

7 STEPS *to* **LIVE YOUR CALLING BEYOND A CAREER**

John and Rena Bonesio

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1 Introduction

In 2005 I had a heart attack. I was in my late 30's at the time – very young for a heart attack. I was experiencing symptoms leading up to it, but I didn't recognize them. On the night of the heart attack, I felt instantly sick to my stomach. I knew that I didn't have the stomach flu. I could tell something was wrong – that I was in trouble. As I was laying curled up on the floor of the bathroom, I wondered if this might be the end of my life.

People joke that our life flashes before our eyes when you face death, as if we dispassionately watch a movie of our life events. But that's not what happened to me. Instead, when I thought I might die, I asked myself two really hard questions. I asked myself, “Did I love people well?” and “Did my life matter?”

I have heard stories from other people who have faced death and they share similar experiences. I believe that everyone will eventually ask themselves these or similar questions.

When I asked myself these questions, I didn't like my answers. At the time, though I had done a lot of good things so far, I felt as if I had squandered much of my life. I had lived mostly reactive to outside influences. I let other people set the agenda for my time and effort. I spent a lot of time doing what I felt like doing in the moment instead of having clear goals for my life.

Fortunately I didn't die that day. I went into the emergency room where they unblocked my artery and put in a stent. Now I have a 2nd lease on life. I choose to live my post heart attack life differently.

The Change

After recovering from my heart attack, I went back to my job – back to my old life. At this point life just seemed incongruent. My life wasn't built around what had finally sunk in as truly important. My career felt meaningless, and I wanted something different. But I didn't even see how it would be possible to change my life. I had spent almost twenty years pursuing my career, and my family was dependent on my six figure income.

It took several years for me to make a change. I'd like to say I laid down some clear goals and pursued them step by step, achieving results. But the truth is that I floundered around a lot. I kept my career job for four

more years. Each year I was slowly dying on the inside. But the yearnings of my heart wouldn't be kept quiet.

Then an opportunity presented itself through training with Dave Ramsey's organization for my wife, Rena, and I to become financial coaches and start our financial coaching business. We had gotten out of debt and had saved a sizable emergency fund. I knew this opportunity would draw on our strengths, and it was a way for us to help people for the better.

We were preparing for this new journey when I was let go from my employment, and we decided that I wouldn't look for another job. We would just continue to pursue this opportunity. We have never looked back.

This guide draws from our experience of moving beyond a career and finding a calling. We are still learning as we continue on our journey. So, while we can't know everything or can't anticipate every situation, our hope is this guide will save you needless time floundering like we did.

This Guide

It is a tragedy at the end of life to look back and think that we didn't spend nearly enough of our time, energy and money on the things we value most, and that our life will have had no lasting impression on the world. If you have reached a turning point in your life where you resonate with the idea of living a life of greater significance, if normal life isn't good enough any more, if you're looking for something more, then read on.

To help you understand what this guide is we also need to tell you what this guide is not. This guide is not a "How to Start a Business" book. This guide doesn't ask you to quit your job, start a business or non-profit, give all your money away, become a paid staff member at a church, or never have nice things ever again. This guide doesn't ask you to live a life that is incongruent with your values, dreams and goals, but rather the opposite. This guide will help you to discover and evaluate your values and passions and change your life to match them.

We have found that ultimate satisfaction in life comes when we live in such a way that we are satisfied with our answers to: "did I love people well?" and "did my life matter?" To be able to live such a satisfying and rewarding life, a number of ingredients need to come together.

This guide will help you develop a set of personalized steps (a blueprint, if you will) that will help you blend these ingredients to find and pursue

your calling. We will help you find what makes your heart sing and express that in the world to make the world a better place. Whether you have a career now or not, if you want to find your calling beyond a career, then this guide is for you.

2 What is a Calling?

Perhaps you've felt it.

Maybe you felt it but didn't know what to do about it.

You felt a need to leave a meaningful contribution to the world, a deep desire to make a difference.

Our goal is for people to identify their calling and to touch people's lives in a significant way. We want people to be good at it—really good at it. No half-hearted stuff here. We want people to be clearly directed, intentional, focused, personally invested and deeply concerned about the outcome.

Let's start by clarifying what we mean when we talk about a “calling.”

“Calling” Defined

Many people use the term “calling” to refer to the work that a person does, often in the context of a church. It could refer to a person's profession or to a general or specific sense of direction a person feels regarding what they should do with their lives. Our definition of “calling” is more specific.

A calling is the unique way we combine our strengths and passions to impact people's lives in a way that is:

- Positive
- Focused
- Recognizable
- Long-lasting

"The unique way we combine our strengths and passions..."

Each person's calling is unique, an outer expression of inner qualities and values. It is a combination of our strengths and passions. Our strengths, simply put, are the things we're really good at and that we love doing. Our passions—what we get really fired up about—come from our life experiences; they cry out to us to take action in the world.

An individual's strengths and passions can be mixed and matched which creates a wide variety of potential options for a calling. Whichever

combination of strengths and passions people use for their calling, it will be a powerful expression of the individual. When people discover their calling, it makes perfect sense to them because it is just the right match for who they are.

“...to impact people's lives...”

By its nature, a calling is other-focused. An individual's calling is not going to be about that individual having certain experiences, going places or doing things for that person's own benefit. We're not talking about a “bucket list.”

We're not talking about just doing some good stuff, either. Doing even well-intentioned activity doesn't always bring the desired results. So instead of focusing on what to do, a calling focuses on end results: a positive impact on the lives of other people so their lives are better than they were before.

“...in a way that is positive, focused, long-lasting, and recognizable.”

The desired results of a calling are defined because we want REAL change, not change that is, for example, superficial or temporary. The change that a calling brings to other people's lives will have the following four qualities:

Positive

Most people don't stop to think about how their lives impact other people's lives. There are some people who have a profoundly negative impact on other people. Consider the effect of serial killers, terrorists and con artists. Drug addicts who lie and steal to support their habit, child molesters and identity thieves also produce very negative effects in the lives of other people. In fact, the effect a person has on the lives of other people can be represented on a continuum, with the extremely negative impact producers on one end of the spectrum and the producers of positive impact on the other end.

Most people's lives have an overall neutral impact on the lives of other people. It's as though they never really came and went, at least from a long-term perspective. There are no lasting signs of their impact on the world.

We want to move people to the positive end of the spectrum of life

impact. We want it to be obvious that people came into the world and had a powerfully positive impact on the lives of other people. That evidence would live on long after the person who had the impact is gone.

Example of Neutral vs. Positive

Donna Chapman had a pretty normal life. She focused mostly on her family, including her husband, their adult children and grandchildren. She went about her life like any other day. She was at work in a dress shop when her husband and son arrived with shocking news: her daughter, Tammy, had just been murdered—at a gas station when she stopped to fill up on her way to church. There was numbness and denial; it was too terrible to believe.

After a short time, Donna started meeting with Tammy's friends and got to know her daughter in a whole new way, that of her close, loving friends. She attended grief support groups and over time, Donna began to heal. Other things in her life that used to be a big deal lost their meaning, and she felt an intense need to help other people who also suffered a great loss. Now she helps lead the grief care group at her church where she uses her experience to give hope to people who are hurting.

Who knows? If Donna had not experienced the loss of her daughter, she may have continued living a life that had little to no impact on people beyond her family. Instead, that experience served as a catalyst for her to go out and leave her own positive mark on the world.

Focused

No one can do it all. The results of efforts that are spread too thin will be mediocre at best, but can be phenomenal when focused. A flashlight spreads a little bit of light over a large area. A laser, on the other hand, focuses it's light to such a degree that it can cut through steel. We want results that have laser-like focus because the impact on other people's lives will be so much more powerful.

Example of Unfocused vs. Focused

Christopher Reeve is probably best known for his leading role in the popular film, Superman. In addition to being a talented actor, he was a true philanthropist. As he developed a successful career as an actor, he donated a lot of time and money to various organizations and for

various causes. He worked for improvements in the areas of the arts, human rights and the environment, to name just a few. Many organizations benefited from his involvement and the broad range of issues with which he helped demonstrated a very kind and giving heart.

After Christopher Reeve sustained a serious spinal cord injury as the result of a horse-riding accident, he began to focus his charitable efforts on disability-related issues, especially regarding spinal cord injuries. He helped start the Reeve-Irvine Research Center at UC Irvine's School of Medicine to improve the treatment of spinal cord injuries. Because of his efforts, the American Paralysis Association's revenue went from \$2.5 million to \$5 million in just three years. The organization changed its name to the Christopher Reeve Foundation.

The lives of many people with paralysis have been and will continue to be touched by Christopher Reeve. We believe that his choice to focus his charitable efforts resulted in more lives touched at a deeper level than what his less-focused efforts would have achieved.

Recognizable

A calling should produce results that are easily recognized. Some results will be easier to measure than others. but we want to see a clear “before” and “after.” This kind of significant change would be apparent to an onlooker or would be reported by the person who experienced the change. Since a calling is results-oriented, it's results are obvious. There is no wondering if people benefited from the efforts.

Example of Unclear vs. Recognizable

As a life coach and active volunteer, Jenny Williamson positively touched many lives and she most likely would have continued to do so in that capacity. Then she became aware of the issue of child sex trafficking¹. Shocked and horrified, she learned that not only was it a global issue, but that it was happening in her own community.

Jenny Williamson founded the nonprofit organization, Courage to Be You (C2BU) and started a home for girls rescued from sex trafficking. Before she started Courage House, the only option police had to protect these young victims was to arrest them and put them in jail for prostitution. The results of that intervention are “unclear” at best, since most girls were back in the same situation again once released from jail.

1 www.courageworldwide.org

Now, girls are benefiting from a residential program that promotes healing and restoration so they can be free to explore who they are meant to be. The girls rescued from the sex trafficking go from slavery to freedom, from being a slave to being a free person. The lives of the girls that Jenny's organization works with are so dramatically different that they stand out as a crystal clear example of “recognizable.”

Long-lasting

Changes that are only temporary alleviate a problem for a little while. Then the problem returns and the people are no better off than they were before. We've all heard the saying, “you can give a man a fish or you can teach a man to fish.” Sometimes in dire circumstances, it is necessary to provide help that meets basic human needs, such as providing food for people who are hungry. It's important to not stop there, though. We want results that last. Then we know there has been some real change.

Example of Short-lived vs. Long-lasting

Eugene Lang, a successful business owner, went back to the elementary school he attended as a kid², Public School 121 in East Harlem, to address the students there. His plan was to give a motivational speech on how if you work hard you'll succeed. Just before he went up to give his speech, the principal told him that 75% of the 6th graders would not graduate from high school. Before he addressed the students, he ripped up the notes for his speech because he realized that those words would not cause the long term change he wanted for those kids.

Instead of giving that motivational speech that day, Eugene Lang told the kids that if they graduated high school, he'd pay for their college. Consequently, 90% of the kids did graduate high school and 60% pursued a higher education. Of the 61 kids, 54 stayed in touch with him. Eugene Lang caused long-term change. In fact, he went on to create the “I Have a Dream Foundation” where he continues to bring about long-term change in people's lives.

2 www.ihaveadreamfoundation.org

What a Calling Is Not

A calling isn't a role, like parent, spouse or employee. It isn't a job or a career. A calling transcends the roles we have. We may live out our calling by what we do within our roles, but our roles change over time: a parent becomes an empty-nester, a spouse becomes a widow and an employee changes jobs. We can expect that the way we live out our calling may change during different times in our lives,, but our calling still remains.

A Visual Depiction of a Calling's Results

Following is a visual representation of how a person's calling effected the lives of other people around him. Each smiley face represents a person who's life was impacted in a way that is positive, focused, recognizable, and long-lasting. The deeper the impact, the bigger the smiley face. The concentric squares represent the person's sphere of influence..

In Figure 1 we see someone who lived life entirely for himself without concern for any other people. Nobody's life is any better off since he came and left.

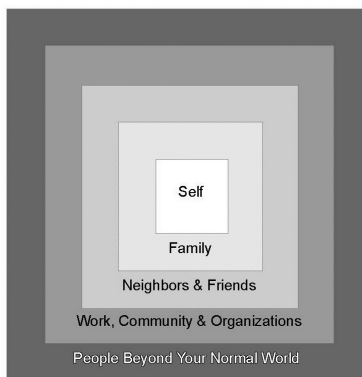


Figure 1

Figure 2 depicts a person who also was very self-absorbed and made no real effort to benefit other people. At most, he was somewhat helpful to his close family.



Figure 2

In Figure 3 we see the life of a person who rarely felt motivated to help out other people other than family in any meaningful kind of way. The positive effect he had on other people was mostly inadvertent.

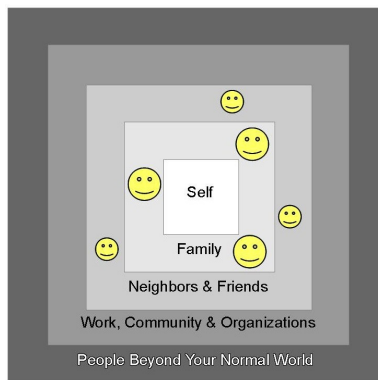


Figure 3

Figure 4 shows the life of a person who worked at being a nice, helpful person to people around him.

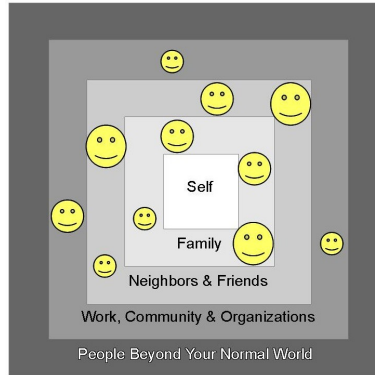


Figure 4

Figure 5 shows the life of someone who wanted to make a difference. He was proactive and did everything he knew to do to be a benefit to other people. Unfortunately, he didn't do some foundational work in his own life, like connecting with positive people and creating some financial security for himself. Otherwise, he would have had even greater results.

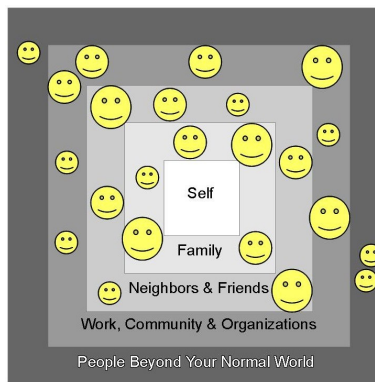


Figure 5

Figure 6 depicts the life of a person who first got himself into a good position to help other people. Then he identified his calling and continually assessed the effectiveness of his work to make improvements wherever possible. The lives of many people—both near

to him and far from him—are better as a result.

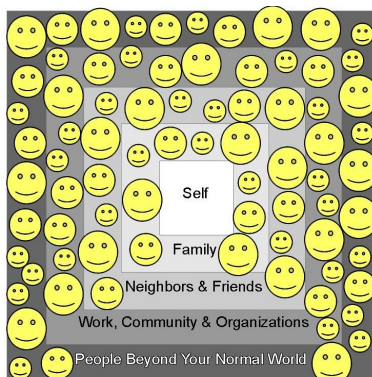


Figure 6

Figure 7 shows the life story of a person whose calling was focused on people who weren't normally a part of his life. Although he didn't personally know them, he had a positive effect on many, many people.

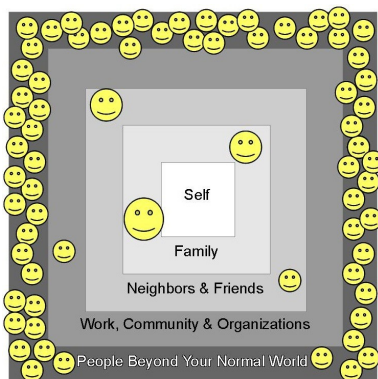


Figure 7

Figure 8 shows us the life of a person who's calling was focused on people closer to him. Several people's lives were touched at an exceptionally deep level, probably through some form of mentoring. Those people most likely went on to live their own calling and benefited

many other people throughout their own lives.

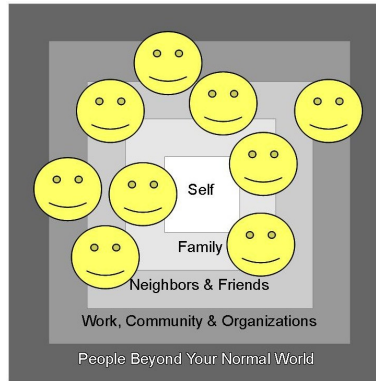


Figure 8

Why We Need to Find and Live Our Calling

We believe people have an innate need to contribute to humankind, to live beyond themselves. While we tend to be distracted with many other less important things as we live our lives, what is really important becomes much clearer as death draws near. Ultimately, having a positive impact on other people is the criterion we use to evaluate our lives.

We get a glimpse of this evaluation when people are lying in a hospital bed dying. Knowing the end of their life is coming, these people show an understanding of the value of other people and the importance of relationships. It's not so often people say, "I really wish I went on that European tour" or "Dang, I really meant to go bungee jumping." Instead, people often express regret that they didn't spend more time with this person or that they didn't tell that person how much they loved them.

Many people who have had a brush with death report that their lives flashed before their eyes. Maybe that experience is part of a life review that we all will face at death. In our own experience, when John realized he might be dying, he found himself asking, "Did I love people well?" and "Did my life matter?"

Our goal is for people to ask these questions now and to re-evaluate what is really important in life so they can use the rest of their time here

to have a positive impact on other people. When people do approach the end of their lives, we want them to be able to answer with certainty , Yes, “I loved people well and my life mattered.”

3 7 Steps

Early on in our marriage, we invested our lives in leading youth and young adult ministries at our church. After a few years, we had children and turned our focus on our kids, and when we did we defaulted to what we saw everyone else doing. We focused on having the good life, on having nice things for our family. We entered the “bigger-better” hunt, upgrading in house and car when we could, getting the big screen TV, and trying to “live the life”. We didn't think of ourselves as selfish. It was just so easy to get sucked into this way of thinking and living.

Having nice things isn't bad, but they were disconnected from our deepest values. There was no focus. We often didn't have much time left over to spend with others. We spent nearly all of our money each month. We were involved in too many things at once. We were emotionally drained and unsatisfied.

Now we live differently. We focus our time, energy, and money on sharing our story – telling people to find their calling and live with impact. We make it our business to speaking into people's lives which is in alignment with our values and heart's desires.

Mindsets

One of the reasons we enter the “bigger-better” hunt is that we hold a couple of cultural mindsets. The first one is that there's not enough – not enough money, not enough homes in good neighborhoods, not enough jobs, and we are definitely not enough as a person for whatever we need to do.

When we are too worried that there won't be enough – that the offer will be rescinded, there is only one good neighborhood in which to live, that there is only this one job available, then we desperately grasp at every opportunity. Better buy that RV now or you'll never see another deal like this again. Never mind that you don't have a place to put it or a truck to tow it.

The second is a mindset of comparison. We feel like we're being left behind or we're inadequate if we don't measure up to those around us. If we have a \$50k per year salaried job, and our friend Joe has a \$60k per year job we feel jealous and a bit like we don't measure up. We compare incomes, cars, houses, clothing, neighborhoods, and vacations, among other things.

But if we are going to pursue our calling, we need to disengage from the “bigger-better” hunt. The “bigger-better” hunt can consume all of us – our time, our energy, our money, and our feelings of self worth. There is no end to the “bigger-better” hunt. As soon as we get the next bigger house, we're already looking at the next upgrade. If we wait until we feel like we're successful to pursue our calling, we'll never pursue our calling. No matter our current level of success, our idea of success is always just a little more.

The key is to learn to be content with our current status in life. We need to have faith that we are adequate to address any situation that presents itself. We will find work if we apply creativity. We will find a good neighborhood in which to live. We are enough and that reduces or eliminates the problem of limited resources.

Instead of focusing on our lack of resources, we bring to bear our own resourcefulness. We can stop grasping at opportunities and stop comparing ourselves to others. Instead we can put our efforts into things that matter most. We can connect to our own humanity by responding to the call of humanity in others.

The Great Exchange

The experience of moving from life as usual to finding your calling is that of an exchange. We traded our ordinary life for one of adventure; a life out of focus for one in focus; a life of randomness for one of meaning. One of the hardest things about this journey is that we have to give up some things we like – even things we spent effort to obtain.

Often we are told that we can have it all. You may have even seen the object lesson of filling a jar full of rocks. We're told that if we put the big rocks (the important things) into the jar (our life) first, then all the little rocks (the less important things) will fit too. But I'm here to tell you that it more than likely won't all fit. There are very likely some things in our life that are not just taking up “space” but are in the way. These things are preventing us from achieving a life of significance – from discovering and pursuing our calling.

The good news is that we get to replace these things in our life that we give up for even better things. In the book by Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, it states that 'good' is the enemy of 'great'. The reason is that 'good' seems good enough. We settle for 'good' and give up on trying for 'great'. There are going to be things in our life that are good that we will have to give up so that we can replace them with things that are great.

In a bit we will share our seven steps to find a calling. As you work through each step, we ask that you be open. Each step will likely require both mindset change and behavior change. View these changes as an exchange. You will be trading the lesser for the greater, which might include trading in good for great.

The 7 Steps

We've broken down the journey of discovering your calling into seven steps. These steps are not cookie cutter. Each person's journey through the steps will look different depending on their situation and needs.

We've examined our own journey, and wrestled through the steps very carefully to come up with the sequence. The order of the steps is important as they build on one another. You likely will run into difficulty if you try to work the steps out of order.

The seven steps are:

1. Make Time
2. Connect to Positive Inputs
3. Maximize Your Energy
4. Build Security at Home
5. Create Your Personal Purpose Statement
6. Learn by Doing
7. Live Your Calling and Refine

Let's walk through each step so you can get a picture of the journey ahead.

Step 1: Make Time

Unfocused use of time → Focused use of time

Most of us are way too busy. We can't fit all our activities in by just doing the important things first. We are going to have to remove some things from our life so that we can devote some time to finding and pursuing our calling.

We recommend that you reserve about 10 hours a week to devote to finding your calling. Each step may take more or less time depending on your situation. Of course, once you've discovered your calling, 10

hours will seem like way too little.

Here are a few places where you may be able to “steal” some time to devote to your calling:

1. Screen time – time in front of the TV or the computer
2. Weekly commitments such as PTA meetings, board meetings, or social gatherings
3. Commute time

With any of these items, you can ask if you can reduce or eliminate them or re-purpose your time. For example, with your commute time, perhaps you can take public transportation. Maybe it will take longer to get to work, but you'll be able to do other activities while someone else operates the vehicle.

If you are serious about living your calling, you'll need to make time to discover your calling and then live your calling.

Step 2: Connect to Positive Inputs

Negative influences → Positive influences

In our lives there are negative influences. These influences may be in the form of our friends and family, or it may be our own internal negative self talk. Perhaps the news we pay attention to gets us down. This step is about reducing our exposure to these negative influences and increasing our exposure to encouraging, supportive, positive influences.

We're not looking for “yes” people. We're looking for truth delivered to us in a way that moves us forward rather than messages that keep us stuck.

Have you ever had a great idea, shared it with someone who then shot the idea down? Then you figured they were probably right, and so you let your idea go only to find that someone else succeeded with your idea or one very similar. Have you had this experience? Well I have.

Let's get real here. Naysayers influence us. As much as we hate to admit it, they affect our thoughts, and they affect our choices and behavior. Have you ever heard someone say any of these things?

- “That won't work.”
- “We tried that before.”
- “9 out of 10 businesses fail in the first 2 years.”

- “I wish you wouldn't try that. I don't want you to get hurt.”

Sometimes the person doesn't even need to say anything. You can see it in their body language, they think you and your idea are going to crash and burn. When we hear people say things like this, what do we think? How do we react? Chances are that we wonder if maybe they're right. Maybe we're the ones with faulty “vision” and we just can't see what a terrible idea it is.

Stepping into our calling will take some new ideas. We'll need to try things we've never done before. And we may even make mistakes along the way – actually it's almost guaranteed. We need to reduce and, if possible, eliminate our exposure to these negative influences. We can't very successfully step into our calling all the while second guessing ourselves and waiting for the “I told you so.” to slap us in the face.

Instead we need people who will encourage us, who will tell us when we're not taking enough risk, and who will tell us truth when we need to hear it. These people are rare. When you find people like this, don't let go of them, and spend as much time with them as you can.

When you begin your journey to live your calling, it is also best to have a supportive spouse. When your spouse is supportive they become a positive input in your life. Even better, have your spouse join you in your adventure. For this step, talk to your spouse. Tell them what you're doing, why it's important to you, and invite them to join you on the journey. If it's just not a good time for them, ask if they will support you in your discovery process. Agree that you will involve them each step of the way so they will know what to expect in general.

Make a list of people that you interact with on a regular basis (be careful to not let this fall into other's hands or it might create a tiny ginormous amount of awkwardness in your relationships). Next to each one, write a -, /, or +. '-' is for people who leave you feeling down. '/' is for people who are neutral – they don't get you down, but they don't lift you up either. And finally, '+' is for people who lift you up, encourage you, and push you to be a better you.

If you don't have any '+' people in your list, it's time to meet some new people. Otherwise, shift your weekly or monthly schedule so you're spending more of it with these '+' people.

It may take a while to completely adjust your time with people, but keep at it until you feel like you have enough encouraging, truthful, lovingly pushy people time in your life.

Step 3: Maximize Your Energy

Draining environment → Filling environment

There may be things in your environment that drag on you mentally. You can't stop thinking about it. Maybe something in your environment is emotionally draining.

Sometimes what gets us down is not so much Eeyore people, but we are stuck in a negative, draining environment or culture. For example, maybe we're surrounded by great people, yet we hate the work we do. We get home from work and all we can do is flop on the couch because we are so emotionally drained. If we've taken care of the negative inputs in our life, and we still feel like we're all used up at the end of the day, we probably have some significant draining elements in our life.

The first part of this step is to identify any significant draining elements in our life. If you suspect there are things sapping your energy, but you can't identify them, try journaling each night. Write down how you feel at the end of your day and explore why you feel that way.

Probably you know exactly what these things are, and maybe you've been putting off dealing with them. Well now is the time for change.

Here are ways to make the change from simple to extreme:

1. Change your experience of the situation

For example, if you hate writing reports at work, perhaps you can automate the reports, or get someone else to write them for you, or maybe you can ask if the reports are really still needed.

2. Change your role

With another work example, If you don't like your position at work, perhaps you can change your role or your position at work to one that better suits you.

3. Leave

Finally if the other options don't work out, you can always leave. You can change neighborhoods if it doesn't feel safe. You can switch jobs. You can quit the team. If it's not working out, there's no honor in sticking with it, unless you made a commitment you feel you need to honor.

If you're going to quit your job, it's best for you and your

employer if you also leave the job. The worst thing you can do is to emotionally quit your job and stay in it.

Step 4: Build Security at Home

Shaky ground → Sure footing

The concept behind this step is that if you are secure at home, you are able to take greater risks where it matters. To pursue your calling you will need to attempt some new things that may require personal risk. You may feel called to take some financial risk to aid folks. If you are in debt, living paycheck to paycheck, or if you do not have the support of your spouse, you will feel stuck. This step is about freeing yourself up to take necessary, appropriate risks to move forward.

Money is a huge part of feeling secure at home. For your money, there's really no way around it. You need to get out of debt and build an emergency fund. Without doing these it will be really hard for both you and your spouse to get behind a calling – it will just seem too risky. There are lots of plans out there to help you get out of debt. What we've found to be the most effective is to just roll up your sleeves, kick butt, and slam your debt to the ground. You sell a bunch of stuff. You sell your car that has car payments. You take on extra work. And you scale your life style way back for a while (remember it's only temporary). If you need more structure, we recommend you check out Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University, a 9 week class or DVD self study kit.

We've found that when people get serious, they can get out of debt and build a 3 month emergency fund in two to three years – even when they're \$20k, \$50k, or even \$100k in debt. You can continue to explore your calling while you're cleaning up your finances, and when you do have the emergency fund, you'll find that you can take greater personal risk for your calling.

Step 5: Create Your Personal Purpose Statement

Doing what feels good → Following a purpose and a plan

This step is about discovering your big “why” in life. We don't want our lives to be random. We need to live with a focus on things about which we care deeply. There are numerous great things to which we can contribute or even start.

One of the big hurdles we often face is burn-out. We often experience burn-out when we contribute in a manner or to a cause to which we weren't called. This step is about first discovering our strengths and our passions. Then we clarify our direction in life with a written purpose statement. Don't worry if you don't get this quite right the first time. You can change it later if you want.

I find that many people approach life backwards. They first ask "How?" How do I get more money? How can I make it through this day? How do I get more business? Then people sometimes pause and ask "What?" What are we doing here? What are my goals for the year or this week? What are we going to do this weekend? Then sometimes people get a jolt and ask, "Why?" Why are we doing this? Why am I in business? Why am I still at this job?

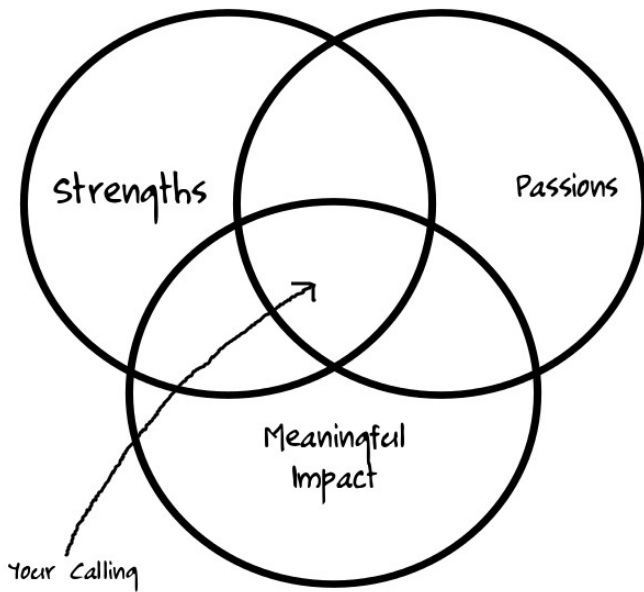
I think that instead we should ask the questions in reverse order. First we should ask "Why?" Why do I want to start this organization? Why am I here on this earth? The "Why?" question has to do with purpose. What is it that we ultimately want to accomplish?

Then we can ask "What?" Once we know our purpose and what we're about, then we can ask what it is that will get us to our ultimate goal. Finally we can ask, "How?" only after we've asked, "Why?" and "What?" will our "How?" even make sense on a grander scale.

Do you find your calling, or does your calling find you? Do you decide on your calling, or do you discover it? The method doesn't really matter as long as you discover that intersection between your giftedness, and your passions in a way that makes meaning. We believe it's best to test it out through experience and to hop back and forth between steps 5 and 6 until it clicks.

Understand that when you find and step into your calling, you will come alive. The calling will be a perfect fit to who you are. You are not called to something that is drudgery. You are built or "wired up" for your calling.

Your calling will be a blending between your innate strengths and your passions, and it will be something that makes a meaningful impact in the world.



Write down a short, one sentence statement that captures this intersection. It's best to keep the statement 3 to 5 words. Otherwise, you'll spend all your time wrangling words rather than trying stuff out.

It's important to understand that you likely will have multiple options here. You probably have multiple strengths. You probably have more than one thing for which you are passionate. Don't get hung up here. You can always change your mind if after testing it out, you discover it's not quite right.

Step 6: Learn By Doing

Head knowledge → Experience

There is only so much we can learn by self reflection and thinking. We don't fully know something until we get into action, and try things out. This step is to fully understand our strengths and passions by experience. We recommend that steps 5 and 6 overlap quite a bit. It is likely that the experimentation we do in this step will lead us to go back

and refine, or maybe even rewrite our personal purpose statement from step 5.

There's no substitute for experience. We never really know a thing until we experience it. A person who studies music theory will not know music the way a pianist or guitar player knows music. The same is true for your calling. Your calling will not have the same meaning for you if all you have is a purpose statement written down somewhere.

For this step, just get out there and try something out that you believe relates to your calling. Volunteer somewhere. Teach something. Give a presentation. Interview someone. Give some money. Start checking out adoption agencies. Whatever you think it is for you, try it out.

Step 7: Live Your Calling and Refine

Smaller impact → Larger impact

Once we have determined our calling, it is time to increase the size of our “splash” in the world. We can't assume that activity equals results. This step is about refining our efforts to produce more meaningful change with longer lasting effects.

We have to be careful with this step. Sometimes what appears to be helping someone on the surface is actually harming them. We can create dependence, hopelessness, and strip people of their dignity all in the name of helping. For example, we can pour in lots of food into an impoverished community thinking we're helping, but because of this flood of free food, local farmers can't sell their produce and end up in the food lines. The locals who receive the food get the subtle message that they can't care for themselves and it damages their spirit. Rather than initiating new solutions, many locals just wait for the next shipment of food. It's like giving a drunk a drink. The drunk will thank you for it, but you are actually harming him.

If your calling involves providing direct help to people, the best approach I've seen is to partner with people and help them be authors or creators of their own recovery. With this approach you aren't just giving handouts with the message, “you can't take care of yourself, so we will take care of you.” Instead, you are working with them to uncover a solution that will enable self sufficiency.

As you get better and better at your calling, always keep an eye on the ultimate results that are created.
Always be asking:

- Are the results lasting?
- Are they the most effective?
- Do the results multiply?

Be willing to make adjustments. Don't assume you have it all figured out. There is always room for improvement. People will experience increased benefit when we can get our own ego out of the way.

Summary

The pursuit of our calling is important. When we live our calling, our lives will be in alignment with our deepest values. We will live for something bigger than ourselves, and we will leave a human legacy that will last for generations bringing us genuine satisfaction.

To make room in our life for our calling, we will need to unhook our lives from the “bigger-better” hunt. It is a lie that having nice stuff will fulfill us anyway.

When we remove negative influences and energy drains, and build in security at home, we will be ready and able to reorient our lives towards a new adventure. We will be able to focus on discovering our purpose and explore it by experience. Finally we'll be able to refine our efforts to produce maximum impact.

When we are living our calling, we will come alive and have a blast, and at the end we will be proud of our answers to, “Did I love people well?” and “Did my life matter?”

Thank you for reading this guide, “7 Steps to Live Your Calling Beyond a Career.” If you liked this guide and want to dig deeper, check out our book, “Splash: Live Your Calling Beyond a Career” coming out Fall of 2013.

We wish you well and hope you make a meaningful impact in the world that influences hundreds or even thousands of people.

John & Rena Bonesio