

*Courage & Calling:
Embracing Your God-
Given Potential*

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Courageously Seeking a Calling

In this revised and expanded edition of his vocational guidance book, Gordon T. Smith continues to address what a calling is and how to live it out.

Why did you choose to update your original version of this text?

Explain the relationship between calling and vocation. Why should we continue using the term *vocation*?

Describe the three expressions of vocation. Why are they significant?

Why is it often so difficult for us to truly realize what we are to do with our lives? What are common obstacles for most people?

What is the difference between occupation and vocation? Is it possible for them to be the same thing?

Why do we need to look at ourselves with “sober judgment”?

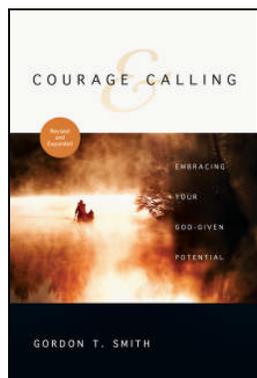
What do you mean when you write “the need does not determine the call”?

How do the various stages of our lives affect God’s calling for each of us?

Why is a “clear break” from our parents needed in order to find our calling?

Describe the four practices that provide integrity within our vocations. Why are they so essential, and how does one successfully practice them?

What are some of the benefits of thinking vocationally?



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Being True to Yourself

The first commandment is “Know yourself.” The second, “Be true to yourself.” Be true to who you are and who God has called you to be; fulfill the call of God—*your* call to be who you are called to be. That call will be consistent with who you are. Self-knowledge is indeed half the battle, but it is only half. The real challenge is to live congruent with who we are—with how God has made us, with the ability and talent God has given us, with the desire God has placed in our hearts, with how we see the brokenness of the world, and with how God has crafted our personalities. To live in the truth is to live in agreement with this identity and the call implicit in this identity.

The New International Version of the New Testament captures well the energy of the text of Romans 12:6-8. Having called his readers to consider themselves with sober judgment, to do a self-analysis, Paul moves forward. The force of the text is evident in his call to live a life of service, but the apostle’s call is to serve in a manner that is *congruent* with this identity. It could be paraphrased as follows:

If you have been called to be a *prophet*, then *be* a prophet; fulfill your call with faith.

If you have been called to *serve*, then serve, without apology, without hesitation, without comparing yourself to others, but with a joyful acceptance of who you are.

If you have been called to *teach*, then teach. Not everyone has been called to teach. Not everyone has the ability that you have. Teach, for that is who God made you to be. You do not need to apologize or feel diminished by what you do not do. Rather, do what you are called to do.

If you have been called to *encourage*, if your unique contribution is to bring hope in dark and discouraging situations, if you have been given the ability to bring light and new perspectives, then do it, for we live in a discouraging world and every one of us needs people, at home and in the workplace and in the church, who have this ability.



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If you have been called to make money so that you can *contribute to the needs of others*, then do it to the glory of God without any apology to the rest of us who can barely balance our checkbooks. You do not have to apologize for making money. Do it; it is a God-given ability! Only, be generous.

If you have been called to *leadership*, then again, do not apologize for the call of God. Accept this with grace and humility. Accept the opportunities for leadership that the Lord gives you. Let me also say this: if this is not your call, then beware of the burden of leadership. For it is not an easy yoke; you will do more harm than good. But if this is the call of God, then the Word of the Lord is, govern diligently.

If you have been called to *show mercy*, may your numbers increase. For in a difficult and broken world, a world of refugees, a world of economic recession and unemployment, a world of battered wives and broken homes, a world where there are homeless even in a land of plenty, in this world we urgently need men and women who have the unique capacity to *show mercy* and be the means by which we know the mercy and comfort of God. If this is your call, do it cheerfully.

Each of these seven, in some form or another, represents a basic vocational orientation. And each has the capacity to be reflected in many different occupations, careers, roles, volunteer ministries, responsibilities and ministries in the church, and in the home. And it is the roles and responsibilities that are given to us that enable us to accept and embrace our vocations.

—From chapter three, “Seeking Congruence”