



MIND: Vocation



“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” — Howard Thurman

Definition: The ability to get the most out of employment, educational, and volunteer opportunities.

Verse: *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms." - 1 Peter 4:10*

1. INTRODUCTION

The word vocation comes from the Latin **vocare** (to call). It is not just about having a job; it is about fulfilling the everyday roles through which God calls us to help make this world a better place.

- **Corinthians 12:4-7:** *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."*

In a traditional sense, a vocation refers to a person's occupation or profession. In many faith-based traditions, however, a vocation is seen as a calling or a divine invitation to a particular way of life, service or ministry. This emphasizes that your **vocation is not just about your external work -- but also about your inner sense of purpose, meaning and fulfillment**. Vocation continues throughout your life. It can include relationships with others, volunteering and service.

Vocational wellness can be defined as experiencing these things:

- **Sense of purpose:** A feeling that one's work or life has meaning and direction
- **Alignment with values:** A sense that one's work or life is consistent with their core values and principles.
- **Use of talent and skills:** An opportunity to utilize one's natural abilities and developed skills.
- **Fulfillment and joy:** A sense of satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment in one's work or life.

At its core, your vocational journey is about discovering your authentic self and aligning your unique gifts with the world's needs.

2. DISCOVERING GOD'S CALLING

God equips each person with gifts and talents to serve others and build community.

In the Methodist tradition, spiritual gifts are viewed as **grace-filled empowerments** given by the Holy Spirit to every believer for the purpose of building up the community and serving the world. UMC typically utilizes a list of **20 spiritual gifts** often categorized into four functional categories. Grouping the gifts into categories helps people to identify their ministry style and also allows for team building within the church to see where there might be strengths in a congregation and where some vital support may be missing. (See Handout 1.)

- **Romans 12:3-8:** *"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."*

3. CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS

Our calling often becomes clear through serving others. And, together, our individual gifts can become greater than the sum of all our parts.

- **Ephesians 4: 11-13, 16:** *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ... From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."*

Spiritual Gifts Discernment Exercise

1. RESPOND: Follow the instructions in Handout 2. Write your top 5 choices here:

2. REVIEW: Review the list. Do these gifts feel natural to you? Do they resonate with experiences where you may have felt like God was using you in a powerful way? Do they match what others may have seen in you previously? Cross off any that you may feel don't quite belong.

3. REFLECT: Reflect on your remaining choices and why these gifts rose to the top for you. Do you see any similarities or contrasts? Were there any gifts that surprised you - either by being or not being on your list?

4. SHARE: Share your list with others in the class. Brainstorm ways you and your classmates could utilize their particular gifts either here at the church or elsewhere in service to others. The backside of Handout 1 may be a good reference for this part of the exercise.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE (3-5 things to try out this week)

- **Try It Out:** Try and use one of your gifts to serve others in the coming week. How did it feel to recognize and use this gift?
- **Going Deeper:** Pastors often use discerning questions to help people distinguish a spiritual gift from a natural talent or a personal interest. Review your list of spiritual gifts from the Discernment Exercise in Handout 1 and reflect on these questions.
 1. **Do I experience genuine fulfillment?** When you operate in your "gift zone," you should feel a deep sense of peace and satisfaction, as if you are doing what you were uniquely created to do.
 2. **Is God being glorified?** Examine your motives. Does the exercise of this gift point others toward God, or is it being used to seek personal accolades or fill an "affirmation void" in your life?.
 3. **Are others being edified?** There should be tangible evidence that people are being encouraged, strengthened, or helped when you use the gift. A true gift "breathes life" into others and helps projects or ministries flourish.
 4. **Is the gift verified by the community?** Authentic gifting is usually recognized by others long before you see it yourself. Have spiritually mature friends or leaders given you positive, unsought feedback about your impact?.
- **Developing Your Gifts:** Think of ways you might be able to develop and grow your spiritual gifts. Things to consider:
 - Speaking with Pastor Abi on ways you might be able to grow in a particular area
 - Training or resources needed to improve the gift
 - Opportunities for practice or application
 - Ways to overcome potential obstacles or challenges