Make Your Job a Calling Resource Guide

How the Psychology of Vocation Can Change Your Life at Work

K. Arianna Molloy, PhD
Bryan J. Dik, PhD
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RESOURCE GUIDE

K. Arianna Molloy, PhD
and Bryan J. Dik, PhD

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Preface

When Ryan Duffy and I began the process of writing Make Your Job a Calling, social science research on discerning and living a calling—while still very new—was rapidly proliferating. This trend has not only continued in recent years, but accelerated. The notion of work as a calling is now an established construct in disciplines like vocational psychology and organizational behavior and management—and more and more research is published every year that expands our understanding of the role and function of calling in work and life. However, as is too often the case, a lot of this research seems sealed off from the layperson, relegated to the ivory tower without trickling down in ways that can have a meaningful impact in everyday life. This problem is of great concern to us. The “psychology of vocation” does little good unless it is made accessible to real people who spend their days doing real work in the trenches of the world’s real workplaces or to students who are preparing to do so. This is why we set out to write Make Your Job a Calling in the first place.

Of course, pursuing a calling is an inherently relational process. While reading a book like Make Your Job a Calling is usually a solitary activity, reflecting on and applying its themes and principles should not be. From the beginning, Ryan and I envisioned a resource guide that could help facilitate meaningful discussion of the book in a classroom, boardroom, church basement, living room, or coffee shop. I was fortunate to know a good person to write such a guide.

I first met Arianna Molloy when she was a doctoral student in
communication studies at the University of Denver and I was a new faculty member in psychology at Colorado State. Her passion for the topic of calling and her ability to help people learn struck me then, as it does now. When she told me years later that she was designing a course on communication, calling, and meaningful work as a faculty member at Biola University, I was very excited to see what kinds of activities she would create to engage her students. The first time she taught the course, it was wildly successful—so much so that it was elevated from a one-time seminar to an ongoing offering. That same year, Arianna was given Biola’s “Excellence in Teaching” award. Given her poignant insights and masterful skill in drawing students at the university into meaningful exploration and personal application, I knew that Arianna would be the perfect person to take the lead on a resource guide to accompany our book. Graciously, she agreed to take the project on and permitted me the opportunity to serve as copilot.

The result is an extremely user-friendly, highly practical resource guide that discussion leaders in virtually any setting can use to help groups of readers work together to derive as much benefit as possible from the book. (For more details on how to best make use of this guide, make sure to read the Introduction on the pages that follow.) Individual readers can use the guide as well to engage the material in the book more deeply—although we urge exploring and discussing the themes with others.

I am grateful to Arianna for lending her expertise to creating this guide. Both of us are grateful to Dr. Julie Yonker, who piloted it with her students at Calvin College and offered much encouragement and extremely valuable feedback. Finally, we are indebted to Templeton Press, particularly to Trish Vergilio and our editor, Susan Arellano, for all the ways they have supported this project. To readers who use this guide, we covet your feedback and are always happy to receive it—just e-mail us at bryan.dik@colostate.edu or arianna.molloy@biola.edu.

Bryan J. Dik, PhD
Introduction

AT ITS VERY CORE, approaching work as a calling implies a visceral interaction between a caller and one who is called. As a communication scholar, I am compelled by the notion that a calling in work is inherently interactional, involving a dynamic process between the self and others. When I began conducting my own research related to how faith and business values are navigated and negotiated in nonprofit work, I continually found that the term “calling” was used to describe the deepest motivation and desire for satisfying work. During my time as a doctoral student, I started to investigate the deeper significance of the term as it related to meaningful work. It was at this time that I had the privilege of meeting Bryan Dik, one of the coauthors of Make Your Job a Calling. Prior to learning of Dik’s work with Ryan Duffy, I found that the notion of work as a calling was dismissed as insignificant or strictly religious by some or romanticized and oversimplified by others. Dik and Duffy’s book on calling is the most solid, well-researched, well-articulated, and approachable writing I have come across in my research. It is theoretically grounded, richly empirical, and extremely practical.

I now work as a full-time faculty member in the Department of Communication Studies at Biola University in California, where I teach a variety of courses related to communication and work-life balance. One of the courses I developed, “Communication and Calling,” is a senior seminar where I have the opportunity to engage in deep discourse on the theoretical and practical topic of calling with students. I chose to incorporate Dik and Duffy’s book into
the course and, as I organized the class readings, learning activities, and assignments, I was continually grateful for the format and content in Make Your Job a Calling. On the last day of the course, I asked the students what they liked most about the class, and that discussion revealed near-consensus support for the value of Make Your Job a Calling. After sharing this with Dik, he immediately suggested we collaborate to write this Resource Guide.

Before discussing the guide, I do want to acknowledge that finding work you love to do—where you are able to use your skills and you have the circumstances to pursue it—is a privilege. One of the many things that Dik and Duffy do so well in Make Your Job a Calling is to underscore that experiencing work as a calling takes time, intentionality, perseverance, opportunity, and support. It is my hope that the process of discussing themes from the book inspires you and generates a thirst to experience work as a calling. Whether you feel stuck or overwhelmed, hopeful or uncertain, or energized and ready to go, our hope is that the book and this guide can assist you in that journey.

This guide is designed to assist instructors, book study leaders, career counselors, human resources professionals, and individual readers who seek to delve deeper into Make Your Job a Calling. In each chapter of the guide, the reader is given (1) a chapter summary, (2) general themes, (3) discussion questions, and (4) suggested activities. The suggested activities often involve a freewrite where you are encouraged to write your thoughts down without editing yourself. In a free-write you are not concerned with proper grammar or punctuation. Rather, you write your immediate thoughts down in a free-flowing manner. This allows for deep exploration and can inform rich discussion of ideas in a productive learning environment.

The elements in this guide are designed to facilitate the reflection and discussion process, providing readers with useful starting points. Of course, not all group leaders will find every question or
activity useful for their particular group, which is why we encourage flexible use of the material. By all means, pick, choose, add to, and adapt according to your sense of what will be most helpful for the group you are leading.

Finally, a note about generating effective discussion: Communication scholars suggest the single defining factor that determines successful group discussion is trust. To create an environment where trust can flourish involves several important aspects. The first is to recognize that context matters. In other words, each person comes to a discussion with his or her own family background, interpersonal experiences, work history and interests, and religious or spiritual assumptions. Some of these experiences may have been very positive for people while others may have been very damaging. Try not to assume that your experiences are the same. Remember to ask questions. A second aspect is perspective-taking, or intentionally looking beyond your own perspective with willingness to listen and learn. This Resource Guide is designed with the knowledge that there are diverse listening and learning preferences. Be sure to allow each person the time to think through the questions and work through the suggested activities.

I hope that this Resource Guide will help you experience a deeper and more meaningful understanding about what it means to approach work as a calling.

K. Arianna Molloy, PhD
PART 1
Calling in the Twenty-first Century
Chapter Summary

Chapter one lays the foundation for reclaiming the concept of calling. Understanding what people mean when they say things like “I am still trying to find my calling” or “I feel like I am finally living my calling” is not always easy, as people often seem to approach the concept from very different perspectives. This is probably not surprising; a wide range of competing assumptions and beliefs about work have developed throughout history and still clutter the cultural landscape today. Dik and Duffy make the case that a calling is best described in terms of three dimensions: (1) a transcendent summons, (2) purposeful and meaningful work, and (3) other-oriented motives. Building on empirical research related to calling, a focus of the chapter—and the book as a whole—is on identifying the impact that approaching and experiencing work as a calling can produce for people and the communities in which they live and work. At the heart of this chapter are the questions: What exactly does it mean to approach work as a calling? What difference does it make?

Themes

▶ Calling makes a tangible difference in one’s approach to work and experience at work.
Calling means different things to different people, and those differences reveal important individual assumptions and beliefs.

There are key similarities and differences between the two main models of calling offered in neoclassical and modern callings.

There are many positive but also some negative implications of experiencing a calling in one’s career.

Discussion Questions

1. To better situate your own perspective on the terms work and calling, take a moment and write down the first word you think of when you see these terms.
   a. Work = __________
   b. Calling = __________

2. The authors start off with an account of an individual named Bryce and a construction flagger. What was the response of the construction flagger? Why was Bryce surprised by his response? What was your response when reading this section?

3. On page 7, the authors explain that “calling’ elicits a variety of definitions from people that reveal different assumptions and beliefs about the role and function of a calling in their careers and lives.” Why do you think this is?
4. The author’s reference a study that investigated how people understand the concept of calling by asking them three questions. Take a minute and try to answer each one.
   a. As it applies to your career, how do you define the word calling?

   b. What, specifically, does it mean for you to approach your career as a calling?

   c. Does the word calling apply to areas of your life other than work? Please explain.

5. On pages 8–10, the authors point out similarities and differences in how people tend to conceptualize the concept of calling.
   a. Describe some of the key similarities.

   b. Explain the difference between the two major distinctions.
6. Take another look at the definition of calling that the authors offer on page 11. Why is their quick disclaimer important to keep in mind?

7. The chapter concludes by making the case for looking at what empirical (observable and verifiable) data has to say about work as a calling. What stood out to you among some of the positive outcomes of thinking about work as calling? What about the negative outcomes?

ACTIVITY

Freewrite

1. Take a moment and respond to the following:
   a. Locate a quote from the chapter that resonated with you, and write it here:

   b. Now, explain your biggest takeaway from this chapter.
Going Deeper

1. Think about the role that work has played in your family of origin.
   a. To understand how messages about work inform your own approach, reflect on the work messages you have received from your family. What did you learn as a result of growing up with them?

   b. More specifically, write about the most memorable message (a strong memory that lasts over time) you remember receiving from a parent or other important adult regarding work and/or the meaning of work. Be sure to include your own interpretation of the message you choose.
Chapter Summary

Chapter two begins by introducing three different orientations to work: as a job, a career, and a calling. For those with a job orientation, work is a *means to an end*, little more than a paycheck or a way to pass the time. For those with a career orientation, work offers a status ladder to climb, a way to increase *social and financial power* through others recognizing their success. In contrast, those with a calling orientation are driven by the *integration of passion and skill in service of the greater good*. These orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive—for example, the line between career and calling often blurs for those in leadership roles. Nevertheless, what makes work as a calling distinct is its focus on connecting a person with the broader world in meaningful and positive ways; it is always other-focused. Much of Chapter two provides a snapshot of Western history and the different messages about work emerging within each era, from work as a burden that makes us like animals to work as that which *distinguishes us* from animals—and even work that makes us divine. Dik and Duffy emphasize the importance of recognizing how historical and cultural contexts impact how we understand our work. They point to a sense of calling as an approach that makes work meaningful by linking it to a broader purpose. Research reveals its benefits; people who primarily approach work
as a calling are more satisfied with their jobs and with life as a whole than those who primarily view work as a job or career.

**Themes**

- People tend to align with one of three work orientations: *job*, *career*, and *calling*.
- These work orientations can be traced to the ways people have understood their work throughout *history*.
- Personal views of work are influenced by these historical and cultural *contexts*.
- Callings link the individual to *community*.
- There are *significant differences* between those who primarily view their work as a calling and those who see work as more of a job or a career.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Think back to the beginning of chapter two. What most struck you about Shawna, Monique, and Nan? In your own words, list the main characteristics of each work orientation these women represent:
   a. Job = ________________
   b. Career = ________________
   c. Calling = ________________

2. After reading the opening story, which particular orientation mirrors the way you think about your work right now? Your future career path? Why do you think that is? (If you need guidance, respond to the exercise on pages 39–40.)
3. We learn in this chapter that the job/career/calling distinction is “unrealistically simplistic” (page 27). Wrestle with this statement for a moment. What does it mean, and do you agree? Please explain.

4. The authors provide a quick overview of various ways people have understood work throughout history. Take a moment to review the following sections: (1) “The Burden of the Beast” (pages 28–31); (2) “The Pendulum Swings: Work Makes Us Divine” (pages 31–33); (3) “The Middle Path: Work as Calling” (pages 33–36); and (4) “Distortions of Work, Then and Now” (pages 36–38). For each section, answer the following questions:
   a. What are the main assumptions about work? Why?
   b. Who were the key players who formed, or represented, these assumptions?
c. What are the problems or challenges with this approach to work? What or whom does this approach leave out? Whose work is being valued?

**ACTIVITY**

*Freewrite*

1. Take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.
   
a. Instead of using words, spend a few minutes and draw a picture of what the concept of “work” means to you. How would you explain your picture? If in a group, share your explanation with other members.

b. Which work orientation (job, career, calling) is best represented by your picture? (You may want to save your picture and return to it once you finish the book. It may be interesting to see whether your picture of work has changed.)
PART 2

Dimensions of Calling
Chapter Summary

Chapter three addresses the role of listening, a critical step in discerning a calling. The first dimension of a calling, a transcendent summons, recognizes that the word calling implies the presence of a caller, a source of the summons. Dik and Duffy explore some of the challenges in discerning the voice or message of the caller. Passive approaches to listening involve waiting for an audible voice or burning bush-type of sign to reveal a calling in an “aha” moment of inspiration. Such experiences are profound, but they are also rare. Instead of passive waiting, the authors propose an active approach that targets the key mediators of a calling, which include gifts (e.g., your skills, passions, and personality); discussion (i.e., intentional and regular conversation with trusted friends, mentors, and/or counselors); obligations (e.g., honoring your other responsibilities in life); and needs (e.g., responding to a particular social need that stirs your heart). The chapter concludes by acknowledging the blurry line between “being called to be and being called to do.” In other words, pursuing a calling may be less about choosing the “right” occupation and more about making work meaningful, whatever that work may be. How do you make work meaningful? Through an ongoing process of evaluating and creating opportunities to use
one's gifts in ways that help make the world better, in big or small ways.

**Themes**

- Although some people may experience a dramatic, unmistakable calling event, for most of us the *discernment process* progressively unfolds over time.
- *Active listening* rather than *passive waiting* is essential in discerning a calling.
- *Active listening* involves being *reflective* (e.g., evaluating, contemplating, and praying) and *proactive* (e.g., seeking wise guidance, opportunities to learn, skill development).
- Identifying particular *mediators* can help bring clarity in the pursuit of a calling.
- Mediators include assessing one's gifts, engaging in *discussion* with mentors, taking stock of other commitments and *obligations* in life, and evaluating *needs* in the world.

**Discussion Questions**

1. While the authors explain that Roger’s dramatic calling story is rare, they also identify Roger’s proactive and intentional steps to explore and confirm this call. If you experienced a dramatic calling, what specific steps would you take in your own life to explore and confirm it? Why did you choose these steps?

2. The authors distinguish between the “pray and wait” and “pray and be active” approaches to discerning a calling (pages 53–55).
How are these two approaches different, and why is this difference important?

3. This chapter provides specific strategies for active discernment by targeting mediators of a calling (page 54). In your own words, describe these different mediators.

4. After reviewing the section on gifts (page 55), think about your own values, interests, personality, and abilities.
   a. When you think about your gifts, what are the first things that come to mind? In what ways are you unique? It may be easier to unpack this question by answering the following:
      ▶ What do you find important (your values)?
      ▶ What do you enjoy or what are curious about (your interests)?
      ▶ How would you describe your temperament and tendencies (your personality)?
What are some of the things at which you excel (your abilities)?

b. Many people have a hard time talking about their own personal gifts. If it helps, think of the person who knows you best. What would he or she say are your gifts?

5. List three people who you trust, who are wise, and who have your best interests at heart. Next, arrange a meeting with each of them.
   a. Review the questions provided on page 56 and choose two that you would want to ask each person. (When you schedule your times to meet with these individuals, consider e-mailing each of them the questions you want to cover so they have time to reflect on their answers.)

b. If you don’t feel like you have anyone who meets all these criteria, think about someone you respect but don’t know very well. How might you connect with and get to know this person better? Consider asking this person the questions you chose above.
6. When considering obligations, the authors point out: “A discernment of calling absolutely has to take into account one’s other responsibilities in life” (page 57). Now, think about obligations in your own life.

a. What are a few central responsibilities you hold right now? What are a few peripheral (or back-burner) responsibilities?

b. How do you distinguish between these? (Keep in mind that a healthy calling will not require compromising commitments in your life that are central obligations.)

7. On page 58 the authors explain that “part of discerning a transcendent summons, therefore, means evaluating the intersection of your gifts with needs you identify in your community and in the world around you.” Take a moment and answer the following questions:

a. What local or global needs touch your heart? What do you find yourself inspired or burdened by? How can you steward your gifts for this cause?
ACTIVITY

Freewrite

1. Figuring out what kind of niche within the world of work you want to pursue can put you under a lot of pressure. It is helpful and important to acknowledge this. Take a moment and describe any pressure you may feel to find the “right” job. Where do you think this pressure is coming from? Why do you think that is?

2. Now, take a moment and reflect back on this chapter. Rather than focusing on the question, “To which job am I called?” think about asking, “What kind of job would allow me to express my gifts in a way that allows me to honor the central obligations in my life while also attending to the social needs that inspire me?” This is a big question, so it may be helpful to break it apart first:
   a. What are some types of work that would allow you to express your gifts?
   b. What types of work would allow you to honor the central obligations in your life?
c. What are some jobs that, directly or indirectly, address a social need that inspires you?

d. Finally, what work possibilities might include all three components?
Chapter Summary

Chapter four focuses on what it takes to experience work as meaningful. The authors suggest that when life goals align with career goals, a person is more likely to experience meaningful work. Two main components of meaningful work are comprehension and purpose. Comprehension means making sense of your experience and understanding how you fit within the world around you. For example, a worker who can articulate how her particular role advances the goals of her organization or addresses a broader social need is probably high in comprehension. Purpose moves from understanding to action, and refers to your intention to do something that matters to you, and to the world around you. Dik and Duffy connect the theoretical to the practical by providing specific steps you can take to experience meaning at work. One option is to find a job that provides meaning by offering things like autonomy, a sense of contribution, and supportive leaders and coworkers. When a job doesn’t offer all those things, there are additional options, such as integrating spirituality in your professional life; using your particular strengths; linking day-to-day activities to down-the-road outcomes that matter to you; and focusing on how your work benefits the greater good.
THEMES

- *Life goals* that align with *career goals* often result in meaningful work.
- Experiencing meaningful work involves *comprehension* and *purpose*.
- *Practical strategies* for making work meaningful include finding a job that promotes meaning, integrating faith and spirituality with your work, using your strengths, linking your work to a broader purpose that you value, and focusing on how your work benefits the greater good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The chapter begins by asking you to think through your life goals. If you have not already, take a few moments now to write these down. (If you have already responded to the questions below, review what you wrote. Now that you have had time to think about it, would you change anything?)
   a. What is ultimately most important to you?

   b. How would you describe your life’s purpose?

   c. List at least five life goals you are currently pursuing.
2. Now, try to narrow this down a bit. What role do you want your professional life to play within the broader context of your life?

a. List at least five career goals you are currently pursuing.

b. If you are reading this book in a group, find a partner. Share one life goal and one career goal.

3. Dik and Duffy suggest that “The more closely your life goals and career goals align, the more likely you are to experience your work as meaningful, in support of your broader sense of purpose in life” (page 67). Furthermore, they say the degree of alignment is diagnostic. What does this mean to you?

4. Think about the work you are currently doing, whether you are a student, the CEO of a company, a stay-at-home parent, a part-time worker, a full-time worker, or a volunteer. How do work tasks connect to a broader goal—a goal that you value and you think makes a difference?
5. This chapter tackles an important but complex concept: pursuing meaningful work. Think over the chapter as a whole. What was your biggest takeaway and why? How does it connect with what you have learned in the first three chapters?

**Activity**

*Going Deeper*

1. The search for meaningful work is all around us. In groups (or individually), watch the ten-minute YouTube video of Daniel Pink’s commentary, “Mastery, Autonomy, and Purpose.” Then, answer the following questions (and discuss if in groups):
   a. What was your takeaway from this video? What did you notice?

   b. What do you think the deeper message is?

   c. Do you find this message appealing? Why or Why not?
d. How does this relate to what you have learned in *Make Your Job a Calling* so far?
5 Serving Others

Chapter Summary

Chapter five examines the concept of calling as it relates to helping others or having a social impact in the workplace and life in general. Dik and Duffy describe how society is built on common needs and mutual service, so that every honest occupation contributes something of value. Therefore, whatever work you do, you can make a meaningful difference, whether large or small. Many workers make their social impact a high priority, even sacrificing personal pleasure (in the form of salary increases, time, and energy) if doing so means they can make more of a difference in the lives of others. Research confirms that doing good is good for you; people who engage in other-oriented activities experience more satisfying relationships, feel less guilt or discomfort over the suffering of others, and are happier and have a more positive self-image, ultimately. Doing good at work is easier when you have the support of others. However, whatever work you do, it is important to identify and focus on its prosocial impact and to actively seek and create opportunities to help others. Taking a prosocial approach to your work may not always seem easy, but, as the authors put it, “if doing good is a good thing to do for others, and good for you, and if work is a good place to do good, why not do good at work?” (page 94).
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Themes

▶ People who engage in other-oriented activities have high levels of life satisfaction.
▶ Whatever your work is, you can make a difference.
▶ Having a conscious awareness of the impact your work has on others can significantly increase your motivation and the sense that your work has purpose and meaning.
▶ Some jobs are by prosocial by nature, but a person can choose to seek and create opportunities to make a difference within any occupation.

Discussion Questions

1. The authors note that “ancient communities that maximized their ability to help one another tended to survive and prosper, and those that didn’t inevitably failed” (page 88). In your experience, what role does service play in a healthy, thriving community or culture? Give an example.

2. What do you think gets in your way when it comes to serving others? What is one thing you could do to change this?

3. Revisit chapter one’s explanation of neoclassical and modern callings. What might the idea of service look like for both of these approaches?
4. Do you think it is easier to serve family or friends you know outside of work, rather than those in your workplace? Why or why not?

5. What is one takeaway from chapter five that could be an asset to your work future?

6. What concept from this chapter influenced, challenged, and/or affirmed your view of work as a calling?

**Activity**

*Freewrite*

1. Think about the last time you did an act of service. What was it about the act that made it an act of service? In doing this act of service, what feelings did you experience?

   a. Based on your answers, what do you think are the key criteria for an action to be an act of service?
b. Based on your answers, what kinds of emotional responses came from an act of service?

Going Deeper

1. Watch the brief YouTube video, “The Power of Words.” Then, answer the following questions:
   a. What is this video about? What is the main message?

   b. How might this video relate to the idea of calling and serving others? (For this question, try to resist taking the easy answer. Reflect back on the chapters you have read so far in Make Your Job a Calling.)

2. Take a few minutes and read Holly Epstein Ojalvo’s article, “Do You Have a Life Calling?” Ojalvo unpacks David Brooks’ observation on commencement speeches as it relates to the pursuit of calling. After you have read this article:
   a. Locate the messages you think reinforce a neoclassical approach to calling and the messages you think reinforce a modern approach to calling.
b. What is your *takeaway* from this article as it relates to what you have learned in chapter five on serving others?
PART 3
Discovering and Living a Calling
6 Forging a Path

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter six provides practical steps for choosing a career path that aligns with a sense of calling. Building from Frank Parsons’ *person-environment fit* strategy (seek to understand yourself, explore opportunities in the world of work, and make a good match), Dik and Duffy suggest that career decision making is both a science and an art. In other words, high-quality career assessments are very helpful in determining what kinds of jobs you *could* do, however it is also important to gather other types of information and feedback and to engage in a process of self-reflection to decide what you *should* do. For example, recall the advice offered in chapter three, and target the key mediators of a calling: *gifts, discussion, obligations, and needs*. Along with these key mediators, chapter six offers a perspective-taking strategy based on three roles you can play: (1) actor, (2) agent, and (3) author. Applying the role of the *actor* means seeking a job that you are well suited for, knowing what you are good at doing and what you love. Taking on the role of an *agent* means being proactive, knowing how to confidently navigate the current work climate and planning strategies for how work can contribute to overall life satisfaction. Finally, engaging the role of an *author* means assessing the guiding themes in your life and seeking coherence with these themes as they relate to work.
Themes

- Discerning a calling involves knowing what practical steps to take.
- Person-environment fit strategies include seeking a clear understanding of the self, gaining knowledge of opportunities and needs in the world of work, and making a reasonable connection between the two.
- Effective self-reflection involves assessing your own role as an actor (what), agent (how), and author (why).

Discussion Questions

1. In this chapter we learn that research suggests between the ages of eighteen and forty-four, the average person changes jobs eleven times.
   a. What was your initial reaction when you read this? Why?
   b. How does knowing this information change the way you approach your current and/or future work? Please explain.

2. Think back to the second role, agency, as you review the following statement: “the most useful skill a person can develop is the ability to adapt, to anticipate change, and to cope effectively when it arrives” (page 123). Then, answer the following:
a. In the context of your own life, what would this look like?

b. What steps can you take to develop this skill?

3. Assuming the role as author, take stock of some of themes in your own life.
   a. Think back to your childhood heroes. What strengths did these role models have?

b. What hobbies did you take part in and what need do you think they satisfied?

c. What interests did you have (in school, in leisure, in relationships)?
d. What do you think are the most important needs in your community or in the broader world around you, and how might you be able to address them?

**Activity**

*Freewrite*

1. Many are familiar with the question, “What would you do if you knew you could not fail?” This question may be an easy one to answer in a make-believe sort of way. However, your answer to the question reveals something important about your goals and what you value.
   a. Looking at this question with a fresh perspective, acknowledge the initial objections you may have raised or the ideas you may have killed off before verbalizing them because of the fear of failure.
   
   b. Instead, take a proactive approach to the question by revisiting the roles of actor, agent, and author (pages 114–27). How might you achieve each of these roles?
c. Now, with those aspects in mind try to answer the question again: “What would you do (as a career) if you knew you could not fail?”

**Assessment**

1. Go to jobZology.com, click on “Solutions for Job Seekers,” and then click on “Join Today.” After navigating the subscription process, take the VIP (values, interests, and personality) assessments and interact with the feedback.

a. How would you describe your gifts (e.g., values, interests, personality, workplace preferences) based on what you learned from the jobZology VIP assessments?

b. Based on your search of the O*NET through the jobZology VIP toolkit, what fields of work are, or would be, a good fit for you?

c. In what specific ways could these occupations allow you to express a sense of calling?
Chapter Summary

Whereas chapter six focused on discerning a calling and choosing a career, chapter seven focuses on how to live out a calling in whatever area of work you may find yourself. This chapter examines the challenges people often face when trying to cultivate their callings at work and counters the myth that only specific types of people, within specific types of occupations, can experience their work as a calling. The authors suggest that one of the most promising strategies for transforming a job into a calling is job crafting. Job crafting recognizes that people are active shapers, rather than passive recipients, of their work environments. Job crafting involves steps that workers can take to “elicit a stronger sense of purpose, meaning, engagement, resilience, and thriving from their jobs” (page 134). Task crafting consists of altering the scope or nature of the task, and/or concentrating on adding a new and different task. Relational crafting addresses the interpersonal quality of work relationships by building positive relationships and/or decreasing exposure to negative relationships. Cognitive crafting involves thinking about your work in a different way by focusing on how it impacts the greater good. Job crafting can make a tremendous difference in how you experience your work and can transform nearly any job in ways that bring it more in line with a calling.
THEMES

▶ Most people can transform their current work in ways that bring it more in line with a calling.
▶ Job crafting involves attention to task, relational, and cognitive crafting strategies.
▶ Effective job crafting begins with evaluating your current situation and making a plan to take action.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is Maggie and why is her story significant in this chapter?

2. The authors provide a road map for those looking to apply job crafting (pages 144–48). Take a moment and respond to the following:
   a. Conduct an inventory of the tasks you are responsible for at work. Categorize them based on the time and energy they require (low, medium, and high).

   b. Make a list of your gifts (interests, abilities, personalities, and work-related values). Organize these gifts according to motives, strengths, and passions.
c. Integrate your tasks and gifts lists. Think about how much time and energy you would prefer to invest for each task. Examine the themes within this list. What tasks do you wish you could spend the most time on?

d. Take action! After identifying themes of tasks that express your gifts, create a plan. How could you make these tasks happen more? Locate someone in your life who could hold you accountable to pursue this. Who would that be?

3. In what ways is a job like a marriage? In what ways does this analogy break down?

4. Revisit the idea that a calling is an ongoing process. As you journey through this book, what concept has impacted your process the most?

Activity

Freewrite

1. The authors suggest “establishing stronger, more positive connection with others around you at work will generate a greater
degree of meaning and on-the-job happiness” (page 138). With this in mind, answer the following:

a. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the happiest imaginable), how would you rate your current on-the-job happiness? Why do you think that is?

b. Similarly, on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being maximum meaningfulness), how would you rate your current on-the-job sense of meaningfulness? Why do you think that is?

c. What job crafting strategy do you think could help with this?

Taking Action

1. Identify someone in your life who can join you in giving job crafting a try. Go through the job crafting strategies mentioned in chapter seven and compare notes. Schedule a meeting once a month to discuss the progress and challenges you may face in pursuit of transforming your work into a calling.
Chapter Summary

Chapter eight explores the concept of calling outside of paid work (e.g., parenting, volunteering, leisure pursuits). More specifically, the authors look at what it means to experience multiple callings, to feel a sense of calling in one area of life while still looking for ways to express it in other areas. There are two main categories of people pursuing callings outside of paid work: those who are unable to pursue their calling in paid work (e.g., stay-at-home parents, artists) and those who sense that they have multiple callings. The two approaches to living a calling that are expressed within these two categories provide fruitful ways to experience a calling—however they can also introduce new complexities. To address some of the challenges of pursuing multiple callings and/or callings outside of work, the authors provide three strategies: (1) differentiate core and peripheral callings; (2) plan and protect time for core nonwork callings; and (3) invest in what makes your calling a calling.

Themes

- People can experience multiple callings.
- Those who are unable to pursue their calling in paid work can compensate by pursuing a calling in other avenues of life.
- Successfully balancing more than one calling can be stressful and will require some sacrifice.
Three strategies that help in navigating callings outside of paid work involve *differentiating between core and peripheral callings*, *planning and protecting time for unpaid callings*, and *staying focused on the purpose of the calling*.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Who is Paul and what stood out to you about his story?

2. The authors talk about results they’ve found in survey responses to the Brief Calling Scale (BCS). Why is there little connection between having a calling to a particular line of work and searching for one?

3. Describe what compensators experience. What kinds of strategies do these individuals use?

4. Dik and Duffy suggest that individuals who feel inclined towards multiple callings, “may think of a calling as relevant in every life role they inhabit, from worker to spouse to parent to citizen” (page 162). What are some of the challenges this perspective might include?
5. The first strategy the authors provide is to “Differentiate core and peripheral callings” (page 166). In your own words, what would this involve?

6. Planning and protecting time for core nonwork callings is the second strategy. What role does motivation and structure play in this process?

7. Recall the definition of a neoclassical calling. What might be important to keep in mind about this definition as it relates to the third strategy, “Invest in what makes your calling a calling” (page 169)?

**Activity**

*Freewrite*

1. Return to the authors’ definition of calling: “A transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (page 11).
   a. Take a moment and think beyond paid work.
b. What might be something else you see as (or could see becoming) a calling?

c. What challenges might this calling involve?

d. What strategy might help you navigate these challenges?

e. What benefits might you experience by pursuing this calling?
PART 4
Boundary Conditions and Challenges of a Calling
Chapter Summary

It may be tempting to assume that there is no downside to living a calling. Chapter nine challenges this assumption by exploring the *perils and pitfalls* that can sometimes accompany a sense of calling. Because a calling can foster one's passion and a strong sense of work as very important, it has the potential to push work beyond the healthy boundaries of a well-balanced life. Dik and Duffy describe two particular poisons of distorted callings: *job idolization* and *workaholism*. Job idolization means viewing work as an idol—the most important aspect of life, holding far greater importance than any other part of life. Workaholism is an addiction to work. The authors delve deeper into *six risk factors* of workaholism. They suggest that the best way to guard against idolization and workaholism are to proactively strive for life balance, actively maintain a proper perspective on the role of work in life, and focus on work not as an end in itself but as a means to improve the common good. Next, the authors explore how a sense of calling can lead to two vulnerabilities. One is *career tunnel vision*, in which a person becomes “locked in” and fails to evaluate the direction of a calling, even ignoring helpful advice from trusted mentors. Another is *exploitation from employers*, some of whom may ask an employee with a calling to do more with less than other workers. The authors then pose the question: Can a calling become so distorted that it is used to justify
harmful, even horrendous, acts? From a neoclassical understanding of calling, the answer is clearly no. Pursuing a calling in the context of community, with the moral standards of love and shalom as guiding principles, helps to guard against such distortions. The chapter concludes with the reminder that callings are “inherently relational” and will not only impact your own life, but the lives of those around you (page 195).

**Themes**

- Pursuing a calling can bring not only benefits, but also *perils* and *pitfalls*.
- Callings become distorted when they drift into *job idolization* and/or *workaholism*.
- Striving for *balance*, maintaining *perspective*, and focusing on *others* helps guard against idolization and workaholism.
- Callings can cause *career tunnel vision* and *exploitation* from unscrupulous employers.
- Callings remain healthy when pursued within the context of a *community* committed to the moral standards of *love* and *shalom*.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Explain the term *job idolization* and provide an example.

2. Workaholism is an addiction to work. What does *the process* of this addiction look like?
3. According to the authors, why is workaholism more complex than many physical addictions?

4. What are the six risk factors of workaholism? How many do you meet?

5. The authors suggest that, instead of focusing on a negatively stated goal like, “Just don’t let idolization and workaholism happen,” it is more effective to take a positive and proactive approach. What will this look like for you?

6. In what ways do you see a calling as a vulnerability? How will you guard against this?

7. In what ways does our culture enable distortions of calling? What big or small changes could address this concern? What role do you have in this?
8. Return to the three dimensions of calling once more. Why is living your calling not a solitary endeavor?

Activity

Freewrite

1. The concept of vulnerability is attracting attention in work and family circles. Take twenty minutes to watch Brené Brown’s TED talk on vulnerability.¹
   a. What connections do you see between this video and the pursuit of calling discussed in *Make Your Job a Calling*?
   b. How might you apply this in your own life?

Digging Deeper

1. Wrestle with the potential costs of approaching work as calling. This involves synthesizing what you have learned in this book and digging deeper into your own core values about work as a calling.
   a. Make a list of the kinds of risks and sacrifices that you might experience in pursuing your calling (think of all aspects of
PERILS AND PITFALLS

life—financial, relational, geographic, time, energy, reputation, etc.).

b. Now, take time to thoughtfully answer the following:
   1. What would you be willing to sacrifice or risk to pursue your calling?

2. What would that sacrifice look like? Provide a practical example.

3. Why would you be willing to sacrifice it?

4. At this point in your life, what are you not willing to sacrifice? Why?

5. Do you think this might ever change? Why?
Chapter Summary

In the final chapter, Dik and Duffy discuss the changing nature of work. They begin by acknowledging the very real sense of uncertainty that many people face in today’s work environment. More specifically, the authors address three realities in today’s world of work. First is the hardship experienced by many due to economic and social oppression, often rooted in forces outside of their control. Second is the rapid change of demographics in the workplace, as baby boomers work longer before retiring in waves, and their Gen Y counterparts flood the workforce. Finally, the authors address the shift from a world of company loyalty and long-term careers within a single organization to one governed by short-term employment relationships and contract work, in which the individual worker is increasingly a free agent. This kind of social inequity, rapid change, and constant uncertainty can be overwhelming. Where does the idea of calling fit within this chaotic world? The authors suggest that perhaps the concept has never been more needed. A sense of calling is like a lighthouse, illuminating a way forward even while obstacles lurk, helping you thrive in the changing world of work.
THEMES

- Current work trends point to constant change and a sense of uncertainty in the world of work.
- Economic privilege, social oppression, age, loyalty, and identity serve as significant factors in the changing nature of work.
- Calling can serve as an inspiring and anchoring means of pursuing meaningful and satisfying work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meritocracy and how does this relate to your career? Do you resonate with the “American dream”? Why or why not?

2. Why do the authors say that, “a calling is not the same as work centrality?” (page 205).

3. What does Maslow’s hierarchy of needs have to do with calling and oppression?

4. In this final chapter, the authors also discuss how calling involves community. How might a shared sense of calling build unity among coworkers?
5. Can you imagine living out a calling in your retirement? What might this look like for you, specifically?

6. How does the “free-agent” orientation impact a person’s work approach? Do you think this supports or undermines a neoclassical sense of calling? Explain.

7. Of the three work trends discussed in this chapter, what trend do you see most prevalent in your own life and/or the lives of those around you?

8. Of all the concepts in the book, what stood out to you most? How will this impact the way you pursue work?

Activity

Freewrite

1. Look again at the title of the book. The implication is to take personal responsibility and to be proactive about living out a calling.
a. Based on what you have learned in this book, what is the first step you can take to pursue your own calling as it relates to work?

**Digging Deeper**

1. Metaphors play a central role in shaping the way we define our realities. They allow us to understand and experience one thing in terms of another, providing a type of shorthand for abstract concepts. While calling may be easy to talk about, it is both an abstract term and can be a taken-for-granted assumption.

   a. Your task here is to locate a metaphor that provides a type of shorthand for your own approach to work as a calling. Note, it may help to think back to the picture you drew (from chapter two) about what work looks like (and what it means) to you. In the same way, use word imagery (metaphor) to draw a mental picture about what work as a calling looks like (and means) to you. For example, “work as a calling to me is a journey,” or “discerning a calling is falling in love,” or “living out a calling is solving a puzzle.”

   b. Select and defend the metaphor you would assign to your own concept of work as a calling.
Notes

Chapter 4: Making Meaning


Chapter 5: Serving Others


Chapter 6: Forging a Path

1. Fees may apply for use of this site.

Chapter 9: Perils and Pitfalls


Chapter 10: A Role for Calling in the Changing World of Work
