year-old and a 4-year-old, this is practically impossible. I do use my "thinking strength" in my home life, however. I think through decisions we make on a daily basis, analyzing them, praying about them, weighing pros and cons, and thinking through different options. Once I've made a decision, it's usually a pretty good one. A well-thought-out one anyway!

Learner: I love to learn and I enjoy sharing that love with others. I get excited when I help my kids discover something for themselves. Sometimes it's talking to my college freshman about his strengths and his future, sometimes it's helping my 4-year-old learn to write his name. But whether I'm stacking blocks or calling out test review questions, I am helping my kiddos learn. It's fun.

Input: I am an information-gatherer. When I'm faced with a problem (like a toddler with behavior issues), I constantly gather information about the issue as I go about my days. (How could his diet be affecting his behavior? Maybe he needs Melatonin to sleep better? What about that parent/child therapy I heard about at church the other day?) I collect lots of information on whatever I'm facing and then determine how to solve the problem, or at least take a stab at it.

Connectedness: I love connecting good people with good things. I do this in a lot of different ways, but one simple way I do this at home is in giving gifts. I love to think about the person I'm buying for and set about finding a unique gift for them. It may be something they need or something they want, or just something that will make them smile. Either way, I'm connecting someone with something good. The payoff for me is the exclamation when they open the gift as well as the ongoing benefits as I see them enjoy it afterward.

Context: I really enjoy knowing the back-story. When I sit across the table from someone, I love to listen to her story. It helps me understand her better and probably give wiser counsel. With 2 adopted children in my house, it is very important to me that they know their stories. From the very beginning. How God has shepherded and guided them to be exactly who they are and where they are. One way I would like to do this is to create life books for

them, complete with stories and pictures. One of my ongoing frustrations in my home life is that there never seems to be enough time to do things like this.

Ok, so there's me for an example on how I use (or want to use) my strengths in my home life. What about you?

Daily Journal Question:

How do you exercise your strengths at home? Take some time to think about that and write or type your answer in your journal. You could write a paragraph like Amber did yesterday, or you could take each strength one-by-one like I did today. Have fun with it!

12 YOUR STORY

Your story has everything to do with your calling.

God has gifted you with many unique attributes, but none so unique as your particular life story. So far in the journey to discover your calling, we have been looking at how God created you. God created you with specific things that make you *deeply glad* and things that you are good at doing. The places where those gifts overlap reveal important clues to discovering your calling. We have also examined your strengths, the traits you've been given to serve the people around you. All of these components make up your "hard wiring," how God has created you to live and serve.

All of these discoveries are unique to you, but now we will dig a little deeper into what makes you *you*. Now we turn to your life story. For the next few days, I will show you how to look at your life as a whole and distill the important experiences that contribute to discovering your calling. This is where the good stuff happens.



Today, I'd like to you to divide your life into segments. You might make the divisions by age, school grades,

geography, or jobs. I'm in my early 40s, so I divided my life into these life-stage segments:

1. Childhood (age 0-8)
2. Pre-teen years (8-13)
3. Teenage years (13-18)
4. College (18-21)
5. Early marriage (21-26)
6. Mom of young kids (26-30)
7. First church plant (30-33)
8. Second church plant (33-41)
9. Adoptive mom (36-...)

Take some time to make these divisions because we're going to use them for the next several days. Today, after you make the divisions, ask yourself this question:

In each section of my life, what were the high points?

Look at each life section and recall the high points, the times when you felt like you hit your sweet spot. The times when all felt right with the world. It could be a moment in elementary school when you

were chosen for something special, or a time in high school when you achieved something significant. It could be a time in college when you experienced something meaningful with close friends, or a time in a job when you felt like you contributed something unique to the people around you. Strive to have 1-3 high points for each section of your life.

For me, ballet performances show up in several sections of my life. These performances have several things in common. First, I was chosen for the role. I also worked hard to make the role come alive and communicate something to the audience. In addition to this, I felt like I did a good job. And maybe most importantly, I really enjoyed dancing.



As you look at these high points, you will begin to see what makes you come alive. These experiences serve as an incredibly important role in discovering your calling.

Daily Journal Question:

Divide your life into sections that make sense to you. For each section of your life, recall 1-3 high points, times in your life when you really felt alive. Record these sections and describe these high points in your journal.

13 YOUR HEROES

We All Need Heroes

Heroes are people who inspire us to keep on doing what we do. Heroes may be people who have walked a little further down the path we're walking, and they turn around to beckon, encouraging us to keep on putting one foot in front of the other. Your hero may have lived a long time ago, or she may live in your house. A hero can be someone you know or someone you've heard about. A hero can be real or, I believe, even fictional. A hero is anyone who has a story that inspires you to be the best you.

A hero inspires you to live out your calling.

Today we are going to pay tribute to our heroes by simply writing down their names. Take your list of life story divisions you made



yesterday and look at each stage of your life one-by-one. As you do, ask, "Who were my heroes?"

Because heroes inspire you to be the best you, they will also help reveal the best you. Your heroes will uncover clues that will help you discover your calling. And they will inspire you to live it!

Daily Journal Question:

Who are your heroes? Think through each stage of your life story and make a list of your heroes. Then answer this question, "What do my heroes have in common?"

14 YOUR BROKENNESS

You can't ignore the broken places.

So far on this journey to discover your calling, you have been asking yourself, "How has God created me to live?" We have been focusing on the creation part of you, your natural gifts, strengths, and abilities. We have recently turned to your life story, looking at the moments when you really enjoyed being you. We also made a list of heroes, people who encourage and inspire you to be your best you. Hopefully by now you are beginning to glimpse some themes emerging that will help shape your understanding of your calling.

I wish we could stop with creation. If there had been no fall, we could. We would all still be in the garden, fully living the way God created us to live. There would be no need to talk about sin or brokenness. But the fall happened, and we live daily with the consequences. We sin. We are sinned against. And sin breaks things... relationships, hopes, dreams, purpose.

If you look honestly at your life story, it is surely made up of more than high peaks and heroes. Your story also hides



valleys and villains. These parts of our stories we would rather not remember, much less revisit. But the valleys and the villains, the broken parts of your story, are key to uncovering your calling.

Why?

Because God is in the business of mending broken things.

The places where we've been broken and put back together? That's where the power lies. That's where our passions stir. Those places hold weight and promise and hope for the people around us.

When we find that power and passion, we find our calling.

So today we "go there." Recall the places in your life when you've been broken, either by your own sin or the sin of someone else.

Don't worry, we'll talk about the mending tomorrow.

Daily Journal Question:

Where is the brokenness in your life? Look over the life story divisions you made on Day 12 and think about the low points that occurred in each section. Write down the ways you've been broken either by your own sin or the sin of others.

15 YOUR MENDING

Restore, Rebuild, Remake, Repair

Yesterday I asked you to do something hard. I asked you to remember the times in your life when you've been broken and to write about them. Today, we move on to sunnier skies.

Because, remember?

God is in the business of mending broken things.

Today we write about how we've been *mended* by God. Healed. Made new.

Look back over your list of broken times, broken things, broken relationships, broken dreams. Has God mended any of those places? Can you see the "good" that God has faithfully brought about (Romans 8:28)? If so, write that down with great gratitude.



Not yet? Ask him to. Remember, *he is in the business of mending broken things*. And I'll tell you this: no low point in your life ever needs to lie wasted. God will use it if

you'll let him.

So let's remember today the goodness of our God to never waste a moment, to faithfully do what only he can do: *restore, rebuild, remake, repair.*

Mend.

Daily Journal Question:

Where are the areas of your life where God has "mended" you? Look back over the areas of brokenness you wrote about yesterday. Today, write down how God has mended some broken places in your life.

16 YOUR PASSIONS

Sometimes the healed places are the strongest.

That's what the orthopedic surgeon told my son after his knee surgery in the middle of his high school senior soccer season. A completely severed ACL and a flipped meniscus ended Sterling's soccer season on the sidelines of a tournament game. He felt broken, in more ways than one.



His surgeon, however, cheered him slightly by telling him the truth about his knee. With the latest surgical techniques and materials, his knee would not only be as good as new. *It would be stronger.* Super encouraging to a guy who loved the game of soccer and hoped to play on the college level.

The same is true for you and me. We've been talking for the past couple of days about how *God is in the business of mending broken things*. But the places he mends do not stay weak and vulnerable. They grow strong. Stronger than before. And they hold power.

I've seen this in my life and in the lives of my friends. The friend who had an abortion as a young teenager and now makes herself

available to girls who also need healing and hope. The friend who got caught up in a homosexual relationship but is now repentant and passionate about counseling others considering a similar lifestyle. Healed places hold strength. Power. Hope for the people around us.

You've looked at your broken places. You've seen how God has mended you. Now, what passions might be stirring in those places? What hope do you have to share?

Daily Journal Question:

What are your passions? Look over the broken places you wrote about on Day 14 and how you've experienced God's mending on Day 15. Reflect on how God has made you stronger in those places than before. Do any passions rise out of those experiences? Any hope to share with the people around you?

17 YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

You've been given a gift, but it's not for you to keep.

We're about halfway through this journey to discover your calling. So far, we have looked at the *created you*, how God fashioned and formed you into a unique individual for his glory. He designed you to function in a way that brings you *joy*, gifting you with *abilities* and *strengths*. In addition to the *created you* we have also looked at the *fallen you* and how God has shepherded you through your entirely unique *life story*: the high points, the low points, the heroes, and the healing.

After Creation and the Fall, comes Redemption. This is the place where God picks you out and picks you up from the pit, making you his own. You... the created you, the fallen you, and the redeemed you. He is in the process of redeeming it all, all the parts that make you you into something for his glory.

We're not trying to get to know ourselves better so that we can live a better life, we're trying to get to know ourselves better so that we can better



understand what God has called us to.

You see, when God redeems you, he also calls you. And one of the first things he calls you to is the body of Christ. God has chosen the metaphor of “a body” to explain to us how we relate to one another as redeemed people. We are connected, just like the parts of a body. And we are all necessary for the body to function the way it’s supposed to.

*God hasn’t given any one of us everything,
but he’s given each of us something.*

That “something” is your spiritual gift.

Your spiritual gift has been given to you not for you to keep, but for you to give away. As 1 Corinthians 12:7 has it:

*“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for
the common good.”*

So what is your spiritual gift? Read the rest of 1 Corinthians 12 to get an idea of the big picture of the body of Christ. Your gifts may be evident to you or the people around you (you might want to ask them). If you need some help or just want a fresh look at your gifts, take this online assessment and see what you learn:

www.SpiritualGiftsTest.com. It’s free, and might prove very helpful.

We'll be looking more closely at your spiritual gifts for the next several days, so go find out what they are!

Daily Journal Question:

What are your spiritual gifts? Take the online assessment at www.SpiritualGiftsTest.com and record your results.

18 GIVING IT AWAY

The Interview Question

John and I were newlyweds, excited to get involved in our first church as a married couple. We also felt giddy over renting our first tiny apartment and inviting people over to enjoy it with us. So when we started to think about how we could serve our new church body, hosting a small group in our home seemed like a natural fit.

In the meantime, I applied for a job with the church to edit their monthly newsletter. This, too, seemed like a good use of my gifts and abilities. During the interview, the staff member in charge of the newsletter asked me a funny question, “Do you volunteer in the nursery?”

“Um, no I don’t,” I answered a little hesitantly. I thought of that door at the front of the sanctuary that all the kids traipse through before the sermon. I didn’t have kids at the time and didn’t feel like I was particularly good with children, so I had never actually walked through that door.



“Oh,” my interviewer replied with disappointment evident on his face, “around here we consider you part of the family if you volunteer in the nursery.” Meaning, I guess, that he wanted to hire a “family member” to edit the newsletter.

I was confused but had enough wits to reply, “My husband and I have volunteered to host a small group in our home... aren't small group leaders considered part of the family, too?”

I remember the man looking a little nonplussed. I'm just a little ashamed to admit that the look on his face still brings a slight smile to my face this many years later.

I didn't get the newsletter job. But John and I helped start a newlywed small group which met weekly in various tiny apartments for a year. That group of people ended up being one of the best blessings of our new marriage. Some of the friends we made that



year we still call friends today.

Today we're going to look at how you can use your gifts to serve your friends in the body of Christ. The best place to start is to see where you're already

doing just that.

How are you using your gifts to benefit your church?

Think about your involvement in your local church body. What are you involved in? How are you contributing? Are you doing something because it is expected of you, or are you truly using your gifts? What do you actually *enjoy* doing at church?

If this list is a little skimpy, then ask yourself:

How could I better use my gifts to benefit the body?

Brainstorm these questions and write your answers in your journal.

Daily Journal Question:

How are you using your gifts to benefit your local church body? Look over the spiritual gifts you discovered yesterday and ask yourself, "How might I use these gifts in my church in a way I truly enjoy?"

19 PRAY

Seek the Heart of God

You have one simple but very important task to do today:

Pray.

We've done a lot of good work so far on this journey to discover your calling. We've looked at how God has created you, redeemed you, and set you apart to work alongside him in the supreme restoration project he has undertaken in our world.

Now it's time to turn to look specifically at what your contribution will be. Who will be the recipient of your gifts? What deep hunger in the people around you has God uniquely fashioned you to feed?

These are questions that, I believe, lie close to the heart of God. So before we set about asking them, let's ask him first what he thinks about them. He's the one who's calling you, after all.

Daily Journal Question:

Today's question is not for you, but for God. Ask him today to show you the kind of restoration work he has created you to do. Ask him to help you discover your calling. Write what you're hearing in your journal.

20 ASK YOUR FRIENDS

Called in Community

Normally I teach this material on calling in a class or small discipleship group setting. Over the years, the benefit to a group setting has become very clear to me. I have learned an important truth:

Your calling is best discovered in community.

Often the people close to us know us better than we know ourselves. They can see what we're good at, where we shine. If they're close enough, they can also see our flaws, where we're not so shiny.

Your community plays a key role in helping you discover your calling. The people around you can help you see where and how God can best use you in your shared community. So, your job today is to *ask your friends*.

Choose someone close to you and ask him or her the following questions:



- How would you describe me in a few words?
- What am I doing when I'm at my best?
- Have you ever sensed God working through me? What were the circumstances?

Daily Journal Question:

How would your friends describe you? Ask them the questions above and write or type their answers in your journal.

21 REDEEMPTIVE WORDS

The Best Description

Yesterday you asked your friends some questions. One of the questions was, “How would you describe me in a few words?” Hopefully you found someone who knows you well, and you wrote down what they told you.

Today your question is simple:

What do you wish they would have said?



That may sound like a funny question, but I’m asking it for a reason. How do you wish your friends would describe you? Really?

For example, my friends might describe me as dependable and trustworthy. Those are good traits, for sure, but for some reason, I don’t feel like they “get at” my heart. Often I am dependable and trustworthy because I’m afraid of making people mad or being criticized. Revealing the source of those traits shows that, in my heart, they are not coming from a redemptive place.

How do I wish my friends would describe me? What are the redemptive words I long to hear? What are the words that describe me when I feel like I'm being the best me there is?

Some redemptive words that seem to rise out of my heart are creative, joyful, maybe even... carefree. Those words don't describe me naturally, but they describe me *redemptively*.

What about you? What are your redemptive words? Think about it, and record your thoughts in your journal.

Daily Journal Question:

How do you wish your friends would describe you? What are the redemptive words that rise out of your heart? Write them down in your journal.

22 SERVICE WITH A SMILE

Who Comes to Mind?

About a month ago my friend, Elizabeth, invited me to go to a weekend writer's workshop. We spent a beautiful day in a remodeled barn in North Carolina talking about writing and art and encouraging one another to create what God has made us to create.

The whole weekend was such a gift. I drove home inspired to pursue my calling, my art, and to encourage others to do the same. The workshop itself was wonderful, but the real gift came



packaged in my sweet friend, Elizabeth. It was because of her hospitality that the weekend happened for me at all.

She thought of me. She invited me. She paid for my ticket. She gave me her guest room for 2 nights. She took me to dinner and gave me my first sushi experience. She drove me around, asked me questions, dreamed with me about what God might be calling us to write and create. And knowing I'm a tea drinker in desperate need of

a quiet morning to myself, Elizabeth left this outside my bedroom door on Saturday morning:



(There's a teapot full of hot, breakfast tea under that towel. Mmmmm....)

Think Elizabeth has the gift of hospitality?
Me too.

I suspect that giving away the gift of hospitality not only makes her recipients happy, but it makes Elizabeth happy, too. I'll bet she doesn't do it under duress or because she thinks she ought to or because someone is expecting it. I'm pretty sure she just does it because she wants to. I think it makes her happy!

So my question for you today is, when was the last time you served someone and you really enjoyed doing it? What were the circumstances? What did the person need? How did you help them? How did the experience make you feel?

And, by the way, thank you for serving me, Elizabeth!

Daily Journal Question:

Have you ever served someone in a way that really made you happy? Write what comes to mind in your journal.

23 WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

What makes you want to get out of bed in the morning?

A few mornings ago I woke up startled to see my 4-year-old standing by the edge of my bed. It was still dark, though the early morning light was beginning to seep through the bedroom blinds. It was not nearly enough light, however, to convince me that my 4-year-old should be up yet. As my eyes focused on his face, I the following whisper:

"Where are the scissors?"

Not the words you want to hear from anyone at 6:25, least of all a 4-year-old with a balloon in his hand and a gleam in his eye.

That woke me up!

But look closely at the question I'm asking today: *what makes you want to get out of bed in the morning?* I'm not asking what makes you get out of bed (like 4-year-olds looking for scissors), but what makes you *want* to get out of bed?

In other words, *what motivates you?*

Are there mornings when you get out of bed looking forward to the day? Looking forward to the work that awaits you? What do those days look like? What does your work look like on those days? This is worth noting, because something about it motivates you. Take some time to think about it and write about it in your journal.

Daily Journal Question:

What motivates you? Think back to times when you looked forward to the day ahead of you, times when you really wanted to get out of bed and get going. What were the circumstances? What were the rewards? Add your thoughts to your journal.

24 WHAT WERE YOU LIKE IN THE 3RD GRADE?

Or any grade in elementary school, for that matter.

Back in the days before you started trying to “figure out who you are,” who were you??

When I was in elementary school, I loved waking up to a rainy day in the summertime. Probably not typical for most kids, but for me a rainy day meant I could stay home and read or write or do whatever I liked. A rainy day meant I didn't have to go to the pool and get hot and sweaty and talk to people all day.



I still love rainy days, honestly, for a lot of the same reasons! The heart of that 3rd grader who loved to spend time alone reading and thinking and writing still beats in this grown-up girl's body. I haven't changed that much.

I suspect you haven't either. That's why I'm asking you today, *what were you like in the 3rd grade?* What made you happy? What did you do back in the days when you had free time? When you had the

freedom to choose what you did with your time? Are any of those same things true today? If so, they are worth writing down. That 3rd grade heart holds keys to your grown-up heart... and your calling.

Daily Journal Question:

What were you like as a kid? What did you do when you had the freedom to choose what to do? Think back to those elementary school days and write what you remember in your journal.

25 I COULD DO THIS FOREVER!

God Made You For a Purpose

When was the last time you had the thought, “I could do this forever!”?

I often ask that question in the classes I teach on calling. Remember, I’m still operating under the principle that God made us for a purpose, and when we are living out that purpose something will feel “right.” We might even feel like saying, “I could do this forever!”

Have you ever had a thought like that? Whatever you were doing at that moment in time is worth looking at closely. I asked my friend, Gretchen, the question, “When was the last time you had the thought, ‘I could do this forever!’?” and this is how she answered:



“Our church has an annual picnic and baptism that I have helped to plan and coordinate for the past 3 years. The

past 2 picnics have been especially memorable and definitive for me personally. I have been thinking through my God-given calling and purpose and taking steps into areas where my strengths can be used. During two separate instances at these picnics, I found myself overjoyed and absolutely content. Both times I was doing something pretty typical, but when I had a chance to think about it, I was overwhelmed in the best way that it was more than typical. At the first picnic, I took a step back from the food line after replenishing some hotdog buns, looked over the crowd, and thought to myself, "I could do this for the rest of my life." Never before had I thought that in any other situation, and it gave even more meaning to what I was doing. Just a few weeks ago, this picnic came around again and it was a little more hectic this year due to weather and last minute changes. Nevertheless, as about 225 people were all packed under a picnic shelter (because it was raining), I stepped back to gather my thoughts of what else I needed to do before we ate... And laughed to



myself, because THIS was exactly what I wanted and needed to be doing! It was the best! There was nothing else I could imagine myself doing at that moment! It has been a blessing for the Lord to affirm a calling of hospitality and administration, seeing others as individuals, and bringing me to a place of pure joy, overwhelming peace, and simply having fun. All initial stress melts away and it's obvious that Jesus is there, too, enjoying the picnic with me, making it all worth it."

I love that Gretchen thought, "I could do this for the rest of my life" over a package of hotdog buns. I am one of the grateful recipients of Gretchen's gifts on a daily basis as she helps my husband administrate all the details of our church. It has been such a joy to help her discover her calling and watch it come alive. All 225 of us at the picnic enjoyed the way God made Gretchen that day, and she enjoyed it, too.

Your turn!

Daily Journal Question:

When was the last time you had the thought, "I could do this forever!"? What were you doing? What were the circumstances? Who benefitted from your work? Look closely at that moment and write about it in your journal.

26 THEMES OF YOUR CALLING

It's time to get out your highlighters!

Your journal is bursting with 25-days-worth of reflections on your calling. Answers to questions designed to help you understand your unique contribution to God's "supreme reformation project" that is underway in the world around you.

Now it's time to shift gears. We've asked a lot of good questions, and now you will turn to see what your answers have in common. In other words, we are going to flip back through our journals, re-read our answers, and look for themes. What common threads run through your answers? When do you repeat yourself? What words, phrases, or ideas show up again and again in your answers? These are your themes, and they provide a very important piece to the puzzle of your calling.

Daily Journal Question:

What are the themes of your calling? Re-read your journal today with a highlighter in hand. As you read, notice any repeated words, phrases, or ideas. Highlight them, and make list of the themes you find.

27 GOD CREATED ME TO...

Craft Your Calling

Here we go! Over the next few days, you will craft an image of your personal calling. Yesterday you read through your journal and highlighted the themes of your calling. Today we're going to distill those themes into the first sentence of your calling image.



Read back over the highlighted words, phrases, and ideas in your journal. Use those themes to craft the big idea of what you sense God created you to be and do. (Don't put too much pressure on yourself,

there's more to come tomorrow and you can take the next few days to edit.) Grab a pencil (and an eraser!) and work on completing this sentence...

God created me to...

Here are some ideas to get you started...

God created me to encourage the discouraged.

God created me to speak truth.

God created me to comfort the brokenhearted.

God created me to bring order out of chaos.

God created me to support godly leaders.

God created me to engage the fringe.

God created me to design beautiful spaces...

Get the idea? Go for it!

Daily Journal Question:

What has God created you to do? Read back over your highlighted list from yesterday and use those themes to catch the big idea of your calling. Finish the statement "God created me to..."

28 YOUR CALLING IMAGE

The Picture of You

Today may be my favorite day out of the whole journey to discover your calling. For all you visual learners out there, this day is for you. Today you will take the calling statement you wrote yesterday and transform it into an image. A *visual representation* of what you sense God created you to do and be. A *picture* of your calling.

Today we will finish the sentence, "I am like a..."

Yes, for all you English majors you're going to write a simile. Compare yourself to something. Have fun with it!

For all you non-English majors, I'll give you a hand. Let's look at the calling statement examples I gave you yesterday and brainstorm what their corresponding images might be...



God created me to speak truth. (A megaphone? A microphone?)

God created me to comfort the brokenhearted. (How about a warm blanket?)

God created me to bring order out of chaos. (A puzzle worker? A closet organizer?)

God created me to support godly leaders. (A foundation? A ladder?)

God created me to engage the fringe. (A shepherd's staff? A hand-written invitation?)

God created me to design beautiful spaces. (A paintbrush? A sculptor?)

God created me to encourage the discouraged. (A forklift? A pedestal?)

Some of those may make sense to you and some of them may not, and that's ok! Your calling image really needs to make sense only to you. It's a powerful image meant to express how God designed you. When I try to remind myself on any given day what my calling is, my calling image often comes to mind first. A picture is worth a thousand words, right?

Want to know what my calling image is?

I am like a teapot.

Want to know why? I'll tell you tomorrow.

Daily Journal Question:

What is your calling image? Take some time to think about the calling statement you wrote yesterday and turn it into a picture. What image best expresses how God has designed you?

29 YOUR MISSION

So far...

You've written your calling statement: *I am created to...*

And you've brainstormed your calling image: *I am like a...*

Now we're going to put those two together and write out your mission:

I am called to...

Your mission will be captured in a paragraph describing your calling. Let me explain by showing you how my calling themes came together:

My calling statement: *I am created to communicate truth.*

I am like a *teapot*.

I am called to take in truth like a teapot takes in water. I fill myself with truth in any way I can. Through Scripture,



through stories, through other believers, through creation itself, I drink in truth. My life experiences are like loose tea. They, too, are poured in and mix with the truth, interacting and blending together. As my life interfaces with truth, something new is formed. My life experiences steep in truth like tea leaves steep in hot water, developing something new and nourishing. When the steeping is complete, the new “tea” is ready to be poured out and shared with others. It might pour out through words, both written and spoken, or through dance, worship, or prayer. It is my life’s joy to share my “tea” with those around me. I have no greater joy than to share what I’ve learned and experienced in the hope that it will strengthen, refresh, and nourish someone else.

That’s my calling.

For the last two remaining days in our series, you’ll brainstorm how to live out your calling out in your everyday life.

But for today, write out your mission...

Daily Journal Question:

What is your mission? Using your calling statement and calling image, write a paragraph describing what your calling looks like as you use it to serve other people.

30 THE WORLD'S DEEP HUNGER

What Do They Need?

Remember Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation from Day 2? Buechner defines vocation as *the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet*.

Over the past month you have discovered your deep gladness, what makes you tick, what brings you joy. You've uncovered the themes



that surface in your life again and again, and you've used those themes to craft a calling statement, create a calling image, and write a description of your mission.

But your calling doesn't stop there. We're going back to the beginning, to our working definition of calling: *the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet*.

Today we turn to the world's deep hunger. That phrase can feel a little overwhelming, I know. So I want to simplify it by asking you to do this today: look into the eyes of the people around you. Your family. Your friends. Your neighbors. Your co-workers. And ask yourself, *what are they hungry for?* But more specifically than that ask, *what needs do they have that I am specifically designed to meet?*

You know yourself better now and what you're made for. You know you aren't made to meet everyone's needs or even all the needs of those close to you. But God has designed you to meet some of them. In fact, he has uniquely fashioned and placed you exactly where you are right now for very specific reasons.

So look around you. What unique contribution to God's supreme reformation project is he calling you to make? What needs has he created you to meet in the people you know?

Daily Journal Question:

What does the world's deep hunger look like in the people you know? What needs do they have that God has specifically designed you to meet, according to your calling?



31 YOUR PLAN

Today we put it all together...

My calling statement: God has created me to...

My calling image: I am like a...

My mission: I am called to...

My plan: Through the Spirit I will...

You've written your calling statement, decided on your calling image, and explained it in your mission. Today, as we finish this 31-day journey, you will write out your plan. How you plan to live out your calling. How you sense God wants to use you to meet needs in the lives of the people around you.

There are 3 steps to writing your plan:



1. This week I will...
2. Over the next 3 months I will...
3. Within the next year I will...

Start with brainstorming how your unique calling can meet unique needs in the people around you this week. Then imagine how God could use you and your calling to impact people over the next 3 months. Finally, dream a little. How could you step into living out your calling more fully within the next year? Write down all your thoughts. They may not all materialize, but throw open the doors to the possibilities of what God could do. Remember, he is at work in your corner of the world, redeeming, reforming, restoring, transforming... and he has created you to join him.

Finally, take note of the particular wording in writing out your plan:

Through the Spirit, I will...

Through the Spirit. The gifts you have are from the Spirit and the work you will do will be through the Spirit. God is the one who calls you, gifts you, enables you, and moves you. It is his work. Our work is to know our calling and yield to the Spirit as we seek to live it out. At the end of the day, at the end of our lives, God will get all the glory. It is all about him.

Daily Journal Question:

What is your plan? Write out how you plan to live out your calling in the next week, month, and year. Remember your plan is made through the Spirit, and God, the one who calls you, receives all the glory.

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