A Guide for Theological Reflection on Vocation
at Seattle Pacific University

Reflection Questions for Faculty, Staff and Students

This resource has been prepared for faculty, staff and students to use in connecting theological reflection and vocation. We hope you find this useful in class, mentoring relationships, service-learning and internships, and are encouraged to explore the topic further with these questions, drawn from the deep Christian heritage and Wesleyan tradition at Seattle Pacific University.

Definition:
Our vocation is “called” forth from us. Every person at every time is called to participate in God's creative and redemptive work in the world. We express our vocation through the ways we choose to live our lives, in our work, activities, relationships, and in our commitments to our church, community and the broader world.

At SPU, we are called to be people of competence, character, and wisdom and to model a grace-filled community. Our calling is what God wants of us all of the time, the voice that calls to us everyday. **Vocational discernment** is learning to recognize our vocation in our everyday lives, to engage our head, heart and soul through **1. prayer, 2. reflection, and 3. community.**

1. Prayer

Regular prayer is a part of our everyday calling. Worship, or communal prayer, and personal prayer practices help us to be attentive to our lives over time, grow more aware of God in our daily lives, and listen more carefully to God’s voice. Prayer allows us to stop and quiet ourselves, to give thanks, ask forgiveness, lift up needs and desires, and rest in God’s comforting presence. In prayer, God transforms us and prepares the ground for our calling to emerge.
2. Reflection

We learn from reflecting on what we read, study and experience. Our self-reflection provides a deeper understanding of who we are and helps us learn more about our relationship with God. Reflecting on particular categories of questions can promote the personal knowledge needed to help us grow in our response to God's call:

- **Dreams and Aspirations.** What inspires me? What are my dreams? What is deep and not yet fulfilled in my life? The Spirit works within us to call us towards our vocation.

- **Passions.** What have been my moments of deep joy? When did I feel most alive, have the greatest sense of belonging to myself, others, God, Creation? We discover our meaning and purpose when we reflect on our everyday experiences.

- **Skills and Gifts.** What comes naturally? When did I have the greatest sense of and expression of my skills and gifts? To discern our gifts helps us to identify our unique contribution.

- **Needs of the world.** What do I know of the poor and suffering? What needs have taken hold in my heart? Discerning our response to the world's needs helps us to explore our vocation.

3. Community

In listening and responding to God's call, the insights of others can help. Asking open-ended questions of mentors, teachers, family and friends can offer a valuable perspective: “What do you see as some of my gifts?” “When have I appeared most joyful and fulfilled?” “How do you see me helping to build God's kingdom or contributing to the common good?”

**Vocational discernment** is a slow, deliberate process and can last a lifetime. Our vocation will develop through experience and by discovering new contexts to express our gifts and passions. The goal of seeking our vocation is to live it out in the world, avoiding the traps of perfectionism, inertia or fear.

We express our vocation through our:
- **work:** professionally and in our everyday work that extends beyond our careers;
- **relationships:** how we live relate to family, friends, and others in our lives;
- **church:** participating in the support, learning and worship of a Christian community;
- **community:** being a “neighbor” to the poor, marginalized, and all who suffer;
- **world:** contributing to the greater society by being a citizen of the world.

In general, our vocation is the everyday expression of our love for God. We are made of love and for love. Our vocation is not as much about what God wants us to do as it is about being the voice of Christ, guided by the Spirit of consolation, cultivating peace, joy and well-being, as we love and serve in the world.