

THE BUSINESS OF CALLING (Part 1)**By Rudolfs Dainis Smits**

Discovering our abilities and talents, and realising our professional desires, are critical to personal fulfillment. God will use our education, vocation, culture, language, gifts and learned skills to serve and bless the society we live in. We do not have to seek extraordinary means to find and obey God's command. Os Guinness, in his book, *The Call*, writes we simply need **to be** who we are and **to become** who we are in response to God's gracious invitation. Understanding vocation – our calling – will change us and serve to prosper society.

In 1989, Latvia was still part of the Soviet Union, and I was presented with two worthy options to work and serve there. Option 1: Make the journey to Latvia with a denomination-sponsored mission ship to help distribute humanitarian aid. Option 2: Join a team of 12 carpenters and volunteer workers to reconstruct a church. This second option was organised by the Ministry of Culture, a secular organisation, to reconstruct a dilapidated church building. Being an architect, experienced carpenter and construction worker, I chose the second proposal. This opportunity best suited my gifts, education, experience and skills.

In the early 1990s, Latvia was ripe for communicating sound ethical principles and introducing just business practices. The challenge to operate an ethical business in a post-Soviet environment was confronted by every business owner and professional wanting to make a difference. This invitation was unique and not intended for church clergy to resolve, but entrusted to ordinary business people serving the marketplace.

There were none better situated "to be" and better equipped "to become" than those business people and professionals in the marketplace eager to make a difference by living, demonstrating and teaching God's principles at work. It is not enough to know and understand who we are. We must ask ourselves, what are we going to do about it?

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus said, "Follow Me." These words probably comprise the most provocative, bewildering, and most life and history-changing statement humanity has heard, tried to understand and obey. This command intrudes into darkness like a bright light, mandating change. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:5). This beckoning invitation, if obeyed, will impact lives, reorder families, society, education, and transform the marketplace, whether in Latvia or anywhere else in the world. In response to Christ's extraordinary call, our ordinary lives will not remain the same. Nor will they be without purpose.

Discovering our vocation makes us free 'to be' and 'to become' what we are. Work is messy, with daily problems and people in the marketplace that need help. There is no one better than the businessperson or professional, already in the workplace, to fulfill this call: No one more ordinary and less perfect; no one that needs more shaping because of the responsibility and potential impact on society for good. If we understand our vocation and unique purpose, we can administer, serve and glorify God in our work. God's mandate to humankind is take dominion – *"...Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it,"* for good (Genesis 1:28).

Understanding our vocation transforms our work and gives place, vision and purpose for our ministry of service. Os Guinness wrote, *"Grand Christian movements will rise and fall. Grand campaigns will be mounted and grand coalitions assembled. But all together such coordinated efforts will never match the influence of untold numbers of followers of Christ living out their callings faithfully across the vastness and complexity of modern society."* As King Solomon commented regarding the benefits of practicing one's talents, *"A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before the great"* (Proverbs 18:16).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Os Guinness writes, *"Calling is not only a matter of being and doing what we are but also of becoming what we are not yet but are called by God to be."* The ancient Greeks asked the existential question: What is my purpose? Today, we ask the same question about our existence. What purpose do I fulfil, and in what way does my life have a part in God's plan? How would you answer the question, "What am I to be, and what am I to do?"
2. Calling is effectual, and knowing your purpose will change you, your business and family. How would you define your vocation? What is the difference between just working, and serving with purpose through our work?
3. What has changed in your life, knowing that you have particular gifts and abilities from God? Do you know anyone that has changed, developed, or discovered his or her abilities and gifting as a response to answering God's call on their lives?
4. Guinness says, *"Somehow we human beings are never happier than when we are expressing the deepest gifts that are truly us."* Has understanding your vocation and purpose changed your work and life? What motivates your work and service? Do your work and vocation align with who you are, your training, and the desire to become all that God wants you to be?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:
Ephesians 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 1:3,10