

gifted for leadership

Are You Living Your Calling?

This download includes 5 assessments to help you evaluate whether you are fulfilling your calling or simply going through the motions.



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Introduction

Assessing the Call

By JoHannah Reardon



Debbie Jensen says in her GiftedForLeadership.com article, "How a Calling Should Change Our Lives" that she is consumed with what it means to be called. She goes on to say:

Those who are called experience an internal change. Their eyes are fixed on a bigger goal, and their actions are always filtered through God's Word. Yes, that's the mark of a Christian as well. A called person, however, will jump to the big picture even faster. For example, a called person might struggle with anger, but when faced with a difficult situation his or her calling provides the necessary power to overcome human flaws and quickly become a



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peacemaker. God's universal plan will always win over personal desires. . . .When you are called, you will reflect Christ every moment of every day and his power will allow you draw on that call for strength, passion, and endurance to do his will.

Isn't that what we all want? The reason a "calling" matters to us is that we want to live passionately and all-out for God. We want to make an impact for Christ and his kingdom—and leave an indelible mark that will have been of importance, even after we are gone from the earth.

But sometimes the reality is quite different from the concept. This assessment pack was created to help you sort out what your calling should be and how you should live it out on a daily basis.

Margaret Feinberg will help you look at the big picture of your call as you step back to see beyond the minutia of your daily life. Nicole Unice will assist you in separating the myths from the realities of your call. Julia Mateer will help you identify your passion and put it into action. My (JoHannah Reardon's) assessment will challenge you to think about what you assume is your calling and make sure it's truly what you should be doing. And Keri Wyatt Kent challenges you to slow down and listen to God's voice.

Blessings,

JoHannah Reardon

Contributing Editor for GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM

Leader's Guide

How to use this download for a group study



This download can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the Reflect questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**

Is Your Calling Too Small?

It should be more than a job title.

By Margaret Feinberg

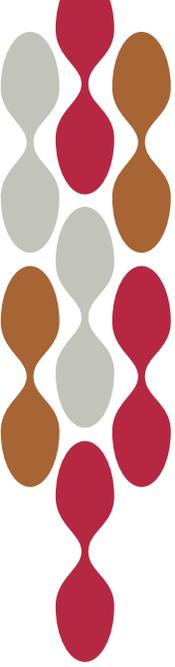


I'm often baffled when a committed follower of Christ asks, "What's your calling?"

To me, the answer is a no-brainer. The "call" of every Christian is the same: to commit ourselves to follow Jesus and be conformed to his image. In other words, the calling on our lives is to press our noses so close into the shoulders blades of Jesus that he's the only one we see and follow.

The real question isn't "What's your calling?" but "How are you specifically fulfilling that calling?" And that's a question many of us are being forced to revisit.

Why? We're living in the midst of a technological



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revolution that's turning our world upside down. The ways we learn, communicate, and shop are shifting in mind-bending ways. Many of our nation's jobs are disappearing. Some of us hear of friends and loved ones who have been laid off and quietly wonder when our pink slips will arrive. This forces us to revisit the question of how we live out our calling as Christ-followers.

I believe that now more than ever we need to expand our understanding of what Christ has called us to. Let me give you a practical example. I have a lovely Christian friend who, when the topic of calling pops up, answers confidently, "My calling is to teach kindergartners and show them the love of Christ." And I love that! I adore watching the way she talks about her kids, the way she celebrates their progress, the moments she shares funny stories from the classroom.

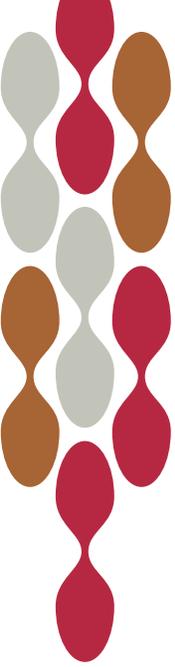
But I also wonder: What if cutbacks begin affecting her classroom? Her job? What if she's laid off?"

Is the fulfillment of her calling found in a job title or something more?

I believe the way she fulfills the calling on her life can't be limited by whatever fits on a business card. My friend is called to teach—and that gift can be used in countless different ways each and every day both inside and outside the classroom.

In my own life, I can say that I fulfill my calling as a non-fiction, Christian writer. But that title sounds so narrow. If I recognize myself as a communicator—then whether I'm writing a book or an email or a blog post, I'm fulfilling my calling. Whenever I send a tweet or a text, I'm fulfilling my calling. Whenever I'm talking with friends or a small group or a large audience, I'm fulfilling my calling.

This raises questions: How are you fulfilling your calling? And is the way you've been thinking about your calling too small?



Are You Living Your Calling? Is Your Calling Too Small?

- If the "call" of every Christian is the same: to commit ourselves to follow Jesus and be conformed to his image, what about my job fulfills that calling?
- What about my job utilizes my God-given abilities?
- Is my current job different from my calling? If so, how?
- Besides my job, what is a broader way that I fulfill my calling?
- The likelihood of losing my job is:
 - Likely
 - Possible
 - Unlikely
- If I lost my job, how would I continue to fulfill my calling?

Margaret Feinberg (www.margaretfeinberg.com)

is a communicator and a regular contributor to

GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM whose latest book is

Wonderstruck: Awaken to the Nearness of God.

Follow her on Twitter or Pinterest @mafeinberg, or become

a fan on Facebook. This assessment was adapted from an

article that first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

A Calling Unfolds

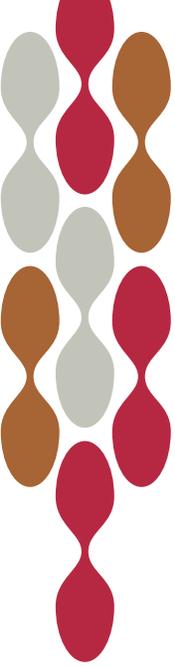
Myths and realities of how God calls us

By Nicole Unice



She found me in the church kitchen. "I know you are busy, but. . ." her fingers plucked at her sweater. "Can I talk to you for a minute?" I leaned on the doorjamb and leaned into the conversation. Life was hard, she said. She wondered if I could pray for her to get this new job, and she wanted to ask me about how I got to the ministry position I held at the church.

She looked down at the floor and kept picking at her sweater, and the words tumbled out. Being a mom was harder than she thought. Staying home and "just" cheering her husband on in ministry wasn't so great. And as the words came, they became stronger and more honest. She was



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anxious for her future and jealous of his. "I feel like I'm wasting my life," she said. "I just want to find my calling."

Just.

Find.

My calling.

This isn't only one conversation I've had, but an echo I've heard from many. And I've not only heard these words, I've thought them myself. Just how does a woman find her calling, particularly in ministry?

In my own season of wrestling with calling, I had the opportunity to hear author Parker Palmer speak. His words were helpful: "Your calling is anything that you can't not do." When we're young, sometimes we think there are a million things "we can't not do." But with experience, with waiting, with humbling ourselves and allowing God to shape us into souls he can use, our calling becomes clearer. We begin to let go of what we can do without. And like a Polaroid picture slowly coming into vision, our calling becomes sharper, clearer. We begin to make decisions based on the broad strokes of things "we can't not do" . . . like showing mercy, working for justice, or embracing our call to lead. Our calling might take us into the classroom or the homeless shelter or our own kitchens or our church offices. But it will not be limited by a job, because our calling becomes part of us, part of our spiritual DNA.

Annie Dillard once said, "I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you" (*Living Like Weasels*).

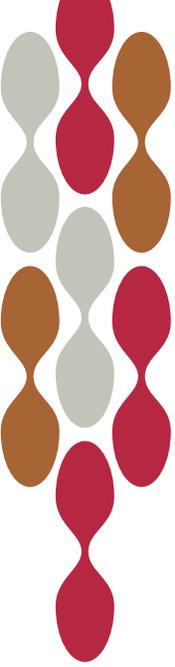
Let's evaluate some of the myths and realities of our call. The following questions may help you refine your thinking:



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- Do I live for "ifs"? If I could just get this next job . . . If I just had enough money for a babysitter . . . If I could just finish my degree . . . If my church would just hire me.
- Do I keep looking for an easy or one-step path to my call?
- If the word *calling* is defined as "a strong urge toward a particular way of life or career," how does that define my calling?
- If my calling is never just around the next corner, how can I begin to look at it as becoming a lifelong explorer?
- How can I begin to view my calling as more than just one job, one relationship, or one season of life?
- How can I begin to refine my call by time, work, trial and error? What should be my first step in that regard?
- *Find* is too active of a word. We talk about "finding" our calling, but that gives ourselves too much credit. How might my calling find me rather than the other way around?
- What can I do to become a more active listener to God's leading?
- God is actively, certainly calling me to something. He calls in many ways. He called Moses with a burning bush. He called Miriam through her family and her gifts for song and speech (Exodus 15:20). He called Hannah through the waiting. He called Mary through an angel. He called Paul through a blinding light and Nicodemus through a conversation in the dark. He is not limited in his creativity and he's not nervous about my timeline. What ways do I see him calling me?



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A Calling Unfolds

- If my calling is about having a humble heart that is fully devoted to him and willing to do anything to move his kingdom forward, how am I doing?
- How might God be equipping me for the work he wants me to do, not the work I think I want to do?
- How might God be using my waiting places, frustrations, experiences, and gifts to shape me into a woman who will be strong enough for the call he will place on my life?
- God's not concerned about my timeline, and he won't be late for his own agenda for my life. (Think of Peter denying Jesus three times and yet becoming a faithful servant.) How can I become more confident that I have a calling and that I'm not going to miss it?
- How might God be using unexpected detours to help me find my calling?

*Nicole Unice is a ministry leader at Hope Church in Richmond, VA, a regular contributor for **Today's Christian Woman**, and author of **She's Got Issues** (Tyndale). You can find her blogging at **NicoleUnice.com** or on Twitter **@nicoleunice**. This assessment was adapted from an article that first appeared on **GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM**.*

Discover Your God- Given Calling



Find your passion and put it into action.

By Julia Mateer

More often than not, you will find Yolanda staying past hours at the all girls' school where she works as a counselor. For Yolanda, her work is not just a job, it's her calling. She is passionate about counseling adolescent girls. Sure, she has a few bad days now and then, but usually she can't wait to get to work. Yolanda unlocked the key to her calling—passion. Knowing your passion is the key to discovering your calling.

As a therapist and women's ministry leader, I'm often asked, "How do I know what my calling is?" Answering this profound and life-altering question sets the trajectory of your life toward the adventure God has for



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you. It is my belief that once you know your passion, you will know your calling. For many of us, discovering passion can seem like a daunting task, but there are questions you can answer that will help with your quest. Grab a cup of java, dust off your journal, and begin to unmask your calling by completing the following exercises.

Listen to Your Life

Our days are filled with busyness to the point of not taking time to listen to our lives. Quieting yourself and answering the following questions will help you uncover your passion.

- ◉ If money were not an issue, what would I do with my time?
- ◉ What do I love to do? What do I hate to do?
- ◉ What gives me energy? What drains the life out of me?
- ◉ What do I want to change, shape, and leave better than I found it?
- ◉ What segment of the population am I drawn to help?
- ◉ What do I want to experience, witness, and learn?

Mission Statement

Writing a mission statement puts a framework to your passion. For example, my mission statement is this: To encourage, direct, and inspire people to reach their full potential. It's easy to understand and remember, helping me to say yes to opportunities that line up with my mission statement and no to those that do not.



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Here are a few tips for writing your own mission statement:

- Keep it simple.
- Keep it general enough that you don't pigeonhole yourself.
- Remember, a mission statement is changeable, a living document.
- Take a moment now and write your mission statement.

Dream

Once you have discovered your passion and developed your mission statement, it's time to use your imagination, throw off convention, and dream. Everything you do in your external world begins in your internal world.

- Allow yourself to dream and dream big. Don't think of the how; just let the ideas flow, creating a list of the ways you can use your passion.
- Once you have several ideas, narrow your list to two or three. Submit the ideas to the Lord and wait on him for confirmation.

Passion into Action

Now that you have discovered your passion, written your mission statement, and developed ideas on what to do with your passion, it's time to devise a plan to make your dream reality by putting your passion into action. The first step in developing an action plan is to recognize the cages you put around yourself that hinder you from going after your passion and fulfilling the call of God on



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your life. Look at the list below and identify those cages that imprison you.

- Fear—do I let fear keep me from doing what God is urging me to do?
- Insecurity—do I trust God to give me the strength to do what I don't feel confident in doing?
- Finances—do I trust God to provide for me as I follow his calling?
- Responsibilities—am I scared of the responsibility following my calling would place on me?
- Past mistakes—because of my failures, am I terrified to move forward?
- Perfectionism—am I able to let perfection go so that I can fulfill what God is calling me to do?

If you identified with one or more of these cages, ask yourself the following question: Do you want to die without pursuing your God-given passion? If you need help breaking out of your cage and into your calling, seek counseling from your pastor or a Christian counselor. Don't settle for anything less than the adventure God has for you. You will not regret it!

*Julia Mateer is a writer, speaker, therapist, and director of women's small groups at **Bayside Community Church**. You can connect with Julia on **her website**. This assessment was adapted from an article that first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.*

Going Through the Motions

Are you passionate about what you do?

By JoHannah Reardon



My husband and I have a long history of full-time Christian service. We met through a campus missionary organization and independently joined the staff of that group. A year later, we both recognized that not only was our calling similar, but our attraction to each other was too! And so began an adventure of listening to God together.

When my husband felt that God was calling him to seminary, however, I balked. It meant another move and certain poverty for three years, so I was less than excited. But as we prayed about it for almost a year after he first mentioned it, I became as enthusiastic as he was. And although I couldn't take classes because someone had to care for our two little ones and earn



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some money, I felt that the call to seminary was a joint calling—mine as much as his. To this day, we refer to that time as "When we were in seminary. . ."

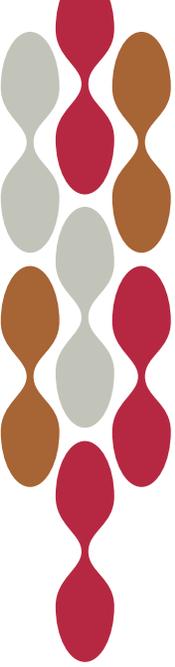
Following seminary, we took on a church plant. Again I say "we." For although my husband was the pastor who got the paycheck, I contributed as much emotional energy—and close to as much physical energy—to establish this church, which is now healthy and thriving.

Nice story, right? Good, happy ending. Uh, not quite—because it isn't the end.

Fast-forward 27 years to the present. About two years ago, my husband felt the same kind of pull that he'd felt when God called him to seminary. Through numerous trips overseas, he began to feel compelled to help the pastors he met there. He realized that his pastoral training and experience were abundant beyond imagination to pastors in poorer parts of the world who were lucky to own a Bible. So he wanted to go with a missionary organization that trains pastors internationally. This time, it took me no time to jump on the bandwagon. This ministry seemed a perfect fit for his abilities and passions, and although he had to raise support, I could provide much-needed stability until the funds were raised because I had a good, secure job. So we saved money like crazy and he resigned as pastor of the church and joined the missionary organization.

All was going as planned until I suddenly lost my position when he had only 35 percent of his funds raised. We went from two paychecks to none since he can't start drawing a paycheck until he has 50 percent of it raised.

My first reaction was not panic but sorrow (the panic came later). I loved my job and felt it to be more than a job—a calling. It was exactly suited to my abilities and was not just a paycheck but



Are You Living Your Calling? Going Through the Motions

a ministry. I was immediately offered another job to take the place of the one I'd lost, but I felt no peace or passion as I prayed about it—and I turned it down, which showed me how strongly I feel about calling. I had experienced what it meant to be called and didn't want to just go through the motions of obtaining employment merely for the paycheck.

The whole experience has been clarifying for me. I realized that even the job I was in had become routine. After almost 10 years, I had it down and was pretty much going through the motions. I hadn't taken the time to ask God if he still wanted me to be doing it, but continued to plug along—unlike my husband, who left his secure position to strike out in obedience.

So I am now in a rather good place. I am open to anything God wants me to do and excited to find out what it is. And I've learned a few things through the whole experience about calling and what it means.

Take Time to Listen

- Do I have the courage to leave the secure and known for the insecure and the unknown?
- Have I taken lots of prayerful time before God, asking him to show me whether to stay in my current position or to pursue something else?
- Do I feel a pull in a different direction? If so, what is that?
- Rather than jumping at the first secure position, am I taking time to listen to what he wants me to do next?



Are You Living Your Calling?

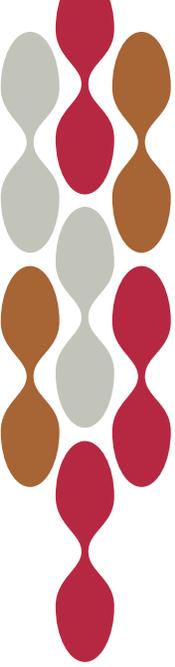
Going Through the Motions

Be Radical but Not Foolish

- Is my "calling" radical obedience or foolishness? Have I sought the advice of wise counselors?
- Is my motivation to help others or to meet my own needs?
- Do those who know me best think this is a good idea?
- Is income a factor? If so, what practical steps do I need to take to pursue my calling while providing for my needs?
- Do I tend toward impulsive behavior? If so, do I need to slow down and take some time to ponder this decision? God is not in a hurry.

Affirm the Calling

- Do I love what I am doing, do I find great fulfillment in it, and am I using my gifts?
- Have I taken the time to make sure that what I am doing currently is what I am supposed to be doing, or am I just going through the motions because it is the secure, safe thing to do?
- Do I feel restless or have I lost my passion? Do I just need rest, or is God trying to get my attention to lead me in another direction?
- Am I taking time to listen to God? If not, how can I begin to set aside time to do so?



Are You Living Your Calling?

Going Through the Motions

If you are feeling a bit restless and have lost your passion, perhaps God is trying to get your attention to lead you in another direction. Take time to listen. If he begins to nudge you in those times of listening, begin testing the idea. Present it to those who love you and know you best to get their opinions. If wise people affirm you, begin to find out what your options are. And even if it's scary, take the first step in obedience. Because being where you are called to be is the most secure place in the universe.

*JoHannah Reardon blogs at johannahreardon.com and is the author of **seven fictional books and two devotional guides**. This assessment was adapted from an article that first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.*

The Dangerous Mistake

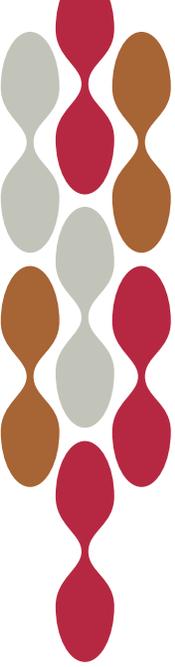
Is “your calling” a thing you do,
or a voice you hear?

By Keri Wyatt Kent



Leaders—whether in church ministry or the workplace—often speak of their “calling” as a time of realization, an aha moment: This is what I was made to do. This is what God has called me to. I am called to lead.

Sometimes calling creeps in like a fog—and we realize that what we’ve been doing for the last five years actually is our calling. Or worse, that it’s not. Maybe we haven’t figured out our “calling” yet and we’re trying to get clarity: what’s the big job God has for me? What is my life supposed to be about? What am I supposed to be doing?



Are You Living Your Calling? The Dangerous Mistake

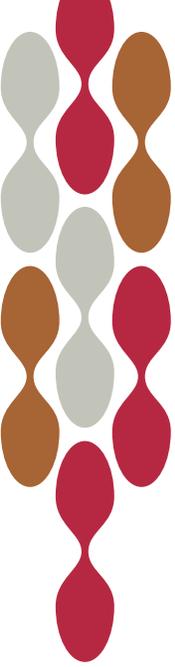
Frederick Buechner wrote many wise things on vocation and calling, including the oft-quoted wisdom that calling is found at the place "where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

That's beautiful, but we can make a dangerous mistake if we assume that those two clues are all we get and it's up to us to figure it out; if we think calling is a memo we get once and are left to implement on our own. Calling becomes a rigid riddle we must solve. We try to discover the right way to live out this calling, the tasks we must accomplish, the work to be done.

What if calling is not just about doing, but about listening? I believe that listening must occur daily and has the potential to be transformative. That's the whole point of hearing and obeying a call: our spiritual transformation, which will change us and then change the world.

Daily Listening

- Did I receive a call that was sudden and sure, or did it come to me over time?
- What do I listen to on a daily basis? Am I mostly influenced by circumstances and people, or do I take time to listen to God?
- Jesus spoke of calling his followers in the way that a shepherd calls his sheep, not once but continually: "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:3-4). In what ways am I called not just once, but daily?

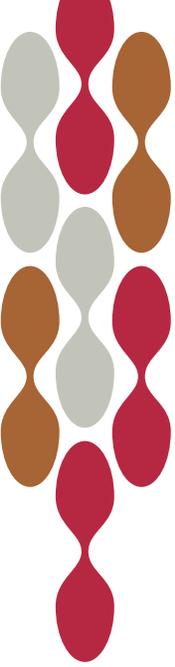


Are You Living Your Calling? The Dangerous Mistake

- Practically speaking, how do I engage in daily listening? Do I intentionally engage in listening prayer? Do I carve out times of quiet when I can ask God, "How do you want me to live out my calling today?" Do I just listen, journaling any thoughts that come my way?
- Do I go through the day bringing that image of the Shepherd to mind? Do I pay attention to quiet whispers he murmurs in my heart and try to obey them?

Transformative Listening

- Voices all around me vie for my attention, attempting to direct me. Which ones am I listening to?
- Frederick Buechner says that we are mistaken that the voice we should listen to least is the voice of our own gladness. What do I love? What has God gifted me to do?
- What peak experiences have I had when I felt deep gladness? What's the common denominator in these experiences? How do they align with what I am doing in my work or ministry?
- How have I been changed and stretched in the past as I've responded to God's calling?
- How can my calling become more about God shaping my soul and less about implementing a strategy on God's behalf?
- Speak to me, God, as I spend time with you.



Are You Living Your Calling? The Dangerous Mistake

Jesus said that his sheep hear, know, and respond to his voice. Daily, he calls us. When we wander, he calls us back. And as the story of our lives unfolds, the Shepherd leads us to new places or gives us new assignments. He may call us to places we might never have gone, were we not paying attention.

Our greatest gladness, the gladness that deserves the most attention, is the gladness that comes from being in the transforming presence of the one who loves us.

*Keri Wyatt Kent is an author and speaker who helps people slow down, simplify, and listen to God. She's the author of 10 books, including **Listen: Finding God in the Story of Your Life**, and a regular contributor to GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM. Learn more about her ministry at keriwyattkent.com. This assessment was adapted from an article that first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.*

Additional Resources

Articles, books, and Bible studies to help you further



Articles

How Should a Calling Change Our Lives?—Consumed with what it means to be called. By Debbie Jensen, available on GiftedForLeadership.com

We Can't All Be Beth—I'm called to oversee the corner of influence God has given me. By Sharon Hodde Miller, available on GiftedForLeadership.com

Inadequacy, Fear, and Calling—God is more than enough to conquer my shortcomings—and my insecurity. By Tiffany Stein, available on GiftedForLeadership.com

Books

Women Who Lead: The Call of Women in Ministry by Mary Paul (Beacon Hill, 2011). Women are called to a life in ministry, even leadership roles. God calls both men and women to guide Christians towards truth, understanding, love, and discipline. Mary Rearick Paul explores the obstacles that women face and



Are You Living Your Calling?

Additional Resources

the myths about women leadership that have been fed to both genders for generations. *Women Who Lead* uncovers them, reveals God's call to women for leadership, and celebrates all who are led to lead.

Sorting It Out: Discerning God's Call to Ministry by Alice R. Cullinan (Judson Press, 1999). This book walks Christians of all ages and experience through the questions and uncertainties that come with a person's call to vocational ministry. Alice R. Cullinan analyzes what a call is, provides many examples of how others have received the call, considers the different kinds of ministry opportunities that are available, and offers advice on how to proceed once one discerns a calling from God.

Downloadable Resources

Discover Your Calling—Learn how to help your church leaders discover their calling and guide them toward greater joy and peace. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

Find Your Calling—Practical advice to help you discover what God wants for your life. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

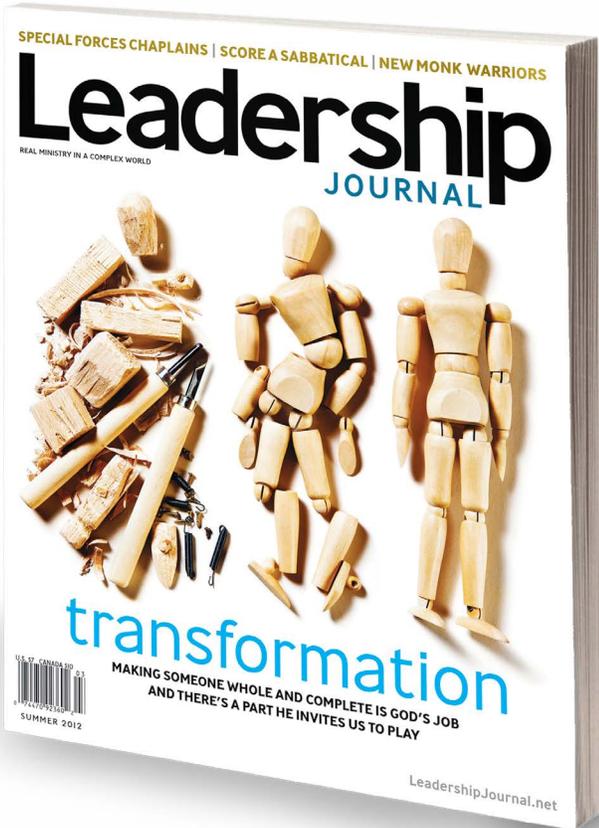
Deepen Your Calling—Equip yourself and other leaders to understand and live out your callings. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

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