

## PROFESSIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CALLING REDEFINED

By Rick Boxx

We often refer to our jobs and careers as vocations, although the Latin-based word (vocare – “to call”) suggests much more than just describing the specific kinds of work that we do. In its purest sense, “vocation” includes a sense of purpose and mission.

Many people limit their perception of a spiritual calling to individuals like pastors, priests, nuns, rabbis and missionaries – essentially, professional religious people. Over the years, however, I have seen this to be a flawed understanding of calling which has dramatically broadened to include those of us who spend much of our time in the workplace.

One example of this shift is a quote that appeared in an article on theconversation.com, a website that provides a platform for academic experts on a variety of topics. In one of the columns, business scholars Mitchell Neubert and Katie Halbesleben defined spiritual calling as “a summons from God to approach work with a sense of purpose and a pursuit of excellence in work practices.”

Think about that for a moment: “a summons from God.” And the idea of approaching work with a sense of purpose and pursuit of excellence. This offers a sharp, even startling contrast to the attitudes of countless people in the contemporary marketplace who perceive work solely as a means for generating a paycheck, just a way to earn a livelihood.

Doing work only for money can be a joyless exercise, as I have learned, especially early in my own working career. If money is our one and only objective when we go to work, is it any wonder that people change jobs so easily, seeking higher wages and promotions that promise more compensation?

The Bible affirms the idea of calling in the workplace that Neubert and Halbesleben described, seeing our jobs and professions in terms of purpose and striving for excellence. Here are some of the insights from the Scriptures:

**Created to work.** Have you ever wondered why we all have different interests and skill sets we bring to the workplace? The Bible says this is by God’s design. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

**Teachings on how to work.** There are countless books about work, some of them very good. But it would be reasonable to say the best book about how to go about our professions in the Bible. After citing the uses of biblical teachings, the apostle Paul said these are provided. “so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

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**Honoring God through our work.** When we use our talents, skills and experience properly, we honor God, the one who has generously given them to us. “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).

In Matthew 6:33, in the middle of what many call “the Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus Christ said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” If we view our work as “a summons from God,” pursuing our spiritual calling in the marketplace, we can trust in God’s financial provision as well.

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever considered your work or profession as a calling? Why or why not?
2. What is your reaction to the statement that any spiritual calling is “a summons from God to approach work with a sense of purpose and a pursuit of excellence in work practices”?
3. If you enjoy the work you are doing, where did that interest, that passion come from? Have you ever thought that it might have originated from God and was given to you as a gift? Explain your answer.
4. How might it make a difference if you started off each workday with the perspective that it is another opportunity to pursue your spiritual calling?

### Challenge for This Week

Have you ever been guilty of approaching your work solely as a means for earning money? If you have never considered that where you are, right now, is part of God’s calling for your life, it might be good to give that some thought.

Do you know of someone who demonstrates joy and great satisfaction in the work they do, not just for the compensation they receive? Try to get some time with that individual this week and ask about what motivates him or her in approaching work.

#### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:  
Exodus 35:30-35; Proverbs 12:24, 14:23, 22:29; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Colossians 3:23-24

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