

# Discussion Questions for Group Leaders

*You Have a Calling* by Karen Swallow Prior



## Questions

1. Among the opening questions on pages 1–2, which struck you most? Why?
2. In what ways can calling be more about *being* than *doing*?

## Work

1. Identify some general attitudes toward work that you have. What forces shaped those attitudes?
2. What attitudes toward work have you seen among family members and friends that differ from yours? Where do you think those attitudes came from?
3. How is it significant that God created human beings to be collaborators, coworkers, and cocreators with him?
4. Does your own work take place more in a context of abundance or scarcity? How does that make a difference in the decisions you make and the attitudes you have about your work?
5. Do you have or have you had assumptions about what it is you are “supposed” to be doing with your life, whether related to school, work, family, or career? Have you stopped to question those assumptions? What are those assumptions based on?
6. How is work a “sorcerer’s stone,” as described in George Herbert’s poem “The Elixir” (p. 14)?
7. What work are you doing that might not be part of your greater purpose but indirectly supports that purpose? What work are you doing that is part of a greater purpose or calling?

## Passion

1. What are the positive and negative aspects of living by the mantra “Follow your passion”?
2. According to the book, what is the connection between competence and passion?
3. When is it important to be good at something you do? When might it be okay to not be good at something and pursue it anyway?
4. How are desire and passion different? How are they connected?
5. What is a desire or passion that you have that you can trace to a particular life experience or circumstance?
6. What role do hobbies play in your life?
7. Does the realization that most people in history didn’t pursue a passion yet lived lives of value and dignity change your perspective on contemporary understandings of finding purpose? How so?

## Definitions

1. Discuss the differences between *hobby*, *job*, *career*, and *vocation*.
2. How might these categories overlap?

## Calling

1. How can it be helpful to think about passion coming from *inside* and calling coming from *outside*?
2. What images or expectations did you have about what your calling would look like and how it would come? Where did those images and expectations come from?

3. If having a hope or a dream is not the same as being called, what role can hopes and dreams play in finding one's calling?
4. Can you find examples in your life of people who seem to be living out a calling even if they don't recognize it as such?
5. Have you encountered people trying to force themselves into a calling that wasn't really theirs? What did that look like? How might that person have been helped to find their real calling?
6. How is the concept of calling religious and spiritual in nature? How does it transcend a strictly religious context?
7. How is calling different from self-fulfillment?
8. Is filling a need the same as fulfilling a calling? Why or why not?
9. How can the concept of calling be misunderstood, misused, abused, or manipulated? How can these pitfalls be avoided?
10. What role does passion play (or not play) in finding one's calling?
11. What role does giftedness have (or not have) in calling?

### **The Transcendentals**

1. Consider the ideal qualities of various things (e.g., car, river, house). What makes that thing true, good, and beautiful?

### **The True**

1. How can truth—both about oneself and about the nature of a type of work—help one discern one's calling?
2. In what ways is truth not just a "what" but also a "how"?

3. What does Dorothy Sayers mean when she says that "work must be good work before it can call itself God's work" (p. 100)?
4. What do you think of the popular saying, "God doesn't call the equipped; he equips the called"?

### **The Good**

1. Discuss Cal Newport's distinction between the "passion mindset" and the "craftsman mindset."
2. Is it freeing to recognize that God does not have a detailed blueprint for your life? Is it weighty?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12. Discuss the wisdom about work to be found in these words.
4. Why do you think ordinary callings and good work quietly done are so undervalued today? Should that be changed? Can it be?
5. How does Wendell Berry's poem "A Vision" capture the goodness of ordinary life and work?

### **The Beautiful**

1. If beauty calls, then finding one's calling is beautiful. How so?
2. Aesthetic experience joins the body and mind through sensory experience and understanding. How does work do a similar thing in joining the body and the mind, the physical and the spiritual?
3. This book applies the classical qualities of beauty—integrity, proportion, luminosity—to work. Discuss your own examples of these applications.
4. How can beauty be found in imperfection?
5. How can qualities of beauty such as justice, fairness, and fittingness help us find and fulfill our callings?