**LIFE CALLING**

by Dr. Bill Millard **<http://cace.org/life-calling/> October 24, 2016

During my years in college and graduate school, I pursued an interesting approach to career exploration—I studied them all. I studied history, pre-law, pre-med, Greek, journalism, religion, public health, dentistry, education, geology. What compelled me to pursue so many different fields? Confusion coupled with a determined search for meaning. At the heart of my actions and decisions, there was a driving need to find an overriding purpose for my life.

Even in my work, I pursued several paths. But I always found myself helping struggling people discover solutions to life problems based on who they were as unique individuals.

So what did I learn?  I finally realized that what I was always doing reflected the purpose for my life. As a result, I turned my career in that direction. I learned that when my work finally become congruent with my life calling, I became energized.  I pursued a doctorate in leadership, and my impact greatly expanded.

Life Calling is *confidence in an overriding purpose for your life.* Everyone has a life calling. Discovering it and developing confidence is the challenge.  We can best make this discovery by looking at three crucial life dimensions. The discovery of our life calling starts with establishing foundational values in our lives. We must then examine our unique design that gives us distinctiveness compared to others. We then need to formulate our values and design into a personal mission that makes our world around us a better place.  When we do this, we release the power of purpose in our lives.

Here is what I learned from my experience.  For an overriding purpose to be unleashed in our lives at a level that propels us toward a life calling, it must gain enough power to overcome four major barriers.

First, the power of purpose must become strong enough to overcome the selfishness of indifference. Most of us search for our life’s purposes in the context of “it’s all about me.” But when we look outward to serving others, our own life calling is better developed and discovered.

Second, the power of purpose must become strong enough to overcome the comfort of complacency. It always seems easier not to do anything, but doing nothing leads to *nothing*. When we take action, we plant the first seed of achievement. The discovery of our life calling requires us to be active explorers, not passive bystanders.

Third, the power of purpose must become strong enough to overcome the fear of failure. Most of us fear failure. So we decide not to approach any significant challenge to avoid the opportunity for failure. The problem is that when we do this, we guarantee that we will never achieve anything significant. Most achievements come along with many failures. Thomas Edison had far more failed inventions than he did successful ones. But he is remembered for his successful ones. If we hope to discover our life calling, we must be willing to take risks.

Fourth, the power of purpose must become strong enough to overcome the avoidance of pain. Achievement always includes an element of change. Discomfort and pain are noticeable indicators of change and are nearly always encountered along the path to achievement. If pain is always avoided, then gain likely will be as well. In fact, it is when we face the painful circumstances of our lives that we often discover the clearest picture of our life calling. If we hope to discover our life calling, we must be willing to change.

When we overcome these barriers, an overriding and consistent context develops that will motivate and guide a lifetime of endeavors and decisions.

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