

BAHA HABASHY AND MARGARET HABASHY



THE STRENGTHS WORKSHOP

Know Your Strengths and Live Your Callings

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The Strength Workshop

**Know Your Strengths
and
Live Your Callings**

Baha Habashy with Margaret Habashy

Special Edition

Including Self-Directed Coaching Toolbox

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Leaders in churches, who have used *strengths material* to encourage and build God's people, thank you for your input and advice. We truly value your wisdom and your willingness to help us learn from your experience.

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DEDICATION

To our Pastor, Dr. Andrew Lau –

Without your prodding, encouragement, and support, this workshop would not have happened. Your vision to see the church be an instrument of reconciliation in our broken world is captivating. If this exercise book can play a small part to see this vision fulfilled through our church, then the effort was worthwhile.

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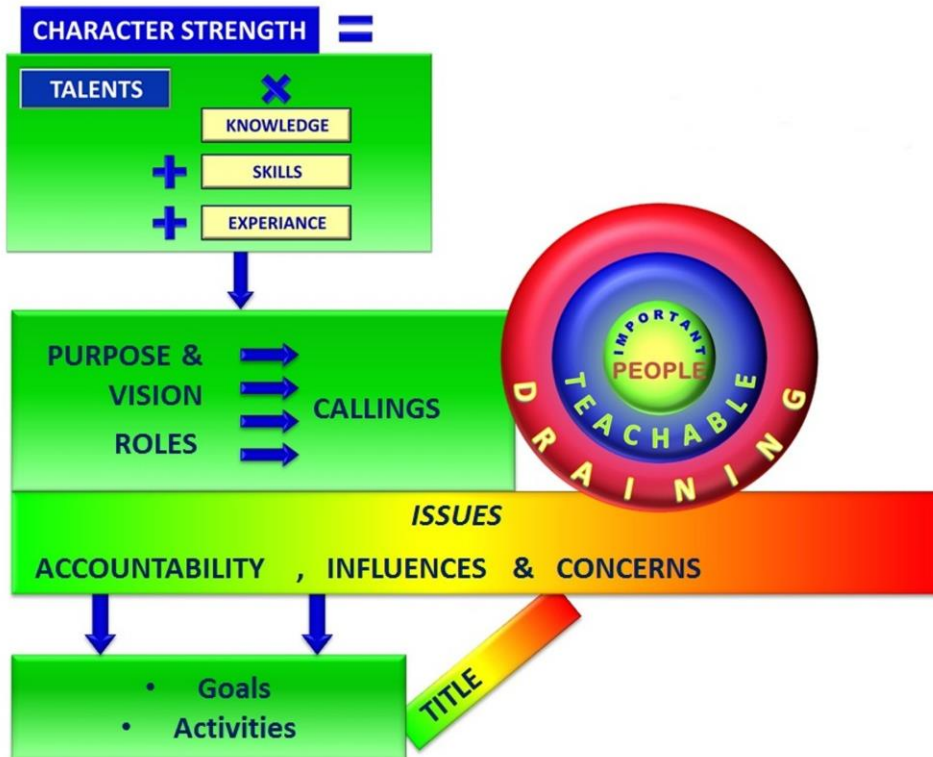
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IN A FEW WORDS.

THIS BOOK PROVIDES A TOPICAL FRAMEWORK
THAT GIVES YOU STEPS TO LIVING YOUR CALLINGS.



INTRODUCTION

Do You Wonder?

Do you ever wonder why, why is it that for some people, work seem to be enjoyable, fulfilling and energizing? But then, for others work is a day to day struggle and most of us look forward to weekend for relief?

Do you personally have days when everything seems to be going your way? Tasks are easy and responsibilities are a joy? And then there are days when you seem to struggle to get anything done. You start the day with a list of tasks to do, work piles up and you end the day worse than when you started.

Why is it, that one person seem to bounce from one job to another with ease, while another, equally qualified, and maybe more skilled, remains unemployed for months or even years?

Think of this, you receive an email inviting you to a meeting, the topics in the agenda makes you feel curious, you adjust conflicting priorities in order to respond and attend looking forward to the role you play. On the other hand, another meeting invite send you in search of excuses and ways that can hold you back from attending. Why?

After a long hard day, you and your spouse are exhausted. The phone rings. The neighbours are having a party and you are invited. You say no, but your spouse is anxious to go. Why? What makes a difference?

Your brother loves to play with your kids, but you would much rather clean the garage or spend your time alone in the workshop. Why? Why is the difference?

It is the weekend; you look forward to spending time reading a book. Your spouse, though tired after a week of work, wants to go out shopping. Why?

Allow me to suggest that Shakespeare gave us a clue to the answer when in the 17th century he wrote: *“All the world’s a stage, and all the men [and women] [you and I] merely players on it: They have their exits and their entrances; and each man in his time plays many roles.”*¹ I suggest that the answer is hidden in two simple words, **Characters and Roles**.

If you watch a stage play or even a movie, the success of any actor hinges on his or her ability to portray the **character** and fulfill the activities expected in the **role**. On the stage of life our roles are defined by what you are expected to **BE** and **DO**. When you are expected to be and do what is a good fit for your character strengths life is fulfilling, enjoyable, enriching and energising. The opposite is totally true. Understanding this will help you find a strategy for living a more fulfilling and productive life. This is the message of this book.

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Confession

Just like most of us, at many points in my long work life I struggled with unfulfilling roles and unmet expectations. At other times I felt that my roles fit me like a glove. Work was fulfilling and demands, even when challenging, were enjoyable as well.

My wife says that this image is a picture of me in a previous life. Yes, I had a lot of hair and I drank 11 – 14 cups of coffee a day. My life was full of conflicting demands and unrealistic expectations. I pride myself on having high energy and the ability to multitask and juggle lots of conflicting responsibilities. But I am not sure I was most effective or fulfilled.



By most standards, through most of my career, I was quite successful because I had roles where I leveraged my talents and character strengths. But it is also because of the **shadow side of my strengths** that I had the greatest crisis in my working life; a crisis that had a major impact on my career, my health and could have destroyed my marriage and family. I recall very clearly when in August 1999 my Doctor told me that unless I changed my career and work life habits I didn't need to come back to him. You see the shadow side of my strengths had compromised my health almost beyond repair.

As a result of this crisis I learned a lot of lessons about roles and character strengths. In this book I hope to share lessons my wife and I wish we had learned 35 years earlier. Yes we still are learning them. I write this with the full knowledge that I am still a work in progress. We are still in the school of life. Our hope is that through this journey you avoid our mistakes, develop to your highest potential, and live the abundant life that God desires for you. In this book I hope to share with you a two-part strategy for living, and a process to help you live your callings in full harmony with the desires of God for your life.

It is about your life.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus states that He came so that we may have a life that is abundant, meaningful and fulfilling. Author Max Lucado calls this abundant life “living in the sweet spot of life.” Describing living in the sweet spot of life, he writes, “Golfers understand the term. So do tennis players. Ever swung a baseball bat or paddled a Ping-Pong ball? If so, you know the oh-so-nice feel of the sweet spot. Connect with these prime inches of real estate and kapow! . . . Life in the sweet spot rolls like a downhill side of a downwind bike ride.”² In the sweet spot, life is purposeful, fulfilling, and what you do is energizing. Yet today the majority of us, even those who claim to have a personal relationship with God,

“Your callings are the places where your highest passion meets with God’s greatest need in your world.”¹

feel unfulfilled, burdened, and/or overloaded. **This does not please the loving heart of our loving heavenly Father.**

Marcus Buckingham is one of the best-known authors and speakers on the subject of Strengths Psychology. In his Trombone Player Wanted video series³ he calls this living in the sweet spot “**playing to your strengths.**” He further says that research indicates that only 17% of those surveyed consistently have an opportunity to play to their strengths.

Why? Why is it that only 17 % of us enjoy life in the sweet spot? Peter Drucker could be the most respected management thought leader of the 20th century. In his book, *The Effective Executive* he writes, “*most people do not know their strengths and those who think they do are often wrong.*” You see, you and I cannot play to our strengths unless we know our strengths. Do you know your strengths?

This Strategy for living has two parts and two simple objectives:

- Help you know and define your God given talents, character and strengths.
- Help you enjoy the abundant life, investing and growing your strengths and fulfil your life callings.

You Are Not Alone

This book does not offer you a system or a program. It is a simple strategy supported by some resources and tools that you can use throughout your life journey. This is a journey of discovery we hope you will take with others who partner with you and support you. Most importantly, it is a journey that we hope you take with someone who loves you very, very much, your Heavenly Father.



My father died when I was only 18 month old. Like me, you may have never had a perfect father, but God is a perfect parent and he wants to take this journey with you. As you start, please take a moment and talk with him. Picture yourself as a small toddler. With your Heavenly father standing behind you, please listen to His loving voice saying:

My dear child, I love you. I loved you before you were born. I created you. I formed you and shaped you for a very special purpose. I know you very, very well. I know your talents because I gave them to you. I know what you can do because I understand your potential.

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My child, I want to go with you through this journey of discovery. Tell me, what is it that you want to know about your strengths, talents and your callings. Ask me and I will tell you.

While this book will introduce you to some excellent resources and give you some good tools only God can answer your greatest needs. We believe that He is waiting for you to ask.

1. Exercise: Pray

What is the one most important question that you would like God to answer regarding your character, strengths and your life callings?

Take a moment and prayerfully write the one most important question that you would like God to answer through your study of this book.

PART ONE:

Know Your Strengths



A. ABOUT YOUR STRENGTHS

How reliable is this workshop material? Is this workshop based on theory or science? How Biblical is its content?

To answer this we first need to define theory and science. A theory is defined as a particular conception or view of something to be done or the method of doing it; a system of rules or principles. Science is defined as systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation.

Strengths Psychology started as a theory based on observations and anecdotal comments. Today with much academic research and millions of credible surveys, it is a well-established science. Any theory or science gains its credibility and reliability from the thought leaders behind it. For this reason, wherever possible we referenced every thought and text. In addition we will provide a list of recommended reading for those who wish to engage in further study.

Content and Structure

Developing a strategy for living could set you to embark on the next phase of your life journey. On any long journey you must be prepared with some resources and tools. With this in view we would like to recommend some resources that we have used in building this book. It is important to note that these resources in themselves are not solutions but tools. These are all man made resources, created by very wise but still imperfect people. Each of these resources is driven by key objectives and goals. Included in these resources are assessment surveys that have been used by millions of people around the world. The value of these surveys is often magnified when you use them in combination with each other.



Spiritual Gifts

The Bible should be your first resource to understanding Spiritual Gifts. The Bible provided lots of input on this subject. Passages like Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 28-30, and Ephesians 4:11. Discovering and exercising your

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God-given spiritual gifts allows you to experience fulfillment in your Christian life and ministry. A vast collection of books and surveys have been written on the subject of Spiritual Gifts. For additional study we recommend that you consider one or more of the following:

- Understanding Spiritual Gifts ⁴
- Finding Your Spiritual Gifts⁵
- What You Do Best in the Body of Christ⁶

In addition to a study of these passages or books we recommend you to take one of the many web based assessments survey available at no cost. For example see <http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts>

Character Strengths Resources

Over the past 70 years the world of Psychology evolved greatly. Strengths Psychology developed through the work of many respected scientists and thought leaders in the academic and business world. Out of this great pool of great minds came many papers and books. For additional study we recommend that you consider one or more of the following:

- Cure for the Common Life: Living in Your Sweet Spot⁷
- What Color Is Your Parachute? ⁸
- Living Your Strengths⁹
- Now Discover Your Strengths¹⁰
- Go Put Your Strengths to Work¹¹
- Mindfulness and Character Strengths¹²
- StrengthsFinder 2.0¹³
- Strengths Based Leadership¹⁴
- Growing an Engaged Church¹⁵

In addition, we recommend our two books, which offer a collection of thoughts and tips from more than 60 different authors. Sprinkled in these are stories and advice from our clients:

- Challenges, Changes & Cures¹⁶
- Life Plans¹⁷

Furthermore, the field of Psychology has always used surveys and assessment tools to help us learn more about ourselves and how we behave. To progress further in this book you must take one or both of the following two surveys.

- **StrengthsFinder2.0™** from the Gallup Organization
<http://www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx>. This survey is based on the pioneering work of the late Don Clifton PhD out of the University of Nebraska. The survey uses 180 statements structured to gain first impression answers in key areas that are scientifically interrelated. This survey is timed to gain your first impression or answers. The Strengths Themes are a collection of talents grouped into 34 categories grouped in four domain areas. The basic report provides your top five Strengths Themes based on level of dominance or intensity.

In the Gallup model, strengths are seen as a formula. A formula that starts with talents that are multiplied by the knowledge we acquire and the skill we develop. In other words, **STRENGTHS = TALENTS X [KNOWLEDGE + SKILLS]**. Gallup has also developed a classification model by grouping the 34 themes into 4 groups which they call Domains. Understanding these domains can be very helpful when they are related to life roles, responsibilities and life callings. In the Gallup model **Strengths** are defined as: *“the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity.”*¹⁸ And **Talents** are defined as: *“naturally recurring patterns of thoughts, feelings or behaviours that can be productively applied.”*

- **The Love Languages Survey:** In living our callings we need to feel appreciated and valued. In his bestselling book, *The Five Love Languages*,¹⁹ Gary Chapman deals with this concept of filling our emotional bank accounts using five different love languages. The survey he developed rates these languages in their order of priority in your personal life. <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/>

Tools

Psychologists, Therapists, Counselors, and Coaches have often used thinking exercises to help us process and apply what we learn. In this book we would like to share with you some that were given to us along our life journey. These tools had a great impact on my thinking. We have frequently modified them over the past 14 years in response to some of our clients' needs. To put this in perspective later in the section titled *The School of Life* I will share with you some of my life journey and how these tools have been most helpful.

Use it or lose it. Like all aspects of your being, strengths are like your muscles. Exercise them and they develop, grow, and serve you well. Ignore them and they diminish, atrophy, and lose their value.

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Exercises Are for a Lifetime

Let us assume that as a self-motivated person. Your new year's resolution was to improve your physical fitness, so you join a local gym. As you walk in, you find many different pieces of equipment and exercising tools. Self-motivated as you are, you are given freedom to select the most appropriate tools and apply the training disciplines required. This is how we would like you to approach the exercises in this book.

On the following pages, you will find more than 33 different **thinking exercises** to help you identify, develop, communicate, apply and maintain your strengths. As with physical training:

- These exercises are not a one-time event. They can be completed over and over again. You can select the ones most suitable to your needs and/or modify them in response to your life circumstances.
- Like exercise equipment, some of these exercises may be easy and simplistic, while to others the same exercises may be challenging and even overwhelming. Do not let that hold you back.
- You are unique. Depending on your temperament, challenges, and objectives you can invest as much exercising time as you feel necessary. Naturally the deeper you dig in and the more you invest, the more you will gain from this experience.
- As you become more committed to living your strengths, practicing these exercises can serve as an alignment and calibration tool to help you stay on the right track of living in your sweet spot.
- You can do these exercises on your own, but you will gain better results from the support, encouragement, and accountability of like-minded friends, a partner or a coach. To be more specific you will find that most of the exercises will require you to have a partner.

**Before you go further why not stop
and call a friend to join you.**

About the Templates: Templates are to here to guide you in your thinking process. They help you write your thoughts so you can see them clearly and share them with others. The space provided in the templates is for examples only. You can download a free set of the templates as a workbook in MS Word format at <http://integrity-plus.com/SM/Notes/Templates.docx>

The Origin of Strengths

Today Strengths Psychology is well-entrenched in many of the world's best universities. It is a management platform adopted by global corporate leaders and preached by many pastors and spiritual mentors. As Christians, this study

can have a great impact on our world view, how we conduct our lives and our relationship with God, our maker. For this reason, it is important to understand its basic theology.

Our first introduction to the strengths teaching is found in Genesis Chapter One.

“God spoke: ‘Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.’”²⁰

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”²¹



Along with the desire for Holiness, in the very act of creation God caused man to have the likeness of His character attributes. God gave man certain talents and abilities that are reflections of His own character qualities so he can do good work. As Christians our relationship with God and our worship of God is based on our understanding of His Character attributes. Reading the scriptures we learn that God is a God of hope, love and judgment. He is responsible, disciplined, relational and communicative ... All these adjectives and attributes are among the many character strengths and themes that describe clients who have taken part in our strengths training over the past years. They may also be revealed in the survey assessment that you will take.

What an awesome honour and privilege. As you identify your strengths, you realize you are a reflection of God in our world. Through you, God intends to continue His creative and restorative work on earth. In a way, through His image in you, you partner with God in a great Holy work. Are you ready?

God in His nature does good work based on His natural qualities. He is known based on what He communicates about His attributes. Based on these attributes you expect Him to act in certain ways. For example, because He is merciful, you can ask Him for mercy; since He is just you can call on Him for justice; because He is good you can count on His goodness. . . . In a very similar way God's design for your life is based on what He designed you to be and the talents He gave you, not the talents He did not give you or the talents you wish you were given.

“Before I shaped you in the womb, I knew all about you. Before you saw the light of day, I had holy plans for you.”²²

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“I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you to give you a hope and a future.”²³

God’s purposes and plans are good. Because of His nature He loves you and desires to prosper you not to harm you. His plans were based on His total knowledge of what the future holds for you. And based on that knowledge His purpose is that you develop your talents and strengths. It is important to realize that God is not a difficult, frustrating micromanager. In His plans God gives you a lot of flexibility to exercise and develop the strengths He gave you. Like a good parent, God delights in seeing His children make good choices that reflect their understanding of His good purpose for their lives. His purpose is that you grow into the likeness of His perfect son Jesus Christ more and more.

Dr. Al Winseman writes, *“From a spiritual viewpoint, when we deny our talents and instead focus on our weaknesses, we are telling God that we know best and that God somehow made a mistake in gracing us with our unique mix of talents.”²⁴*

Author Max Lucado writes:

“God never prefabs or mass-produces people. No slapdash shaping. ‘I make all things new,’ He declares (Rev. 21:5 NKJV). He didn’t hand you your granddad’s bag or your aunt’s life; He personally and deliberately packed you. . . . You can do something no one else can do in a fashion no one else can do it. Exploring and extracting your uniqueness excites you, honours God, and expands His kingdom. So ‘make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that.’ Discover and deploy your knacks. . . . When you do the most with what you do the best, you put a smile on God’s face. What could be better than that?”²⁵



It is a Stewardship.

Every boy I know and I suspect many girls, as well ...at one time in their early years stood in front of a mirror and with pride flexed their muscles. In the simplicity and purity of childhood we seem to understand that our strengths are a gift from God and something to be proud of, and to cherish with gratitude and joy.



As we grow older we seem to ignore our strengths and focus on our overweight, physical and emotional, and our mental imperfections. Our strengths diminish and grow weaker by the day. As we ignore them we become more and more uncomfortable talking about our strengths and more willing to talk about our weaknesses. The same seems to happen to our character Strengths and talents.

In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus uses a parable to highlight a very important topic. You and I are stewards of what we are given.

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, which called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and

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hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘you wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has, will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

From this parable we note that a steward has two responsibilities. As a steward of God-given talents you are accountable for two specific responsibilities:

1. You are accountable to know and clearly define the talents you are given. You have a God given responsibility to articulate and communicate what you are given
2. You are responsible to invest what you are given in the time you are given on this earth to bring the best returns possible.

Understanding Talents

We have two grandchildren. Spencer is 4 years old and Garrett just turned one. As most grandparents can attest, having grandchildren is much more fun than raising your own. This may be because we have had more experience and thus we are more relaxed or and may be because we do not carry the full burden of parental duties.

Anyway, at this stage we can observe their developing from a totally different mindset. We often stand in awe and fascination with their rapid development.

At this very early stage we are certain that Spencer is totally different form his brother. With every passing week we can see clear evidence of mental and character development. I guess even at one year old we are able to observe Garrett unique talents. Psychologists now tell that the first few years are the most critical in forming the child’s character.

If strengths and talents are a trust from God, when and where do we get our talents? Defining talents can be more complex than the scope allowed by the limits of this book or the ability of this author. For our very limited scope it is



enough that Neurologists tell us that talents start with the neurological development in the brain. It is at the first few days of a mother's pregnancy that the brain starts developing Neurons. In the first few month of pregnancy a baby's brain has developed more than 100 billion Neurons. That is a rate of more than nine thousands Neurons per second. That is amazing.

Even while the child is still in the mother's womb, these Neurons start to communicate and build Synoptic Pathways. A network of more than 15,000 Synoptic Pathways is developed forming the infrastructure that defines our unique individual patterns of thinking, feeling and behaviours.

In the months that follow a baby's birth and during the early childhood development, this network of Neurons and Pathways form a clear set or qualities that are as unique to an individual child as his or her finger prints and they seldom ever change. **This is talent.** This is why, the way you act, feel or think are uniquely you. This is the foundation for your natural reaction to all of life circumstances.

Describing this magnificent creation Author Max Lucado writes: *“God never prefabs or mass-produces people. No slapdash shaping. ‘I make all things new,’ He declares (Rev. 21:5 NKJV). He didn’t hand you your granddad’s bag or your aunt’s life; He personally and deliberately packed you. . . . You can do something no one else can do in a fashion no one else can do it. Exploring and extracting your uniqueness excites you, honors God, and expands His kingdom. So ‘make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that.’ Discover and deploy your knacks. . . . When you do the most of what you do the best, you put a smile on God’s face. What could be better than that?”*²⁶

2. Exercise: What Do You Think, How Do You Feel?

What do you think, how do you feel?. Over the years I have had coaches that helped me a lot. I recall that in almost every discussion my coach would ask “what do you think, how do you feel?” This was often followed by “what will you do?” Later, as I studied coaching, I learned that these two simple questions, “what do you think, how do you feel?”, are critical keys to understanding and articulating most of life issues. These two simple questions are further reflected in our daily spiritual disciplines. You see, our **faith** is based on what we **think** and understand. **Feelings** serve to affirm us in what we believe. Our **thinking** and our **feelings** then equip us to act and do what we should do.

Now examine the facts about your creation and your talent stewardship then write your thoughts so you can share them with a partner. Take time to discuss what you wrote with your partner.

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When I reflect on the fact that my character and my character strengths are a reflection of God...

- I think ...
- I feel ...

When I consider that I am a steward of the strengths and talent God has given me...

- I think ...
- I feel ...

B. THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

School is for learning and developing. The school of life starts in the safety of our mother's arms and our father's care where we experience our first warm relationships, express our unique characters and exercise our talents and abilities. The school of life continues with new opportunities for development till we breathe our last. In the school of life our character and strengths are shaped, reshaped and shaped again. Our strengths are shaped by what we learn, and by what we believe through the people we meet and the relationships we develop. The bible tells that "As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another"²⁷. Our strengths are shaped by the impact of life experiences large or small, good or bad, happy or sad.



It was said that the greatest life lessons are learned through the darkest nights. Very often in the business of everyday life we do not take time to think and learn; then comes a life altering experience that forces us to stop, think, exercise, learn and grow. This has been my personal experience that resulted in some of the thinking exercises and tools we would like to share with you in this book. To give credit where credit is due and give some background and context to these exercises let me share two major work experiences that intercepted my 35 years career in the corporate world.

The first experience happened in 1992. You see, between 1980 and 1992 I worked for one of the largest computer companies in the world. That period of my career was a time when I truly played to my strengths and was most fulfilled. In those days the mainframe computer was king of the information technology world. With the demise of that technology the careers of many executives like myself was sent into turmoil. I was fortunate the company provided some transition outplacement services and career counseling.

The counselors and coaches at Ceridian and Fulcrum Search Inc., I will referred to them from here on as my Coach, helped learn a lot about myself, my character and my strengths and how to apply this to my career transitions and my job search. Through exercise and role-play they helped me communicate who I am and what I learned through the school of life. What I learned helped me to successfully negotiate major changes in my career track in the years that followed. In addition, I found that what I learned about my strengths and how to communicate them did not apply only to my work but also in my relationships with my wife, my family and almost in all aspects of my life.

The second turbulent time came in August 1999. As stated earlier, due to my

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overloaded life and compromised health I had to leave the high pressure corporate world and join the world of self-employed consulting where I thought I could have more control of my work habits. Based on my work life experience and its impact on my family, my wife researched a large volume of books and resources and developed our Overcoming Overload Workshop. With the tools of this workshop we had the privilege of working with overloaded people from many walks of life for the past 14 years. Our workshop offered a simple process and exercises to prioritize life roles and responsibilities. In helping you develop your Strategy for living we hope to share some of the workshop exercises with you.

Myths, Truth and Consequences

In the school of life what we believe shapes our life priorities. The truth you examined about your creation and your talents as well as your understanding of your sense of stewardship is motivating and energizing. But in the school of life we also encounter negative thoughts, myth and even lies that seek to derail us from what is true and worthy of praise.

As you grow you gain greater knowledge and acquire more skills. At the same time you become more and more of who you really are.

In part two of his Trombone player series, Markus Buckingham suggests that there are three myths which hold us back from playing to our strengths. Being trapped with these myths leads to ineffectiveness. The opposite also is true. If we apply the truth, you and I can be freed to play to our strengths and enjoy a more fulfilling life.

First Myth: As you grow you change. This is a myth. The truth is that as you grow you may acquire new knowledge and skill but your talents do not change very much. The truth is that at the core of your personality your temperament and your talents do not change. You merely become more and more of who your really are. This is often revealed in the small events and activities of our daily lives. It is also revealed more clearly when we get older or when we put aside our social correctness.

Example: For the past 40 years my wife has been trying to change me. She has been trying to change a small personal habit that irritates her greatly. I love my wife, and I TRULY want to please her and make that simple change to the habit she hates. But I have not been able to do so. My personal problem is that I do not close doors and drawers. For 40 years I have tried and failed. Over the years my wife has accepted my limitation.

Rewarding my wife for her patience with me, God gave us a grandson, Spencer, who loves to close doors and drawers. For Spencer an open door is a major irritant that cannot be ignored. When Spencer grows to be 70 years old, he will still have a passion for order and closing doors. For the sake of peace in his

family, I hope he does not marry a wife who does not close doors.

Second Myth: You grow the most in the area of your greatest weakness. This is the problem with most of our educational systems. We focus on weaknesses. The truth is that you will grow the most and go the furthest by focusing on the area of your greatest strengths and most natural talents.

The rewards are greatest when you and I invest in the areas where we have the greatest talents.

Example: Most of my career was spent in fields where information and data are changing at an overwhelming pace. To succeed you had to keep up with the fast changing world. My clients expected us to communicate not only what was happening, but how it applied to our relationship with them and how it impacted their productivity. My problem was that I was a very, very, very slow reader. Keeping up with all that was happening was very stressful and overwhelming to me. I tried to change. I took no less than 4 speed reading courses. Regretfully, my reading speed barely nudged forward. Fortunately I worked in large organizations where I could rely on others who knew much more than I did, this allowed me to focus where I had natural strengths and ability to excel in presenting and facilitating.

When I was forced into the world of independent consulting, I could have struggled spending days and nights reading to keep up. This would not have been the best use of my time. God provided me with a partner who is a very, very fast reader and learner, my wife. Our business partnership has been a delight for both of us because we decided not try to build on or change our weaknesses but leverage our individual strengths in life fulfilling roles. In our little business my wife is the brain I am the mouthpiece

In playing to your strengths you must focus your life roles on your God-given talents and effectively delegate to others so they can play to their -given strengths. Together you create a well-rounded team.

Third Myth: To be a team player, put your team ahead of your preferences, chip in wherever you can. God never intended for you to be well rounded, rolling around in response to every kick and punch that comes your way. You are totally unique, Created for very specific roles.

Example: Max Lucado is one of the best known pastors, leaders, and writers of our generation. When starting his ministry, like most pastors, he tried to be responsive to his growing congregation. As a result, during a period when by obvious standards he was most successful, Max Lucado was not living the abundant and full life that Jesus promised. Max was overloaded, stressed, and sincerely questioned his vocation as a leader and pastor. This point of need and despair led him to seek the help of an executive coach. His coach helped him

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identify his God-given strengths and led him in focusing his life roles around his strengths. The results totally changed his life and ministry, making him one of the most effective pastors and leaders of this generation. Reflecting on this life experience, he wrote one of his best books, *Cure for the Common Life*.

The Not Good Enough World

In the school of life, people can be cruel. Expectations can be unrealistic. This can leave a negative lasting impact on how we live and use our strengths. At times you may cry out “I was not made for this.”

I spent much of my childhood in the “**not good enough world.**” My father died when I was eighteen months old. Fortunately, I had a large, loving family and spent a lot of time with my cousins. While my cousins thrived in school, to me school was a growing burden and a necessary evil. I did not like school and did not do as well as my cousins. I was often compared to my cousins and siblings who seemed much smarter than me. Yes, I grew up in the not good enough world.

Most of my professional career was in the sales and marketing field. Sales targets and business benchmarks are often established to challenge and stretch a person to the point of pain. Management score cards are often used to induce guilt in the hopes of motivating people to deliver almost impossible results. Lately the corporate war cry is “more with less.” Yes, even in my career I often lived in the stressful, not good enough world.

Life in the not good enough world is not limited to childhood or work endeavors. Many of us in our home and married life struggle with feeling not good enough.

In our communities, regardless of how good you are, our present day culture seems to cry out **you are not good enough.** You live in a culture that demands more and more from you each day. This leads many into a state of critical indebtedness and an overloaded life. The majority of people today are tempted by feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

The negative voices we believe hold us back from focusing our strengths and the joy of applying them. God calls us to a different paradigm. In Philippines we are told “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*”¹

**Living in the not good
enough world is not the
will of God our maker.
He commands that we
look at life differently**

3. Exercise: What Holds You Back?

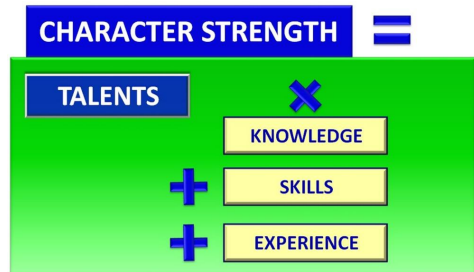
What negative thoughts, myths, opinions or understandings hold you back from playing to your strengths?

In the following space, take a few moments and reject the myth or the “not good enough voices” that may have influenced your life. Write a conversation with God. List the lies, myths and negative voices you need to put behind you. Promise yourself that you will not permit them to control your thinking any longer.

Write your thoughts . . .

4. Exercise: I Learned

While your strengths start with your God given talents, they are developed by adding **Knowledge, Skills, and Experiences**. Good education systems take advantage of the students’ natural talents. The education systems are designed with a developmental strategy. In the early years we learn how to acquire knowledge. Then we move on to actually collect knowledge. From there we realize that knowledge gains its value when it is used and applied to useful life environments, so we create processes to use what we learn. These processes or how to steps are often called skills. The true test of knowledge and skills comes through the laboratory of life experiences.



Example: You have the talent to see the road and control the steering wheel of a car. This does not make you a good driver. You can know all you need to know about the function of every part of an automobile by reading a book. But driving requires that you learn the process that allows you get the car moving. To excel in driving you need the experience of driving on different roads and in many different conditions. That makes strengths.

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The following table is divided into logical time segments. For each life period take an inventory. Record highlights of what you learned, the experiences you gained and the skills you developed. If you need to, in the appendix we provided a list of roles and skills that you may find helpful.

Wisdom is the development of our talent using knowledge and skills tested by experiences to impact our world for good. This is best revealed in relationships.

Life Period	I Learned: Knowledge, Skills, Experiences,
Early Childhood	
Early Schooling	
Teen years	

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College Years	
20's	
30's	
40's	
50s +	

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5. Exercise: I Like ...

In the school of life we encounter subjects you love and subjects you hate. Teachers you like and teachers you dislike or almost hate. Yes, even environments and cultures that we might like or dislike. What we like and dislike reveals a lot about our character and strengths. What we like comes naturally easy, but what we dislike is hard and discouraging.

Just as you did in the previous exercise, the following table is divided into logical time segments. For each life period take an inventory. List the subject, issues, experiences and even relationships that you loved or hated.

Life Period	I liked	I Disliked
Early Childhood		
Early Schooling		
Teen years		
College Years		
20's		
30's		
40's		
50s +		

Job Interview

“Tell me about yourself!” This is one of the most common questions asked in job interviews. **Why?**

Back in 1992, when I started my job search, my coach told me to be prepared for this question. **“Tell me about yourself”**. He warned me that how I answered this question could set the tone for the whole interview. It could get me the job or make me lose a possibility of a job offer.



In response to this very critical question, most people are tempted to provide a historical list of their job titles followed by achievements and awards. My coach advised me to start listing a set of clear adjectives that would paint a picture of my character and the roles I played. To me, at first, that was a challenge. I knew I had talents, I believed I had a strong character; I believed God gave me spiritual gifts but I could not describe them in adjectives or attributes. It seemed to me as a type of self-flattering.

Though it may be hard, let me encourage you to think this way. You may have noted that when we tried to describe the character of God we used adjectives. God revealed Himself to us in adjectives. Adjectives are powerful in communicating how we see people and how we want people to see us. If you try to express how an actor or performer played their role in a movie you say he was romantic, expressive, domineering, powerful ...

Following some exercising, coaching and role-playing, I was able to list 25 different adjectives that I could relate to the key roles I played. After this I used to look forward to the interview question “tell me about yourself”. Learning a clear set of adjectives and relating them to my key roles always changed the trajectory of the job interview to my great advantage.

6. Exercise: Tell me About Yourself

Back in 1992 my career counselors did not have access to tools that could help me know my talents or character strength. Today you and I are fortunate. We have many tools available in the field of Psychoanalysis and strengths discovery. Take time, test yourself using StrengthsFinder2.0 Survey.

From the reports you get list 5 – 10 adjectives that describe each of your top 5 Character Strengths or Strengths Themes. Once you have listed these adjectives, share them with your partner. In so doing start each group of adjectives with the word “I am...”

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Strengths	Adjectives
	I am ...
	I am ...
	I am ...
	I am ...
	I am ...

With this background knowledge and adjectives, picture yourself in a job interview and when you are asked **“Tell me about yourself...”** How do you feel? What do you think?

<p>I think ...</p> <p>I feel ...</p>

7. Exercise: 360 Feedback

In the field of human resources or industrial psychology, 360 feedback is a tool used to help employees compare ones self-assessment to the input of trusted others in his or her work circle. We would like you to develop your own 360 feedback.

Supposing your name is Tom. Seek input from at least 5 – 10 friends who know you well, give each of them a slip of paper that looks like the following example and ask them to finish 5 - 10 short sentences that describe your character and return it to you confidentially. Once you get their input you will have as many as 100 adjectives or attributes that express how your friends see you or describe you.

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Hi,

Could you please help me identify and focus on my best character attributes?

As candidly as you can, please complete the sentences listed below. Use attributes or adjectives that you feel best describe me. **Keep it confidential. Do not add your name.**

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Tom is _____

Group the adjectives or attributes you collected from your friend. Compare these attributes to the ones you selected in the “tell me about yourself” exercise. Hopefully, you will find some similarity between your chosen adjectives and how your friends describe you. This will give you a picture of how others see you.

Use your best judgment to focus on what you deem to be your most important character attribute. Think of key roles you played and how these attributes helped you in your roles.

A friend should be one in whose understanding and virtue we can equally confide, and whose opinion we can value at once for its justness and its sincerity.

Robert Hall

8. Exercise: Show and Tell

My Coach taught me that I needed to always **affirm my strengths adjectives** with honest life experiences and achievements. He said something like this, “while most employers could be impressed by the fact that you can describe your strengths in adjectives, they will want to see evidence of your strengths in your life experiences and achievements. So always be prepared to talk about times when your strengths were revealed in your work or personal life.”

“Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger, even though sometimes it is hard to realize this. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and grieves which we endure help us in our marching onward.”
Henry Ford

This reminds me of what Marcus Buckingham would call “tell me about experiences where you played to your strengths.” Or even better still, tell me about the times when you used your strengths as an expression of your talent stewardship.

For each of the five character strengths or themes you listed in the previous exercise, recall an experience, or tell a story of when you used your strengths to your advantage or towards fulfilling a good cause. Write your story in such a way that you can read it to your partner.

Strengths	Experience or Story

My Strengths Made Perfect in Weakness

Living in the “not good enough world, we are always reminded of our weaknesses. I suspect that Paul must have been reminded of his weaknesses often as well because he writes about this in his letter to the second letter to the Corinthians Church chapter 12. Actually he says that he pleaded with God to take away a certain weakness but God told him no for a simple reason, “My strength is made perfect in weakness.”²⁸ How does this work?

First let us examine what we call a weakness in terms of the Strengths Psychology. Both StrengthsFinder2.0 and the VA Survey reports suggest that you have **ALL** related themes or qualities but in different intensity. The fact that certain strength is not among your top character themes does not mean you do not have that strength. It is there but it is less dominant. This is why both StrengthFinder2.0 call them your lesser strengths.

Let me illustrate. Take a moment. Write your first name on a slip of paper. Was that easy? Switch hands and write your name again. Your first hand is your stronger hand. Using it is your natural way, and it comes easily. Your other hand reflects your lesser strength. While you can use your lesser strength to write, it is harder and consumes more time and energy. While you can spend a lot of time training your second hand to write, you will gain greater benefit by improving your handwriting with the first hand.



In life we all face situations where we have to act and do what does not come naturally or easily to us. We have to use our lesser talents and strengths. The key is to seek roles and activities where we can exercise our most dominant and natural strengths. If for some reason, God forbid, if you lost your ability to use your normal writing hand, God will interfere and help you find a way.

Let me give you another illustration. When I drive I need to use prescription glasses, my wife on the other hand needs her prescription glasses for reading. I can drive without glasses, but with some difficulty and some risks, especially at night. God provided my prescription glasses as a support system to compensate for my weakness and lesser strength.

My wife can read very well without her glasses. But in order keep up with the research she had to do for our work, she had to read a lot of material over a prolonged period of time. If she did this without her glasses, she is likely to feel strained and get headaches. Her mental ability would be compromised. So her reading glasses are her support system.

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Let me give you another example. When in desperation I left the corporate world in 1999 and went into the land of independent consulting, I had to learn a lot of new information. I am not a good reader. As a matter of fact I am a very, very slow reader. God raised my wife. She had no business experience but she is an excellent reader and a very fast learner. She became my partner and my support system. Together, committed to the same objectives, we complement each other and do the work that we believe God has called us to do. As a matter of fact if it was not for her support and partnership, most of this material would not exist. God provided His Strengths in her to help me overcome my weaknesses.



When acknowledging your top strengths, you must be willing to make yourself vulnerable by admitting our lesser strengths. Honest humility is a key attribute of successful leaders. When you know your strengths and admit your lesser strengths you reflect maturity and dependability on others. In so doing you must take time to learn and appreciate the strengths God has given to others.

In the example we shared earlier, when Pastor Max Lucado, a powerful leader, confronted his lesser strengths, God provided others in the church to step in and use their own talents and the church flourished. As Pastor Lucado acknowledged his weaknesses (lesser strength), God made His strengths visible through the life of that church.

Saint Paul, wrote clearly about this in the clearest way. He likens our relationship to our support system as the relationship of one part of the body to the other part.

"¹² The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. . . . ¹⁴ now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are

indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” 29

9. Exercise: Know Your Body

The important people God places in our lives are there by God's design. As such we have a God-given responsibility to:

- Know their talents and character strengths.
- Affirm them in their talents and strengths.
- Care for them and collaborate with them in every way possible to fulfill our common purposes for the Glory of God.

Take time to study the strengths of those God has placed into your life. In the appendix you will find descriptions for each of the character strengths and themes referenced as resources as well as related adjectives. Prayerfully think of important people in your life as you read these descriptions or adjectives. In the table below:

- List each of these important people as well as strengths and adjectives that you can observe in them.
- Think of ways you can affirm them in their strengths or how you can collaborate with them.
- Take time to write them a note or tell them how you appreciate them.

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Person	Strengths or Adjectives	Affirm / Collaborate

Shadow Side of Strengths

Can your strengths lead to wrong or negative outcomes? Can your strengths be used in negative ways? The answer is yes. The shadow side of strengths presents great risks that you must be aware of and confront. Our personal life examples can help us illustrate what we mean by the profound reality of the shadow side of Strengths.

Achiever is one of my top five strengths. For most of my working career, I was fortunate to have comparative roles where I played to this strength. As an Achiever I thrived on the competitiveness of the business world. The more challenging the opportunities, the more driven and persistent I became. The more impossible the challenge, the harder I worked. The more urgent the need, the more energized I became.

I must confess that I enjoyed the adrenaline rush that came with the intensity of this demanding world. Success and the praise of my management added fuel and justification to what became a destructive, workaholic life style. While I knew the risks I faced, while I was warned by my wife, family and friends, I was not willing to label it and deal with it. Regretfully, this was damaging not only to my health, but also it had a negative impact on the important relationships in my life. I wish I had learned how to label the shadow side of my Achiever strengths sooner. I wish I had set reasonable boundaries to protect my health and my family.

Responsibility is one of my wife's top five Strengths. She grew up in the "not good enough world." She recalls coming home with a 96% on one of her school papers, and her dad said, "What happened to the other 4?" The shadow side of responsibility is perfectionism that exacted a very high emotional and physical price.

What is your shadow?

Adjectives and labels can be used to reflect positive traits or negative qualities depending on how or when they are used. Just as you are responsible to define your strengths and wisely use them, you also are responsible for understanding your shadow and protecting yourself and others from their negative consequences.



***The brighter your strengths,
the darker your shadow.
As you progress towards
the light of your goals,
others will see your shadow
long before you do.***

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Once you identify your shadow, begin to put reasonable boundaries to protect you.. Here again, your important people can help you. Empower your friends and family to help you stay within your reasonable boundaries.

The following lists include **ONLY** a few examples or labels of risks that relate to the various strengths themes. **These are not all inclusive.** They are only a tool to help you start thinking of how to avoid living in the shadow side of your strengths. Consider your life experiences, and seek the input of wise friends as you examine labels that may reflect the shadow side of your strengths.

- Achiever:** workaholic, overcommitted, ruthless, unrestrained . . .
- Activator:** impatient, driven, obstinate ...
- Adaptability:** submissive, reactionary, unreasonable, directionless ...
- Analytical:** self-possessed, critical, nit-picking, never satisfied...
- Arranger:** critical, demanding, offensive, nonconforming ...
- Belief:** dogged, elitist, stubborn, opinionated, dogmatic, goody-goody ...
- Command:** bossy, abrupt, inflexible, stubborn, insensitive ...
- Communication:** garrulous, verbose, longwinded, talkative...
- Competition:** strong-willed, insensitive, uncaring, selfish, self-seeking, offensive ...
- Connectedness:** idealistic, easy to take advantage of, adolescent, naïve ...
- Consistency:** stubborn, disinterested, strict, uncooperative, unrealistic ...
- Context:** closed-minded, unimaginative, counterintuitive, inexperienced ...
- Deliberative:** aloof, withdrawn, introverted, unfriendly, time-waster ...
- Developer:** naïve, unwise, unrealistic, easy to take advantage of ...
- Discipline:** obstinate, rigid, mechanical, impersonal, detached, unrealistic ...
- Empathy:** soft, over-involved, gullible, susceptible, naïve ...
- Focus:** absorbed, intense, stressed, stubborn, single-minded ...
- Futuristic:** dreamer, impractical, unrealistic, unreasonable, irrational, misleading ...
- Harmony:** irresolute, indecisive, weak, non-confrontational, flattering
- Ideation:** dreamer, unrealistic, self-absorbed, introspective, unrealistic ...
- Includer:** indiscriminate, naïve, adolescent, gullible, unsystematic ...
- Individualization:** overly-patient, indecisive, undiscerning ...
- Input:** irresolute, indecisive, faltering, vacillating, slow to act, cluttered ...
- Intellection:** loner, bookish, smug, academic, non-productive, irrelevant ...
- Learner:** bookish, uninspiring, unrelated, academic, non-productive ...
- Maximizer:** picky, demanding, challenging, uncompromising ...
- Positivity:** insincere, naïve, superficial, dishonest, Pollyanna ...
- Relator:** cliquish, clannish, plays favourites, disingenuous, hypocritical...
- Responsibility:** micro-managing, perfectionist, stickler, obsessive ...
- Restorative:** critical, punitive, negative, critical, focused on weakness ...
- Self-assurance:** arrogant, conceited, proud, stubborn, persistent, self-righteous ...

- Significance:** self-absorbed, needy, self-centered, insecure, uneasy ...
- Strategic:** disrespectful, offensive, invasive, belittling, impatient ...
- WOO:** fake, insincere, dishonest, shallow, compromising ...

Note: for an additional to help see the shadow of your strngths see the Appendix: **Shadows – The Dark Side of Strengths.**

10. Exercise: What Is Your Shadow?

Realistically consider your personality and life experiences, and then acknowledge the risks by answering the following two questions.

In James 5.16 we are encouraged to “...confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

What shadows do you see for your top strengths? Explain.	What boundaries do you need to protect your shadows?

11. Exercise: Personal Strengths Profile

How can you shape a perfect resume? This could be your most powerful exercise. It builds on the other exercises you have done so far. The goal of this exercise is to help you distill the thoughts you collected from your study, self-examination, and affirmation exercises in a few powerful words called your **Strengths Profile Card**. In this thinking exercise, for each of your strengths themes, list the most powerful words that answer five simple questions:

- Who are your talents? (**Adjectives = I am...**) List the best adjectives that reflect your talents and your character strengths.
- What do you bring? (**Skills, knowledge = I bring**) List the most relevant knowledge, skills that relate to your talents.
- What are the relevant life experiences? (**Experience = I did...**) List the relevant experiences where you used your talents, skills knowledge to a great advantage.
- What risks or challenges are you most likely to face? (**Shadow = I fear ...**) This is where you may, with honesty; consider your lesser strengths, shadow or what you do not like.

Using the example below, create a reference table or list with information that you can easily recall. This reference table can be used any time you create or update a resume. It also can be helpful every time you are examining an opportunity or invited to play a specific role. This list is not a static tool. It is a lifelong thinking tool that you can update every time you learn more about your talents and strengths.

Strengths	Talents Adjectives I am ...	Knowledge Skills I bring ...	Experience I did...	Shadow I fear ...
Strength 1				
Strength 2				
Strength 3				
Strength 4				
Strength 5				

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To help you create your Personal Profile Card, the following is an example of one of my strengths themes: **Analytical**. The words in it are gleaned from the information provided in my Strengths insights report and personal experiences.

Strengths	Talents Adjectives I am ...	Knowledge Skills I bring ...	Experience I did...	Shadow I fear ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical Process oriented Disciplined Outcome and results oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear Value Project skills Tools People skills English, French & Arabic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 2000 project Started a new business Lead a major ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Nitpicking Never satisfied

Why Drift?

We all are born with the tendency to drift. We all are tempted to drift away from our strengths. You do not run away from your strengths. You just drift away from them little by little. But then one day you wake up, finding yourself in a place you never intended to be and never would have chosen.

There are many currents that tempt you or cause you to drift. These may include financial and peer pressure, parental expectations, social status, ego, self-esteem, unrealistic expectations of self and others, as well as an incorrect understanding of the purpose of life itself.

God intended for His creation to live in strengths but the reality is that we all can identify with what Saint Paul wrote:

“What I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary. But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can’t keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it’s predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God’s commands, but it’s pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I’ve tried everything and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn’t that the real question?”³⁰

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Paul goes on to give an answer to his question. God can do something. One of God's strengths is forgiveness so, when you drift, you can call on Him to forgive you. Forgiveness is one of the most powerful acts of strength. By modeling it God expects you to apply forgiveness towards yourself and others. In prayers you often ask God to forgive your failures and for you forgive everyone who fails you.³¹

As you are tempted to drift, you can rely on the restorative power of God's forgiveness to keep on trying and to keep on growing.

12. Exercise: Avoid the Drift

This exercise will enhance your awareness of the currents that cause you to drift. In a way this is a personal confession of your vulnerability and also a commitment to resist the temptations that cause you to drift.

In order of priority, describe the top three factors that may tempt you to drift away from your strengths as well as what you can do to overcome this temptation.

13. Exercise: Stewardship

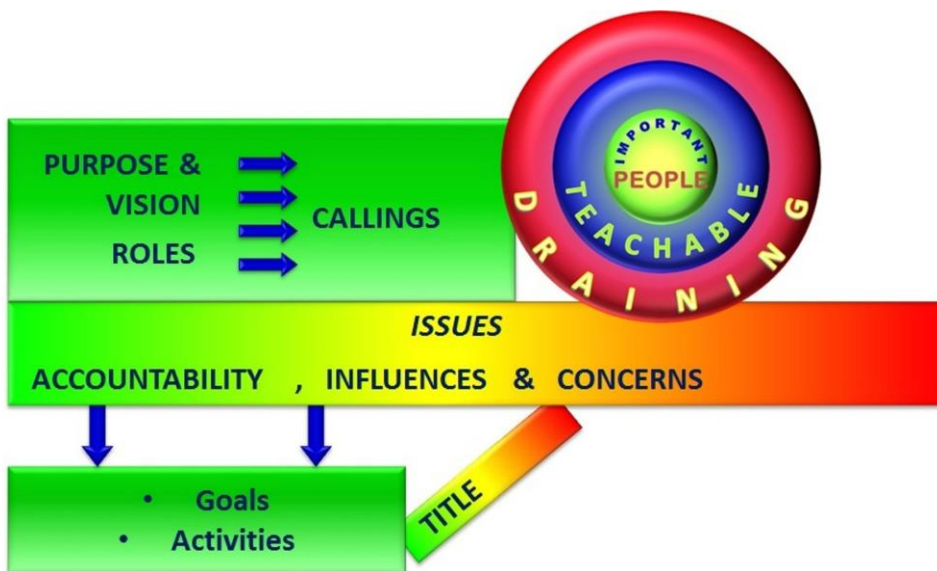
You are a steward of the talents you are given. You are a steward of the knowledge you have gained. A good steward takes great care to apply what he or she has learned.

- Take time to review what you have learned.
- List what impressed you the most and
- How you can apply what you have learned over the coming eight weeks

The best I learned	How I will apply it.
<p>If you want to be a master of an art coach it. Think of two people you care about who can benefit from something you learned. Commit to sharing what you have learned. This not only will help them but will affirm your learning experience, as well.</p>	

PART TWO

Live Your Callings



C. DISCOVER YOUR CALLING

In Part One you were able to understand the science and theology of strengths and how tools can help you define your own strengths and articulate and communicate your strengths. God created you in His image. Your greatest honour is to reflect His character so the world can see God in you. Your life journey can be exciting as you regularly update your understanding of your talents, grow your knowledge, and develop more skills.

Your strengths gain its value when applied to life circumstances in an appropriate timely manner. We call that wisdom. Wisdom is revealed in your callings.

In Part Two we will focus on how the application of your strengths impacts in all aspects of your life. This is what we call your life callings. We will start by exploring how you define and discover your callings, and then we will use exercises so you can be affirmed in your callings and then help you build a process to fulfill your callings.

As you practice this process you will find that your callings are reflected by the life roles you play. Through the right mix of people in your life, you will be affirmed and can focus your strengths on where you deliver the greatest impact with meaningful life goals. With rewards supported by biblical principles we hope you develop life habits that impact your world.

About Callings

In our present day vocabulary, we do not use the term “**calling**” very often. Walk around a busy street and ask people what comes to their minds when they hear the word calling and most likely they will think of a ringing phone. Some may think of a high and lofty clergyman position that does not apply to most of us.



But, if you let the person think a little and ask them if they would like to learn their life calling, you would notice an increased level of longing and interest. You see, deep in our minds we associate the word calling with purpose, life purpose.

Dr. Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, became an all-time bestseller

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because it tries to help people answer a simple question: **“What on earth am I here for?”** Each of us has a longing and a deep-seated need to feel valued and feel that we are leaving a positive impact on our world. God created you with a simple purpose for your life. The early church fathers in the Puritan and Reformed writings they say that **“Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.”**

Sometimes we associate having a calling with a profession or career based on titles we are given. In a title driven world, callings become valued based on earning and compensation models associated with each title. I suggest that this is a wrong value system that does not reflect the kind of callings God desires for His children.

Back to the Bible:

It may be wise to look at how the word calling is used in the Bible. For reference, I used one of the oldest English translations, the Authorized Version. Using a word search feature in my computer Bible program, I found that the word “Calling” is only used five times in the Old Testament and nineteen times in the New Testament.

Consulting the *Strong's Dictionary* for the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek Lexicon we find that the original text offers five different meanings for the word “calling.” Four of these meanings refer to someone beckoning or calling out to another. For example: Christ calling the blind man to come to Him. Only one meaning refers to a vocation or career, like Paul was called to be an Evangelist to the Gentiles.

With this in mind, I would like to center our discussion on the possible meaning of the word “calling” as **“God calling you and me to come and ...”** This will help us think of the **“Why and How”** of a calling.

Parenting How God Does It

When our children were small we took part in a study titled “Parenting: How God Does It.” We were young parents anxious to be the best we could be, and this seemed like an interesting study. Through this study we learned a whole lot more about our relationship with God than about the fundamentals of parenting.



I still recall the one lesson that impacted me the most. The teacher said that every parent has a natural instinct to be totally focused on the development of his or her child. A good parent tries to help the child develop by providing educational opportunities and educational toys appropriate for their age and stage of development. I still recall when the teacher said “God is a perfect parent; He uses all the experiences of life for the purpose of developing His children. Whether it be positions, relationships or responsibilities, whether large or small, important or insignificant, they are all educational toys from the hands of a loving Heavenly Father.”³²

This profound teaching has impacted my life ever since the first time I learned it. This one principle has greatly impacted my relationship with my children, my work, my wife, and my relationship with God. God is much more interested in how I am developing than in what I am accomplishing.

Our two children, Rebecca and Noel, are very precious to us. As a toddler, Noel was a hands on child and loved toys, lots of toys. Very often, near dinner time you would hear me calling, “Noel, I need you. Come help me tidy up the toys in the play room.” **Did I really need a toddler’s help?**

One day I came into the house and with all the excitement of a three-year-old, our Rebecca yelled, “Daddy, Daddy, I helped Mommy make a cake. Do you want to have some?” Did my wife really need the help of a three year old to make a cake? Wouldn’t it have been easier for her to make it when Rebecca was asleep or out at a friend’s house? **Why would a parent ask the child to come and help with such small tasks?**

As our children grew we continued to ask them to help with bigger things and responsibilities. It is easy to see that the reason good parents ask their children to help has two highly interrelated and very valuable purposes. The first is the development of the child. The second is the

God is much more interested in how you are developing than what you are accomplishing.

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relational bonding that happens when time is spent working together. It is through that relational bonding that the child develops character and values that often reflect that of the parent. **Our God is a highly relational Father; He delights in relating to His children.**

There is another dimension to the developmental relationship parents have with their children. Over the years we gave our children developmental toys and tools appropriate for their age. Our two children are very different from each other. We watched their development closely to see how they grew through the tools and/or experiences we made available to them. For example, Noel enjoyed working with complex Lego models. For Rebecca, her love was managing her money and little spending budget.

Whether we call them to help us or provide them with service opportunities, the heart of good parents is intently focused on developing their child. Once a child outgrows one developmental stage, a good parent seeks to direct the child to something more challenging that would result in further growth.

As our children developed we often gave multiple options to help them develop the very important quality of making good choices. Sometimes, this process is challenging or unpleasant to the child, but it still is as important through the eyes of a good parent. The same principles apply to our relationship with our Heavenly Father and His calling. God does not like to see stagnating children. He delights in growing children who make good choices.

Father Is Calling

Imagine how you would feel if you got a call from God's "office" asking you to come and help Him. Imagine you picked up the phone one day and on the other end of the line you hear God asking you to come and help Him do something important. Most of us would be thrilled if such an invitation came from the President's or Prime Minister's office. Imagine if that call came from God Himself. Yes, such a call does come to you and me every day – sometimes several times a day.

Nothing thrills the heart of a parent more than to see his children make good choices.

The same it is with our Heavenly Father.

Your callings are centred on the fact that God expects us to use the strengths He gave us to help Him do the work of creation and restoration which He carries out every day. He invites you to live in His kingdom and work side by side co-laboring with His Son Jesus Christ.

We only can understand our true callings when we examine our life through the eyes of our Heavenly Father. Nothing thrills the heart of good parents more than to see their children grow, develop, and make good choices. It is a very

proud day when parents see their good character qualities reflected in their offspring's life choices. You may have heard a thrilled parent's voice say, "That's my boy" or "That's my girl." This is the highest reflection of parental bonding.

God's expectations and callings changes as you develop and grow. God delights in giving you choices. That is how He created you – with free will. When it comes to God's calling, He is always very clear and unwavering about His purposes, but He often gives multiple callings to develop your skills of making best use of the talents He gave you.

Please think again. As earthlings, we simply are a dim reflection of Him. "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"³³

Ask Him for your callings.

Perfect Calling

The term "perfect calling" implies that there is a less than perfect calling. If you believe in supreme dictator like God who imposes a perfect will on all aspects then we can hope for a perfect world and a perfect calling. But we know that God did not create us to be a bunch of robots at His electronic command. He created us to make choices. If our callings are based on the choices we make then our callings will always be less than perfect. On the road of life there will always be bumps, challenges and imperfections.

Your Heavenly Father does not require perfection; He only expects a sincere heart and genuine stewardship of what He has given each of us.

We believe in a perfect God, who has a **perfect purpose** for everyone's life, but within that perfect purpose, He gave us the freedom to choose. By our imperfect choices we have created an imperfect world. By virtue of this imperfection it is impossible to have a perfect calling. Your Heavenly Father does not require perfection; He only expects a sincere heart and genuine stewardship of what He has given each of us.

To help us focus this workshop, I would like us to consider the following definition of a calling. "***Your calling is the place where your strengths empower your greatest passion to meet God's greatest need in your world.***"³⁴ In other words, your calling is where your greatest strengths are matched with the greatest needs in your world. Based on this, your calling:

- **Requires a specific place** or a defined condition of life, not an imaginary, illusive vision or a fuzzy unspecified set of words.
- **Is the place where your strengths empower you and gives you energy.** As you recall from Part One your strengths are based on the talents you are given at birth. Your calling must be strategically based on your strengths, not the

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assumptions and expectations of others.

- **Involves your greatest passion.** We often assume that passions are emotional impulses. However, sustainable passions are based on state of mind and acts of the will. Sometimes you may experience the excitement that comes from applying strengths and talents toward what you believe you are called to be and do. That is great. Your passion engages your feelings, a sound reasonable mind, as well as elements of faith.
- **It responds to God's greatest needs.** In his bestselling book, *Experiencing God*, Dr. Henry Blackaby writes, **“Look for where God is working and join Him.”**³⁵ God is working everywhere, and He has enough needs to engage each of us in ways that demand our best and develops us the most. Working with God is purposeful because God's work is purposeful.
- **It involves your world.** I love the song that says, “This is my Father's world.” Whatever you can see, envision or imagine is your father's world. It is your world. God loves to give his children choices. Your world can be your home, your community, your work, far away countries and lands, or wherever your imagination and dreams may lead you. Start searching “seek and you will find.”³⁶

Dare to Dream Again

If your life was a painting and you were the artist, what would you place on the canvas called time? What would your masterpiece look like?



Good parents often ask their toddlers, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” This question has a deeper meaning than its entertaining value. We want our children to dream, have hopes and aspirations. Daydreaming is a wonderful childhood skill that develops ambitions that motivates a good life.

As we grow older, the world tries to mold us away from dreaming. “Grow up, stop dreaming,” we are told. As a result we lose that wonderful skill that God created in each of us. Whether you are three or thirty-three, nine or ninety-nine, you still are a child of your Heavenly Father who wants to see you dream, develop, and grow. He wants you to dream and have great visions for what you can be and do with Him. Your Heavenly Father said, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”³⁷ He wants you to have visions for your future with Him. The authors of the *Living your Strengths* book recommend that you dream. Dream a lot. With God along your side, take time to dream³⁸

Like a child, put aside the constraints of money and public opinions. Ask your Heavenly Father to help you relearn how to dream. With Him by your side, ask Him to help you build a vision of your tomorrow starting today. With a pen in hand, write down your thoughts, scribble little notes, or paint a picture. Whatever you do, be sure to record each and every

“Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.” Matthew 25:21 NKJV

Use your uniqueness to take great risks for God!

If you’re great with kids, volunteer at the orphanage. If you have a head for business, start a soup kitchen. If God bent you toward medicine, dedicate a day or a decade to AIDS patients. The only mistake is not to risk making one....

He lavished you with strengths in this life and a promise of the next. Go out on a limb; he won’t let you fall. Take a big risk; he won’t let you fail. He invites you to dream of the day you feel his hand on your shoulder and his eyes on your face. *“Well done,” he will say, “good and faithful servant.” Max Lucado*

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thought as you go along.

To help you dream, use as many prompts as you can:

- Take a trip down memory lane. Go back to exercise 5 where you revisited the past. Picture yourself reliving these energizing moments today.
- Rummage through picture albums and imagine healthy events happening again.
- Talk to others who were a part of your past and discuss what made you feel good and how you can leverage these experiences.
- Capture the moments or thoughts that cause you to think or say, “I wish I could...”
- Read the application descriptions in the StrengthsFinder reports.

In the following exercise, summarize your thoughts and the changes you would like to see happen. Create objectives in short sentences or bulleted point so you can maintain this list for future use.

The Power of a Model

There is a lot to be learned from reading books, attending workshops and listening to podcasts and sermons. Most of us do not have a problem learning what we should do; our problem is gaining the motivation to apply what we have learned. This is where the power of a model can play a vital role. So, as you consider your calling and your life priorities, who are the models you seek to emulate? What are the life examples that challenge you? Who are those you seek to follow at this stage of your life?



Allow me to share my personal experience.

Soon after I turned sixty years old people began to ask me, “*When are you going to retire?*” or “*Have you started planning for retirement yet?*” With that kind of social pressure I started reading books and attending seminars on planning for retirement. While all of this was helpful, what greatly impacted my dream, vision and my applications were the models that I saw and the people I read about.

For example, in my life there were two models who I could emulate. There were friends and colleagues who have retired to a life of comfort and ease. Their days are spent playing golf, recalling younger years and old friends dead or alive. While this kind of retirement seemed interesting, it did not excite me in any way. You see, I never liked golf, and I am too old for the aggressive sports that I love. While I like people, I did not see myself sitting at coffee bars every

day with the same group of old friends. I knew very well that this is not the kind of life where I wanted to spend my last years on this planet.

On the other side of the coin I had another model named Ernest LaFont. Let me tell you his story,

He never held a corporate office or had an impressive title, yet he has influenced my life and the lives of countless others greatly for the past fifty years. He was not born with the proverbial silver spoon. His father left the family when he was only six years old. His mother died the day of his tenth birthday. When Ernest and his siblings moved in with their grandmother she told him that he had to get a job to support himself. This little tyke secured not one but two jobs, one before school and the other after school and on weekends.

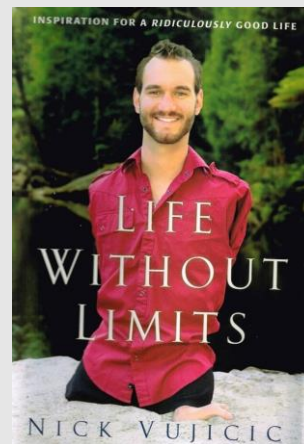
From the very young age of eleven years old, life was hard work. He paid his way through school and then college. After graduation he shipped off to the mission field with his wife, Grace. For more than forty eight years they served as missionaries in war ravaged Panama and the Middle East. At the age of 68 his family thought that he would settle down in the comfort and safety of the U.S.

At seventy years of age Ernest and Grace accepted the call to become missionaries to the Far East. Back in the states, at 78 he joined the local police force as Chaplin. At 84 he was discharged from police service to join the staff of his local church as pastor for seniors.

I called him a few weeks ago to wish him a happy 97th birthday. He spoke of his expanding card ministry. Every Monday, the office of church he attends gives him the names of people who need encouragement. He sends them personal, handwritten cards and follows up with regular phone calls of support. When he is able, he visits shut-ins and others in nursing homes.

I should tell you, after his wife's death he remarried at age 92. Looking into the future he told me, ***"it is not good for man to be alone. . . . I need someone to share with me in my new ministry."*** This is my role model. When I grow up I want to be like him.

If the model of a 97 year old man does not fit with your imagination, please take time to view any of the 24,000 YouTube video clips of the **"The Man without Limbs"**



From Dreams to Reality – Objectives

Dreams are wonderful for creating a vision of the future, but you do not want to stop there. You do not want to be **only** a dreamer. Your callings must be articulated in a real life that impacts the world for good. You were given your strengths for a purpose of creating and bringing about good change into your world. Now you need to inject a little bit of objectivity to help move your dreams closer to reality. To move your dreams closer to reality you must find an issue, a problem, a need or an opportunity to create something good.

If your life was a painting and you were the artist, what would you see on your life canvas? Consider your personal life, your work life, your community or church, and/or the world in which you live such as your country. You may even consider the global issues that impact the world. In each of these I am sure you will identify needs or challenges looking for solutions. Each of these challenges present opportunities for you and others to ignite your passion and exercise your strengths. Your world is full of issues which are calling for your attention. Read the local paper, watch the news, and surf the web and you will see challenges and changes calling for solutions. Examine the world image and take note of words that capture or attract your interest. What topics attract your curiosity? What issues make you say “**I wish I could . . . ?**”

Add Objectives to Give Shape to Your Dreams

To make the bridge between dreams and reality you need to create simple objectives. Objectives help you build a yardstick by which you measure the value of your dreams. They help you define success. They help you communicate how you measure progress in the various areas of your life. They help you see how success reflects your core values and how your callings are most fulfilled.

Objectives are statements of faith reflecting what you wish to see happen at a future point in time.

Large or small, great or humble your vision can be your springboard to many objectives. Objectives will help you see more “objectively” the many changes you desire.

Objectives are statements of faith reflecting what you wish to see happen at a future point in time. Be aggressive in creating your objectives. Later, we will guide you as you test your objectives by creating goals that lead to actions that reflect your life callings.

So do not delay; start exercising! Start with the one or two areas that capture most of your passion and create your strongest emotions. Make time and find a place where you can be relaxed and uninterrupted. Collect any prompts to help you. With pen and paper in hand, ask God, to help you on the journey that can transform your life.

14. Exercise: Personal Life

Your personal life always should be your first priority as you seek to apply and use your strengths. Your personal health, emotional stamina, financial stability and spiritual vitality are the foundations upon which you build other aspects of your vision and dreams. Nothing you do should compromise that priority of your personal life. You have a calling for your personal life. Take time to write your dreams and visions as well as your objectives.

Dreams And Visions For My Personal Life:

List any needs, opportunities, news or ideas that come to mind.

-
-

Objectives For My Personal Life:

More objectively, list the top three changes you would like to see happen in the coming 3 – 6 months.

-
-

15. Exercise: Family Life

The family is designed to be the cornerstone of any community. None of us has a perfect family but each of us has assets and resources that uniquely equip us for the needs and challenges that face our families. This leaves a lot of room for dreams, visions, and objectives.

Dreams And Visions For My Family Life:

List any needs, opportunities, news or ideas that come to mind.

-
-

Objectives For My Family Life:

More objectively, list the top two changes you would like to see happen in the coming 3 – 6 months.

-
-

16. Exercise: Community Life

Your community could be your neighbourhood, your church or those who join you at the gym three times a week. In your sphere of influence you have people with whom you share common interests, aspirations or needs.

Dreams And Visions For My Community Life:

List any needs, opportunities, news or ideas that come to mind.

-
-

Objectives For My Community Life:

More objectively, list the top two changes you would like to see happen in the coming 3 – 6 months.

-
-

17. Exercise: Work Life

Your work life consumes a lot of your time. Whether you are a stay-at-home mom, a hard-nosed executive, or an employee on an assembly line, your work life is a place where your calling can shine.

Dreams And Visions For My Work Life:

List any needs, opportunities, news or ideas that come to mind.

-
-

Objectives For My Work Life:

More objectively, list the top two changes you would like to see happen in the coming 3 – 6 months.

-
-

18. Exercise: World Life

You are a significant member of a world that is much broader than your family, work or community. You have important roles to play in your city, country or even faraway places. Pick up any newspaper and you will see immense needs that you can respond to and great issues that you can influence.

Dreams And Visions For World Life:

List any needs, opportunities, news or ideas that come to mind.

-
-

Objectives For My World Life:

More objectively, list the top two changes you would like to see happen in the coming 3 – 6 months.

-
-

Roles are Your Callings

When you were being formed God designed you for unique and special roles to play in His wonderful world. He gave you part of His character qualities so you can do good work with him and for him. The roles you are called to play on the stage of life are your life callings.

In the 17th century Shakespeare wrote: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men [and women] merely players on it: They have their exits and their entrances; and each man in his time plays many roles.” Shakespeare provides some powerful imagery. We want you to keep this image in mind as you examine your life. By this image you will filter what you do so you can focus on the most important roles you play. Your effectiveness in the roles you play is related directly to your ability to use your strengths in these roles. For this reason it is critical that you understand your roles and how your strengths empower you to play your roles.

Very often our life experiences look like this picture of the children in their Christmas pageant. Their experience may have been entertaining for the adults in the audience. For the children it was stressful and frustrating. The little boy in white was our three year old son. He cried throughout the whole episode.



These children did not understand their roles or their strengths. As a result they had no control over what happened with their lives on the stage of this pageant. This is not a picture of the abundant life God desires for His children.

If in life you are playing roles that are not a good fit to your God-given strengths, your experience on the stage of life may be similar to that of these children. This may not be the abundant life God desires for you.

Define your roles

In the workplace titles are often given that seldom define the high value roles individuals are expected to play. Job descriptions try to identify what a person is expected to DO. They seldom reflect what he or she is expected to BE. Organizational charts may reflect areas of responsibility but do not highlight important relationships.

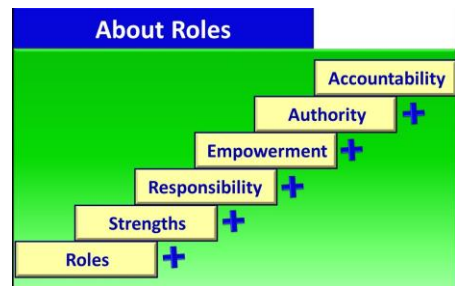
Based on years in organizational change management we believe that ill-defined roles are the primary cause for workplace dissatisfaction. In our fast changing world roles are not static but must be fine-tuned or even changed in response

to corporate objective and team dynamics. Defining the roles you play is a personal responsibility.

With the help of important people, this is a collaborative process. In the corporate setting employers may create organizational diagrams that serve to highlight functional relationship and structures. Organizations may even create a skeleton of labels or titles. Each title may include one or more roles they expect the employee to play. Within that structure, as an employee, you own the responsibility of defining your roles. Each role is unique and greatly depends on your unique strengths, (talents, knowledge, skills, and experience), and how they can serve the common good or bring the greatest results.

19. Exercise; Define Your Roles

The following diagram illustrates the various areas or parts that must be included in defining the role. The steps in this exercise along with the templates that follow are written to help the individual define his or her roles. The same process and template can be easily modified by any employer to describe the roles he or she is seeking to fill.



1. **Role / Label:** In every drama each character is given a name. The same applies here as well. Each role must have a name that is different from any title the person may hold. For example, you may have the title of “Director” but the role you are called to play may be that of a Resource, Advisor, Observer, Coach ...
2. **Strengths:** There can never be a role with out the needed strengths. Like a good father God never expects His children to preform a role for which He does not give them the strengths. Your strengths based roles start with your talents. Character attributes or adjectives reflect what you are expected to be. This will help you define how you will do what you are expected to do. We often say that how we do what we do is more important than what we do. Using **adjectives**, list what the role is expected to **BE**.
 In defining strengths, along with adjectives that reflect talents, we must also include the needed knowledge, skills and experience ince. For simplicity this can be combined in one word; we can call it **competency**!

There is no role without Responsibility.
No responsibility without Empowerment.
No empowerment without Authority.
No authority without Accountability.
No accountability without clear Goals.

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- 3. Responsibilities:** Strengths without responsibility is strengths wasted. Responsibilities often **define the scope of the role**. The area of responsibility is the place objectives are stated, actions are taken, and outcomes are realized. Responsibilities are best aligned with your knowledge, skills, and experiences. **Clearly focused** responsibility highlights the uniqueness of each role. For this reason each role/responsibility must be assigned to individuals, not groups.
Responsibility assigned to many is seldom done by any.
- 4. Empowerment:** Responsibility without empowerment leads to frustration and disappointment. This brings the resources needed to fulfill the role. Resources include the skills, knowledge, and experience required in fulfilling the responsibilities. Empowerment may include the financial resources as well as any tool needed to deliver the expected results or outcomes.
- 5. Authority:** Empowerment without authority leads to inaction. This confirms the delegation of permission to act to deliver the expected results. It is often wise to state who provided that authority and permission. Authority provides the role with the freedom to act and create result oriented goals, activities and plans.

 - **Goals and Results:** Faith based goals are critical parts of every role. Reasonable results oriented goals provide focus, clarity, and objectivity. The absence of goals often leads to discontent, dissatisfaction, and misunderstanding. Results are the ultimate proof of the value the role brings on the stage of life. **Results can be tangible and/or intangible.**
 - **Plans and Activities:** It was wisely said “People do not plan to fail; they simply fail to plan.” Your goals must be reflected in your time planning and your To-do lists. This is the way commitments are confirmed and communicated.
- 6. Accountability:** Accountability is for protection. In protection you set boundaries, policies, and processes for the role. This is critical to protect the person, the purpose, the team, and the assets needed to make things work well. Support and oversight are a critical part of accountability.

 - **Support:** On the stage of life we live and work in teams. This is the place where appropriate partnership and collaboration must be noted and clearly communicated. The role plan must highlight critical relationships and how they merge or intersect towards fulfilling common goals.
 - **Oversight:** Appropriate oversight works hand in hand with accountability. It is interesting to note that appointing overseers was one of the first functions established in the early church. The overseer of any role does not focus on the detail but on the key elements that are most critical to the appropriate functions of the role.

Note: Download a MS Word copy of the template at

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<http://integrity-plus.com/Data/Templates/Role.docx>

1. Role and Organization:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write the unique label or name of this role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List organization, project, function or committee related to this role
2. Strengths		
Talents		Competency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order of priority list the best adjectives that the role must BE 		<p>In order of priority list needed knowledge, skills and or experience.</p>
3. Responsibilities:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order of priority list the areas of responsibilities impacted by this role 		
4. Empowerment:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order of priority list the resources required in fulfilling the responsibilities and delivering the expected results or outcomes of this role. 		
5. Authority:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the office, person, and policy or bylaw that provides the permission needed to fulfill this role 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals and Results: 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the key SMART goals and or expected results that will be achieved by this role. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and Activities: At a minimum your plan must include each task to be done, when it will be done, and who will do it. 		

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Task #	Task and Sub-Tasks Description	Key Resource	Start Date	End Date	Effort Hours
1	Example: Define role objectives and goals.	Jim	19.10	16.11	20
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
6. Accountability:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify who will provide the accountability needed for this role. It is always preferable that accountability be assigned to only one person. 					
• Support:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List the areas of possible partnership and collaboration that may serve to support or enhance this role. 					
• Oversight:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List who will provide the needed oversight as well as the oversight format and frequency. 					

The Danger of Title-Imposed Roles

When asked about the roles we play, most of us provide our title or the work we do. If the questioner persists, you most likely will highlight organizational responsibilities. If asked to clarify further, you list the tasks you perform.

Titles are a misleading indicator of value while roles reflect the impact of a life well lived.

Most of us prioritize our day using our “to do” lists. These lists often are a reflection of the titles we are given or the demands placed on us by others based on their expectations of that title. In our rapidly changing world, we are inclined to cater to urgent demands, often feeling compelled to fill in the gap of uncertainty by responding, “Let me see what I can do.” Each demand, once fulfilled, becomes a *de facto* part of the job title and is added to the ever-growing “to do” list—after all, you did it once so, “why not do it again?”

Over time, what you do defines who you are. In most social settings a common introductory question is, “What do you do?” We forget that we are called human beings, not human doings. Title-imposed roles feed on longer “to do” lists. As the list of what you are expected to do gets longer and longer, you lose your focus and your ability to prioritize what is most important or what brings the highest value.

It is easy for us to define our roles based on what we do. Sometimes it feels good to list all of the things we do. It makes us feel important, as if the more we do, the more important we are. When hired by organizations, most of us are given job titles. These fall short in defining the high-value roles we are expected to play and often lead to the risks associated with **title-imposed roles**.

Throughout your past you have played many roles. Some of these roles energize you and made you feel strong. Such roles are a very good reflection of your strengths at work. At other times you played roles that drained you and sapped your energy. Even if these roles resulted in success or great achievements, they are roles that drew on your lesser strengths and should be avoided. Here we encourage you to prioritize your life around the high value roles you are called to play. These roles are a good fit to your strengths, and as a result they energize you and make you feel strong, fulfilled and valued.

Avoid title imposed roles

Title imposed roles are embedded risks that accompany every title. These roles are imposed on you by virtue of the needs, assumptions and expectations of others. For example, suppose you are given the title of “**TEACHER.**” The students you teach, parents, administrators, community and the Government each will have different assumptions and roles they expect you to play. Here are some of these roles: educator, disciplinarian, psychologist, provider, trainer, corrections officer, friend, counselor, empathizer, entertainer, administrator, facilitator, organizer, fundraiser, supplier. . . . Some of these roles may not be a

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good fit for your strengths. If you are to be among the minority of those who play to their strengths you must prioritize your life around the roles that best leverage your strengths.

The cure for title-imposed roles requires you to go back and with God's help prioritize the roles you play. Focus on roles that best that reflect your character and strengths.

20. Exercise: I Was Made For This

In the school of life, sometimes you experience life roles that are a perfect fit. That is the time when you shout, **"I was made for this."** Such roles are uniquely yours. No one can play these roles the way you do. **Why? Because your strengths and your talents are uniquely yours.** According to Gallup the possibility that anyone else has your same top 5 strengths in the same order is one in 33 million and the possibility that anyone else has the same top 10 strengths in the same order is one in 447 trillion.

Let me explain, Listen to a well-tuned piano. Each key has a unique sound quality. Each key has a unique role to play. Yet the best music is made when keys combine together to generate a powerful chord or support each other in creating a delightful melody. In the hands of a masterful musician the keys and strings are a wonder to behold. The same applies to your strengths placed for the right role by the hands of a masterful God. You are totally unique for a unique role in a unique time of life.

This is how Author Max Lucado describes it:

"Every so often we find ourselves riding the flow of life. Not resisting or thrashing it, but just riding it. A stronger current lifts channels and carries, daring us to declare, 'I was made for this.' Do you know the flow? Sure you do. Go back into your youth. What activity lured you off the gray sidewalk of sameness into an amusement park of sights, sound, and colors? Oh the fireworks. Every nerve ending buzzed, every brain cell sizzled; all five senses kicked in.

What were you doing? Assembling a model airplane in the garage? Helping your aunt plant seeds in the garden? Organizing games for your playground buddies? To this day you remember the details of those days; the smell of contact cement glue, the feel of moist dirt, the squeals of excited kids. Magical. The only bad moment was the final moment."³⁹

Let us consider examples of how the unique combinations of strengths used in the right time allowed people to play mighty roles. For example:

- When you take the strength of **"Belief," a need to orient one's life around a core set of values**, and combine this with the strength of **"Futuristic," a fascination with the potential of the future**, you get a visionary leader like Martin Luther King Jr., exemplified by his famous

speech, “I Have a Dream.” You see Martin Luther King Jr was made for this.

- In a different combination, when you take the **same strength** of **“Belief,” a need to orient one’s life around a core set of values**, and combine this with the strength of **“Relator,” a desire to get to know people well and build close relationships**, you get a totally different personality. You get Mother Teresa whose primary focus was on touching the lives of each needy child she met. By her touch and model she impacted the lives of thousands around the world. Yes Mother Teresa, was made for this.

“God made you *you-nique*. Secular thinking, as a whole, doesn’t buy this. Secular society sees no author behind the book, no architect behind the house, no purpose behind or beyond life. It simply says, “You can be anything you want to be.” Be a butcher if you want to, a sales rep if you like. Be an ambassador if you really care. You can be anything you want to be. But can you? If God didn’t pack within you the meat sense of a butcher, the people skills of a salesperson, or the world vision of an ambassador, can you be one? An unhappy, dissatisfied one perhaps. But a fulfilled one? No. Can an acorn become a rose, a whale fly like a bird, or lead become gold? Absolutely not. You cannot be anything you want to be. But you can be everything God wants you to be.” Max Lucado

- In another combination, when you take **the same strength** of **“Belief,” a need to orient one’s life around a core set of values**, and combine this with the strength of **“Command,” a desire to be demanding, opinionated, and not shying away from confrontation**, you get a U.S. President, Ronald Reagan, with his famous speech telling the Soviet President, “*Mr. Gorbachev, tear down the Berlin wall.*” Yes again, Ronald Reagan, was made for this.

In a similar manner we can consider Bible characters who did unique work because of their unique combinations of strengths used by God at a unique time. Some became famous, like Moses, Paul or Peter. Others were not famous but did equally great work. Think of the boy who had the two small pieces of fish and five loaves of bread. I suggest he could have shouted, “I was made for this”. How about Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus? You may think of Joseph of Arimathea who placed Christ in his own new tomb cut out of the rock.

How about you? This principle applies to you and me when we allow our unique combination of strengths to be played at the right time. You may be a

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homemaker, a plumber, a teacher, a manager... Do you recall a time when your combinations of strengths made you feel you played roles that made you think “I was made for this?” Write your answers in the following table. Be sure to give adequate descriptions and examples of your experiences as to what happened and how you felt during such event.

Strength +	Strength =	Resulting Experiences and How I Felt

Which Roles Best Describe You

In the school of life, we all face the challenges of “title imposed roles”, but we all have opportunities to play roles that make us shout, “I was made for this.” Granted, I know these are not very common but it does not mean you do not search for them and relive them again and again. When you find them or relive them they leave you energized to face the more regular or even draining roles of life.

As a steward of your God given talent you have a responsibility to take as much control of your life roles as you possibly can. Most of us have more control than we think we do. We each need to frequently stop and inventory the roles we play and make changes in search of a better fit. So let us start now.

In his excellent book, *StandOut*,⁴⁰ Marcus Buckingham groups the roles we play into nine different categories:

Advisor: You are a practical, concrete thinker who is at your most powerful when reacting to and solving other people's problems.

Connector: You are a catalyst. Your power lies in your craving to put two things together to make something bigger than it is now.

Creator: You make sense of the world, pulling it apart, seeing a better configuration, and creating it.

Equalizer: You are a level-headed person whose power comes from keeping the world in balance, ethically and practically.

Influencer: You engage people directly and convince them to act. Your power is your persuasion.

Provider: You see the world as a friendly place where, around every corner, good things will happen. Your distinctive power starts with your optimism in the face of uncertainty.

Pioneer: You sense other people's feelings, and you feel compelled to recognize these feelings, give them a voice and act on them.

Stimulator: You are the host of other people's emotions. You feel responsible for them, for turning them around, for elevating them.

Teacher: You are thrilled by the potential you see in each person. Your power comes from learning how to unleash it.

21. Exercise: Choose the Roles You Play

Focusing your roles is one of the most important challenges in defining your calling.

- Examine the above combination of roles which best describe you. If you wish, refer to a more detailed list of roles provided in the Appendix.
- For affirmation and clarification, go back and examine **your Domains of Strengths presented in the Appendix**, (Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking).
- In the table below, describe in order of priority the top five roles you would like to play. Relate each role to the most likely combination of strengths or talents that describe you.

Describe Your Prioritized Roles	Strengths / Talents

Very Important note:

Growth is God’s desire for your calling. Roles are never for a lifetime. They are never a life sentence. As you grow your roles must change. Periodically take time to examine how you are growing and what changes you need to make in your roles and responsibilities. Review this with your important people so they can support your desired change.

Classification and Grouping of Talents:

Gallup provides classification or grouping for their character strength themes. A study of these can help you understand more clearly how to leverage the combinations of your strengths and focus your roles to be most effective.

In the book *Strengths Based Leadership*,⁴¹ the Gallup team documents the results of extensive research and in-depth interviews conducted with twenty thousand very successful leaders representing more than one million work teams in all walks of life. The objective of the research was to identify common strengths that contribute to leadership success and effectiveness. While their research failed to find the common strengths, it confirmed common qualities.⁴² It confirmed that all successful leaders:

- Focus their roles and responsibilities on their top strengths.
- Invest in their top strengths by developing skills and acquiring knowledge that relates to their top strengths.
- Understand their lesser strengths or the strengths that are not in their top strengths and find ways to compensate for them.
- Engage with people with different strengths than theirs.
- Know the needs of those who follow them and empower their teams to play to their top strengths.

The research team also was able to define a new grouping of Clifton Strengths Finder® themes. They called them The Four Domains of Leadership Strengths.⁴³ They put groupings of similar strengths into a simple structure that can be very helpful. Understanding this structure will help you identify the roles you should play to be most effective. This understanding also will help you see how you can add value to others with whom you share common objectives and goals. This structure of strengths grouping can further help you have a discussion with other people and find ways to be more collaborative in reaching common goals and objectives or developing effective team memberships.

In the Appendix you will find a Gallup article *What Makes a Great Leadership Team* that describes the Four Domains of Strength and lists them in a table. Now that you know your strengths, mark your strengths in the order of priority reported by Strengths Finder. Where do you see most of your strengths? Does this give you an indication of roles you should focus on or avoid? There is a possibility that your strengths are spread over more than one domain. That is fine. The key is to learn to define where you may have a better fit.

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Types of Roles

On the stage of life there are three types of roles that are always present. During your various stages of life, you will have to play these roles with different intensities.



- **Leadership Roles:** Your success in leadership roles is based on the success of those you lead or those you support. A good example of these roles is parenting adult children. Here you may play the role of an advisor, a confidante, a sounding board, etc. Your success is measured by what they do not necessarily by what you do.
- **The Project Roles:** Here your success is based on the ability to make change happen in the areas you control. Unlike parenting adult children, the project stage is like the desire to bring a new child to life. At a period of time a couple desires to see change in their family, so they engage in a project. This project has a well-defined purpose, objective, and a time based plan. Over time they monitor progress toward reaching a well-defined goal. Some of the project roles include resource, partner, director, manager, etc.
- **Operational Roles:** Operational roles leverage consistency and repeatable patterns. This is like caring for a new borne child. These patterns have a great value to support the operational routines needed in any home or organization. Such roles may include manager, overseer, helper, etc.

God who gave you your strengths is the same God who desires for you to have fulfilling roles. Look closer and you may find some interesting relationships between the various strengths themes and these types of roles.

Our father in heaven desires to see you grow. Roles are never for a life time. How you often you change the roles you play is one of the greatest indicators of growth. As you move from one role to another you delegate the role you are leaving to others and they in turn grow through the process. This is a strong indicator of a healthy family, church or organization.

22. Exercise: Affirmed in Your Roles

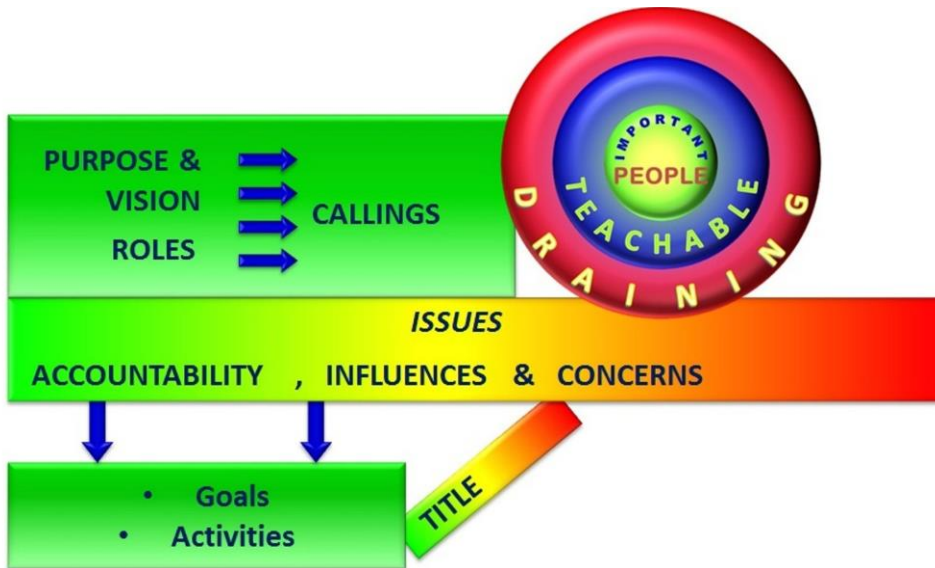
Just as in a family, by no means can we suggest that any of these roles are better or more voluble than another. It is only a matter of which type of roles are best suited for your strengths at this stage of your life.

Consider your strengths and your areas of responsibilities then compare the percentage of time you presently spend in each type of roles compared to the percentage of time you would like to spend in each type of roles.

Roles Type	Percentage of time spent		As you examine this table can you think of any actions or change you need to make in order to be better aligned with your strengths?
	At Present	Desired	
Leadership Roles	%	%	
Project Roles	%	%	
Operational Roles	%	%	

Again, please allow us to repeat this very important note. Growth is God’s purpose for your callings. Roles are never for a lifetime. They are never a life sentence. As you grow your roles must change. Periodically take time to examine how you are growing and what changes you need to make in your roles and responsibilities. Review this with your important people so they can support your desired change.

D. AFFIRM YOUR CALLINGS



Your life objective is to find callings where you can partner with God and others to be most effective in fulfilling your life purpose. Your roles become your callings through the affirmation of God and others. Our Heavenly Father is not looking for perfection. Neither should you. He delights when you make good choices, the best choices possible so you can grow and develop to your greatest potential. In this you also will bring the greatest return on the talents and strengths He has entrusted into your care.

In the following pages, our objective is to give you a framework and a process by which you are affirmed in your life callings. A structure to help you prioritize the many callings you find on life pathways. This framework is adaptable to your changing world and can help you respond to God’s greatest need in your world.

This framework is transferable to your personal life, work life, family life, community life or even your political life. This framework is a thinking process. The exercises and the templates are thinking and communication tools. They seek to help you “see” your thoughts and clearly communicate them to others.

This framework will help you validate and affirm your roles using two critical parts:

- **The people** you interact, collaborate, and deal with in fulfilling your roles are your value exchange partners. You add value to their lives, and they add value to yours as you collaborate with them or as you serve them. Credible

relationships are a most valuable asset. You are encouraged to inventory and prioritize the people with whom you can collaborate.

- **The issues** that capture your passion serve as opportunities towards fulfilling your roles and living out your calling. Here we hope you will learn to focus on where you are accountable and what you can influence greatly.

People Affirm Your Callings

Your callings are defined by the impact you have on the people you interact with and how they impact you. We have been taught that all people are equal. Yes, all people are equal under the law, and all people are equal when it comes to death and taxes. But not all people are equally important or have the same status when it comes to prioritizing how and where you invest your time, energy, and God-given talents. Your time and energy are finite resources; you need to invest them where you can deliver the highest value and have the maximum impact for good.



Important, Teachable, and Draining People

In his thought-provoking book, *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion*,⁴⁴ Dr. Gordon MacDonald suggests that in our lives we interact with **different types of people**.

The People diagram shows three circles, illustrating three different groups of people in your life:

- **The Important People** are your circle of accountability. The important people are those who share elements of accountability for common goals and objectives. They understand your strengths, and see how you can complement their strengths. These are the people who help you define the roles you play and who are critical to achieving your goals. With the important people you play the roles of partners, collaborators, and stakeholders. Your important people often empower you to play your roles by lending their authority, talent or resources.

It was said wisely, “Who you know is more important than what you know.”⁴⁵ Your ability to collaborate with the right people is critical for achieving the objectives of your calling.

Without important people who empower you, collaborate and support your dreams and objectives you have no callings.

Without teachable people who benefit from your dreams and objectives you have no callings.

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- **The Teachable People** are in your circle of Influence. The teachable people are the beneficiaries of your life callings; they draw on your strengths as you play your roles into their lives. They may be influenced by your character and/or your attitudes. They may admire your behavior and your life values. They may consider you a model in certain aspects of life. Teachable people are in your circle of influence as you play the role of resource, mentor, coach or vital link to their life needs.

One very simple way to help you identify your teachable people is the energy exchanged as you invest time with them. After meeting with your teachable people you feel energized and fulfilled.

- **Draining People. Draining people are not bad people.** They simply are people who do not fit in the first two categories, important and teachable. Draining people are people for whom you may have a great deal of concerns, but they have needs that are outside your key areas of strengths. Their needs require you to draw upon your lesser strengths or lead you to use your strengths in the wrong way. This is very draining for you and even can be harmful to them as well.

Allow me to share personal examples. Empathy is not one of my top strengths. My wife may suggest that it is one of my lowest strengths. Achiever and Activator are among my top strengths. At this stage in my life I have several family members who have health and age related issues that the achiever in me cannot fix. What my loved family members need is empathy, which I do not have as much of as some people do. Giving empathy is very draining to me.

Out of sense of responsibility, I often try to help with my achiever and activator strengths. As a result I miscommunicate, I offer advice, and I propose solutions and even may act impatiently. This is frustrating and even may cause relational damage that is not helpful.

While your draining people may be of great concern to you, draining people often do not fit in your life roles because they bring issues beyond your scope of control or even your sphere of influence. They may come to your life at a point where becoming involved in their issues or concerns may compromise prior life objectives or commitments.

People's concerns that you cannot impact by your strengths are very draining. They often leave you feeling guilty and "not good enough." If you focus on them you run the risk of compromising your calling.

In dealing with draining people you need to avoid them, reduce or control your exposure to their draining needs and behavior or remove yourself from their

If your life is consumed with draining people, you will have no time for your important people and lose your impact on your teachable people.

life circumstances. Most importantly, pray that God will send the right resources to meet their needs.

We often are asked, can an important or teachable person become draining? And the answer is yes. Even your important and teachable people may exhibit draining behaviors. When this happens, for the good of all concerned, you have to confront draining attitudes and behaviour. In his book, *Caring Enough to Confront*, David W. Augsburger points out that the primary motivation for confrontation is that you value and desire to protect an important relationship.⁴⁶ It is out of loving concern for the person that you need to confront draining behaviour. If done wisely, you may win an important or a teachable person.

23. Exercise: Affirming Relationships

Reflect back on your dreams, objectives and roles then consider the value exchange opportunities that may come to your mind.

- List the people you seem to like or admire and wish you could collaborate with. These are your important people
- List individuals or groups of people who can benefit from your dreams, roles and objectives. These are your teachable people.

People Names	What I need to do to enhance our relationship
Important	
Teachable	

24. Exercise: Issues Affirm Your Callings

On the stage of life, your callings often are defined by the issues that capture your imagination and where you chose to invest your strengths. As you collaborate with your important people and serve your teachable people, the issues you choose become opportunities for you to play your roles with excellence. You will find that the issues that attract your attention may relate, not only to your talents, but also to your skills and knowledge.

Whether it is in your personal life, family life, work, community or the world at large you will confront issues that call for your attention. Open a newspaper; watch TV or surf the web and you find needs and opportunities that call for your help. Below is a list of suggested issues. Which of these issues do you think are a better match to your strengths?

- Abortion
- Arts
- Disasters
- Environment
- Finances
- Hunger
- Money
- People Groups
- Security
- Sports
- Water
- Abuse
- Children
- Disease
- Ethics
- Fitness
- Immigrants
- Multiculturalism
- Persecution
- Security
- Technology
- Youth
- Addiction
- Corruption
- Divorce
- Faith
- Health
- Leadership
- Old age
- Politics
- Slavery
- Travel
- Add more
- Administration
- Crime
- Education
- Family Life
- Homelessness
- Marriage
- Parenting
- Refugees
- Spirituality
- War
- Add more

Your heavenly Father is at work in all the issues listed above. He is inviting you to join him. Select 3 where you wish you can make a positive contribution and explain your thoughts and feelings.

Issues	Thoughts and Feelings

Scope of Accountably



Dr. Stephen R. Covey and his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, highlights that with every issue there are three subsections or sub-issues. Dr. Covey calls them the scope of accountability, influence and concerns. The attached diagram illustrates these sub-issues. As we discuss them we hope you can see how they relate to your strengths, your people, and how they serve to validate your callings.

- **The Scope of Accountability** includes issues or sub-issues for which you are accountable. These are areas where you hold the primary responsibility, and where you are committed to act and deliver your best results. This is the area of responsibility where your goals are least impacted by what others can or cannot do. Remember, you cannot be responsible or accountable for what you do not control. Focusing on your scope of accountability, you may play the role of owner, resource, director, problem solver, planner . . . In the scope of accountability you may meet many of your important people.
- **The Scope of Influence** includes issues where you are able to influence others as they play their roles and fulfill their commitments in their own scope of accountability. These may be issues where others collaborate with you. It also may include issues or parts of projects that you have delegated to others. Here you may play the role of a coach, advisor, overseer, advocate, etc. In the scope of influence you may meet many of your teachable people.
- **The Scope of Concerns** includes issues where you may have great concern or interest but have very little control or influence. These issues never can be part of your scope of accountability because you exercise very little or have no control over them. These are issues where the investment of your time and strengths is likely to generate little or no positive return. While these issues may have limited negative impact on your dreams and vision, investing your time in them will take you away from where you can deliver maximum value. Here you may play the role of an observer or bystander. If at all possible you need to delegate these issues to others who are better equipped to deal with them or influence those who can deal with them. In the scope of concerns you may meet many of your draining people.

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As you develop your objectives and life plans it is important that your goals be focused on your scope of accountability, leverage your scope of influence and include contingencies for your scope of concerns.

Example from parenting: We love our Grandchildren dearly. In our roles we are not accountable for parenting them. We are accountable to be good models of hope, faith and love when they are in our home. We are accountable to maintaining good supporting relationships with their parents; in good positive relationship we can be of good influence providing wise advice if and when we are asked. With growing violence in our community and bullying in the schools as well as decaying social standards, we have a lot of concerns for our grandchildren's future, but there is very little we can do about those concerns. If we focus on our concerns, we are likely to lose our influence, and have no time or energy to focus on the areas where we are most accountable.

Unless you define what you are accountable for, you have no calling.

- In the scope of accountability you are likely to meet your important people
- In the scope of influence you are likely to meet your teachable people
- In the scope of concerns you are likely to meet your draining people

25. Exercise: Issues Focus Your Roles

Question: As you consider the roles you can play to fulfill your dreams and visions, what are some issues that you are likely to encounter? List these issues indicating if they are part of your scope of accountability, influence or concerns.

Issues	Scope of Accountability	Scope of Influence	Scope of Concerns

Affirmed by Your Spiritual Gifts

God who gave you your strengths is the same God who gave your spiritual gifts. It is only natural that they both work in harmony supporting one another. Understanding the relationship between spiritual gifts and your strengths is a wonderful affirmation exercise. In other words, since we refer to talents as God-given gifts, you need to see strengths interrelating to spiritual gifts in supporting the roles you play in the Kingdom of God.

For a long time the topic of spiritual gifts has been a subject of much discussion and even controversy in some churches. We certainly do not wish for this Workshop to contribute to this theological debate. So we will seek to keep our discussion at the simplest level possible.

The writings of the Apostle Paul often are used in discussing spiritual gifts. Reading Paul's letters we see that he highlights differing views or interpretations of spiritual gifts.

“Let’s just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren’t. If you preach, just preach God’s Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate; if you’re called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don’t let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.”⁴⁷

“God’s various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it

all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful: wise counsel clear understanding simple trust healing the sick miraculous acts proclamation distinguishing between spirits tongues interpretation of tongues. All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.”⁴⁸

Through your spiritual gifts you are called to apply to your God-given strengths in roles to fulfill His purpose in this world.

This supports the fact that there is no one simple description for what we often call spiritual gifts. At the same time Paul is consistent in highlighting personal responsibility for using what God has given each of us to reach one common goal, the glory of Christ.

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Christ, on the other hand, never preached about spiritual gifts but He gave more attention to talents, stewardship and accountability. In Matthew 25 and 28 He teaches that each one is accountable to fulfill the Great Commission by using the unique talents He has given in a variety of fields or forms.

The authors of *living your strength* suggest that “*these Spiritual Gifts, then, perhaps more accurately can be called ministry areas of calling.*”⁴⁹ It is through your spiritual gifts that you are called to apply to your God-given strengths in roles to fulfill His desire in this world. Therefore, you can think of your spiritual gifts as the domain in which you exercise your talents. It is the game you are called to learn and play. It is the playing field where you are to establish your roles and goals. It is where you are to deliver the expected measurable return on the talents God entrusted into your care. For simple illustrations, let us consider three examples:

- **From the sports world**, if you are passionate about the game of baseball, depending on your strengths there are many roles you can play in this game. You may be a pitcher, catcher, manager, coach, umpire or even a passionate fan of the game.
- **From the early church**, there are records of many evangelists. When you think of those with the gift of evangelism, you probably think of people like Peter and Paul. But maybe you can think of the woman at the well. Also you may recall Stephen with his character and conduct. With few words asking, “*Lord, do not hold this sin against them,*”⁵⁰ he must have had a great impact on Saul of Tarsus who stood witnessing his death. Another example is the wise words Saint Francis of Assisi said that, “*you should always preach the gospel and if you must, use words.*”
- **From our personal family life**, both my wife and I have the spiritual gifts of hospitality. When we have guests, for my wife with her strength of responsibility, she feels responsible to clean the house, bake something fresh, and so on. For me with my strength of achiever, I need to know the purpose of the visit, when the guests are coming and what time they will leave. Our son on the other hand has connectedness as his strength. For him it is most important to have as many people as possible and not to exclude any one.

26. Exercise: Affirm Your Spiritual Gifts

If you have not yet discovered your spiritual gifts, there are several free web tools and surveys that can help you. See <http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com/>. In your own words, provide a brief description of each gift.

In the table below briefly describe your spiritual gifts and how it interrelates with any of your strengths themes

Spiritual Gifts Description	Interrelationship to Strengths

Reward Your Callings

The same God who gave you your strengths gave you a desire to feel valued and appreciated. As you live your calling you will be affirmed by the rewards you received for investing your strengths.

Rewards are part of God's management system. We know that there is a Heaven and a Hell. The parable of the talents⁵¹ talks about the rewards for those who invest their talents (strengths) well. In Luke we read "*the worker deserves his wages.*"⁵² Giving fair and just rewards for work well-done is not only biblical but also part of any civilized society.

In defining work and rewards, we often use the wrong set of measurements. We define work as anything that provides direct financial compensation. Everything else is volunteering and does not deserve any rewards. Even in a church, paid staff members are ranked differently from unpaid labourers. Unpaid others are expected to work for no compensation at all. After all, we hope God is watching, and He will reward them.

It is your responsibility to communicate your expected rewards to the important people in your life.

I suggest that this is the wrong view. God does not play favourites. Paul instructs us that "*a worker deserves His pay.*"⁵³ God desires that all His children feel valued as they serve in His kingdom. He also desires to care for His children by meeting their financial needs for healthy living.

In God's economy, there is no separation between secular and sacred work. Whether you work in an office or preach from a pulpit, in God's eyes you are a co-labourer with His son Jesus Christ. God's compensation system covers all aspects of your daily life. For some, financial compensation comes from work outside the church while for others it comes from the "storehouse of God." In some cases it can be a mix of both places. Effective organizational leaders ensure that the needs of its people are well taken care of financially.

Compensation models are created to fairly reward and motivate. The rewards come in tangible, including financial, and non-tangible or emotional ones. What kind of rewards should you expect for wisely investing your strengths? We cannot ignore financial compensation. It is essential to meeting our earthly needs. At the same time extensive research supports the fact that once our basic needs are met emotional and non-tangible rewards play a much more significant part in motivating and energizing our work and personal life.

As you find your callings and engage your strengths, it is wise to understand and communicate how you like to be compensated, rewarded and/or motivated. Indeed it is your responsibility to communicate your expected compensation to the important people in your life. They never will know it unless you tell them.

What is your Currency?

In addition to financial rewards psychologists suggest that each of us have an **emotional bank account**. The demands of life make withdrawals from your emotional bank account. Deposits into your emotional bank accounts are made by those who are important to you and me. Those who are close to you have a unique ability to energize you and build you up emotionally.

In his bestselling book, *The Five Love Languages*,⁵⁴ Gary Chapman deals with this concept of filling our emotional bank accounts. Deposits into your emotional bank account come in the form of receiving love. He suggests that using the right love language is the best tool for that currency exchange. Chapman suggests that there are five love languages and within each language there are differing dialects.

We each have a native language. Most often, this is the language that we best understand. This is the language which we feel most comfortable with when communicating love and support. This is the language we most likely will use in giving respect, and appreciation to others. It also is the language that we prefer when filling our emotional bank accounts.

The following is a brief description of each of these languages:

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Leo Buscaglia

- **Words of Affirmation:** Actions don't always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, “I love you,” is important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten. You thrive on hearing kind and encouraging words that build you up.
- **Physical Touch:** A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, and thoughtful touches on the arm—they all can be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive. Appropriate and timely touches communicate warmth, safety, and love to you.
- **Quality Time:** In Quality Time, nothing says “I love you” like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes you feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed activities, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful. Whether it is

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spending uninterrupted time talking with someone else or doing activities together, you deepen your connection with others through sharing time.

- **Acts of Service:** Can helping with homework really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an “Acts of Service” person will speak volumes. The words he or she most wants to hear: “Let me do that for you.” Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don’t matter. When others serve you out of love (and not obligation), you feel truly valued and loved.
- **Receiving Gifts:** Don’t mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures. Gifts are heartfelt symbols to you of someone else’s love and affection for you.

God who created your strengths is the same God who created your emotional bank account. It is fascinating to see the interplay between strengths and love languages. In discussing this with my family it was interesting to note that:

- My first strength is Achiever. I like to get things accomplished and feel good to see things done. My first love language is words of affirmation.
- My wife’s strength is responsibility. Her love language is acts of service
- Our son Noel has the strengths of WOO and Connectedness. His love language is quality time.

Living your callings often involves working relationships with others. In this it is important to realize that you have some responsibility for the needs and emotional bank accounts of those you collaborate with. As you collaborate with others it is critical that you do not only communicate your own needs but also understand and have some responsibility in meeting the reward needs of those you collaborate with.

27. Exercise: Define Your Love Language

To most of us the greatest need is not to have more cash in our bank accounts but to replenish the deficit in our emotional tanks. If you do not know your Love Language take this short survey at <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/>. Enter your Love Language Scores in the table below.

Acts of Service		Physical Touch		Quality Time	
Receiving Gifts		Words of Affirmation			

Communicate your love language

Write any impressions or observations about your love languages

What do you need to do to communicate your love language to your important people?

E. LIVE YOUR CALLINGS

This is where the rubber hits the road. Fulfilling your calling is where things happen, actions are taken and results achieved. This is where you long to hear the voice of your heavenly father say well done good and faithful servant.

Joe, not his real name, was a man of great talents. He was raised in a very wealthy home. Went to the best of schools and earned a degree from a well-known university. He followed that with a master's degree that could have earned him a very good job with lots of potential.

Joe was a man of great ideas, visions and dreams. He often talked about doing great things for God. He loved kids and had hopes for a family with many kids of his own. He always talked of his life objectives and what he would accomplish in his life. Yes, with his family background he had access to a lot of bright and influential people. But that is about as far as Joe's life went.

Now Joe is almost 60 years old, he never held a job for longer than a few months. His dreams caused him to spin from one disappointment to another. His disappointments were often caused by his constant dreaming.

You see Joe lived most of his life in the shadow side of his strengths and never had goals to pull him out of the traps created by his lesser strengths.

The Power of SMART Goals

Objectives are the forerunners of goal-setting. While objectives can have less detail, goals must be more specific and clear. Goals are stepping stones to the realization of objectives. In their excellent book *Strategy for Living*, Ted Engstrom and Richard Dayton state that, "Goals have the power to change you as they motivate and keep you focused."⁵⁵ Someone has suggested that we all have goals. Some are clear goals; others are fuzzy goals. Some are good goals and some are foolish goals. Regretfully, many seldom achieve their goals for one simple reason – their goals are not **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed-upon, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-dependent.

A calling without goals is no calling at all.

Specific: Goals need to be specific. In sports, a goal is a very clearly marked point. A specific goal is one that can be verified by one of the five senses or can be confirmed by scientific measurements.

Measurable: Socrates wrote that, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” Your goals are tools to help you examine, evaluate, and measure your progress towards maximum impact for good. Having measurable goals allows you to gauge your progress towards reaching them. Measurable goals are SMART goals because they help you make appropriate and timely changes to your action plans when necessary. The more specific the goals the more measurable they will be and the greater their likelihood of success.

Agreed-upon: Before you embark on any goal, you must be sure that your goal is agreed upon by those who have an important stake in it or play a role in achieving it. The support you receive will bring along with it an element of healthy accountability that will keep you motivated and encourage you when you are tempted to give up.

Realistic: A common mistake encountered by most of us is that we underestimate the effort and the investment required towards achieving our goals. One principle that you may find helpful is to “aim high and goal low.” It is good to set high and lofty visions or objectives, but it is wise to set realistic goals and tasks. Setting realistic goals that can be achieved will encourage you as you progress to higher-value goals and activities. Realistic goals harness the expectations of others and set you up for the possibility of over-achievement.

Time-dependent: Like any drama on a stage a SMART goal has a starting and ending point. Goals with endless timelines lead to frustration and apathy. Time-dependent goals are SMART goals because they help you avoid the natural temptation to procrastinate.

The shorter the timeline, the smarter the goal and the greater the likelihood of success.

Callings without goals are no callings at all. Goals reflect your life commitment and direct your life priorities. Goals energize you and reflect your progress. Once you define your strengths and your roles it is critical that you articulate specific goals that help you prioritize your activities and track your progress.

While roles define what you are expected to be, goals define, focus, and direct what you are expected to do. Living without goals leads to an aimless life. The old saying is true: “If you aim at nothing, you will surely get there.” Accepting a role without defining clear objectives and goals leads to unrealistic expectations of yourself and others. This often results in disappointments and/or overloaded lives. Unless you actively take ownership or at least participate in developing your objectives and goals, others will assume them for you.

28. Exercise: Goals Reveal Your Roles

- Are you ready to create SMART goals:
 - Carefully examine your prioritized objectives and issues. In which of these are you likely to create SMART goals? To be most successful start with a few issues.
 - Discuss your selected issues with the people with whom you need to collaborate. Make sure they are fully committed partners with you in achieving your SMART goals.
 - In the table below list your most important SMART goals in order of priority.
 - Define the term for each goal. That is the target completion date. As much as possible, use short terms. I always prefer terms of three months or less. If a goal requires more than three months break it down into several independent goals.

Prioritized Goals list	Term

The Jar of Life

At the beginning of every week you and I are given a fresh jar of life; a jar of time. Rich or poor, educated or not, we all are given the same size jar. The giver of time holds no restriction on how you and I use this jar. You are entrusted with what you will allow into this jar. Whatever goes into this jar cannot come out. Once the space within this jar is taken it cannot be reclaimed or reused.

This story has been told often, and the original author is unknown. Here I share it as it has applied to my life journey.



A famous management professor was invited to speak on the topic of “Effective Life Management” to a gathering of highly successful leaders. These distinguished leaders were anticipating pearls of insight and wisdom from the distinguished professor. Standing before them the professor said, “We are going to conduct a simple experiment with a jar, a few rocks, and a bag of pebbles and sand.”

From under the table the professor picked up a simple empty jar. “This jar represents a week of your life. It is your privilege to fill it to the top and live it to the full. I want each of you to do that for every week of your life.”

The professor then took a bag of sand and pebbles and poured them into the jar. The sand and pebbles are the daily demands that fill your average day. With urgency they fall through your fingers unnoticed. Small things that you often cannot control. They take a good part of your jar and fill your weeks with all the to-do’s that you have to do.

Asking one of the executives to help, the professor presented him with a bag of rocks. Some were the size of a golf ball and a few the size of a tennis ball. These balls represent the parts of your life that are important but seldom urgent such as your health, family, planning, friends, and some very important projects. Your job is to fit these into the jar.

This high powered executive tried but failed to fit the rocks in the jar. “There is no room in the jar for all these rocks!” he exclaimed. Helplessly, he said, “This is impossible.” The professor stepped in to help.

“Let us start all over,” the professor said as he placed the rocks back on the table, and the sand and pebbles back in their bag.

Instructing his helper the professor said, “Please put the rocks in the jar.” So he did. Gently the professor started to pour the sand and pebbles into the jar. Shaking it occasionally the professor said, “Always put the important things of life first in the jar and let the rest filter where there is room.”

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As the sand and pebbles filtered between the rocks the professor smiled and said that this is the way you manage life effectively.

As I coach clients I often ask them to place the critical areas of life in order of priority. Areas of your life that you deem most important may include children, personal health, spiritual life, spouse and work life, etc.

As they struggle with this issue I introduce a life principle that has impacted my wife and me for a very long time. The principle states, **“Always prioritize on permanence.”** Whatever has longer longevity should be placed at a higher priority. How this works:

1. Your spiritual life will last through eternity. It deserves first priority
2. Your health and wellbeing lasts with you until they put you in a box. It is out of that; you can support your spouse and children
3. Your spouse is with you until they put one of you in a box. Out of the strengths of your relationship that you can provide what your children need the most.
4. Your plan for your children’s development is towards moving them into independent lives as soon as possible
5. Your work, in a fast changing world, is here today and may not be her tomorrow

These are the big rocks of life. Put in the jar first and in this order of priority.

Summary: What we are dealing with here is taking control of your life. There are only two things in life that you can control fully. How you spend your money and how you spend your time. We all know the importance of planning how you spend your money. Budgeting is the most important part of financial wellbeing. Here we would like to help you exercise how you budget your time.

Most of us do not struggle with choosing between good and bad. Our real challenge is in choosing between good and best.

That is what we call wisdom.

29. Exercise: Time Inventory

Every week we are each given a fresh supply of 168 hours (7X24). The following lists key categories where you are most inclined to spend the majority of your time:

1. **Personal Development** including sleep, physical, and mental care is a significant part of a balanced and fulfilling life.
2. **Spiritual Life** including time spent in spiritual exercises and biblical disciplines is critical to the present life and the next.

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- 3. Family and Friends** provide a place for reciprocal relationships that bring encouragement, emotional restoration, and support.
- 4. Community Service** is the place where you invest your time and talents without expecting any reward or compensation. Small or large, local or global, you are part of community.
- 5. Work Life** is the place where you are most likely to get rewarded and compensated for the use of your time and talents. Here you need to include the time you spend at work as well as the time you spend commuting to and from work.

Exercise: Each of us is accountable for how we spend our time. In the table below estimate the percentage of time you invest in each area in an average week. If you desire change, indicate the desired percentage change.

Note:

- **Do not be overly analytical.**
- The total of all of these columns need not be 100%. As a general rule **you MUST** have some slack so you can respond to life's uncertainties.

%	Personal Development	Spiritual Development	Family/ Friends	Community Service	Work Life/ Commuting
Present	%	%	%	%	%
Desired	%	%	%	%	%

30. Exercise: The Big Rocks of Life

The following page illustrates a simple Week-at-a-Glance time planner. Make your own or download one from our website for free. <http://www.integrity-plus.com/wp/tools/lys/>

At the start of every week:

- Make a list of the big rocks in your life.
- Decide how much time should be dedicated to each of these rocks including activities to fulfill your goals. Place these in blocks of time in the weekly outline.
- As the demands of life progress create a simple to-do list as illustrated on the page that follows. Begin to insert your to-do's, meetings, phone calls, shopping, and other demands into the remaining space.
- Commit not to change the priority of the important in favor of the urgent.

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	My Week Planner						Week of	Jan XX-1X	
2	Time Block & Big Rocks						Fri	Sat	Sun
3	Personal/	Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fitness	Fitness	Fitness
4	Spiritual	6.00	Fitness	Fitness	Fitness	Fitness	Fitness	Fitness	Fitness
5	Physical	30	Pray & Reading	Pray & Reading	Pray & Reading	Pray & Reading	Pray & Reading	Pray & Reading	Pray & Reading
6	Mental	7.00							
7	Family & Friends	30							
8	Family 1	8.00	e-Mail	e-Mail	e-Mail	e-Mail	e-Mail	e-Mail	
9	Family 2	30	Weekly Planning						
10	Business	9.00							
11	Leadership	30	Expenses	Admin	Billing / AR	Ministry Plan	Team		
12	Adam	10.00	Adam					Home & Yard	Worship
13	Eve	30	Eve						
14	Kam	11.00							
15	Team 1	30	Kam						
16		12.00							
17		30							
18	Projects	1.00	Team	New Book	Admin	Mission Trip	Adam		
19	Ministry Plan	30							
20	Office Renovation	2.00							
21	Mission Trip	30	Office Reno						
22	New Book	3.00							
23		30							
24		4.00							
25		30							
26	Operation	5.00							
27	e-Mail	30	Fitness Gym						
28	Visitation	6.00	Family dinner						
29	Expenses	30							
30	Administration	7.00							
31		30							
32	Service	8.00	Volunteering						
33	Task 1	30	Task 1						
34	Task 1	9.00		Reading					
		30							

The Power of Low Lying Fruits

What next? Are you prepared to make the needed change to start living your strengths? Start with the low lying fruits.

Regretfully, often, after taking such training two things often happen:

- Many people put aside their commitments. Learning becomes stale and overtime forgotten. Remember, this workshop was a walk through the gym. Here we introduced you to some of the exercises that will help you discover your strength so you can live your calling.
- Others try to be overly ambitious and seek to tackle some of life great challenges. Here you bite on much more than you can chew. Things do not work well. You become frustrated and give up.



We advise you to start with simple easy to achieve exercise. These we call the low lying fruits. Tackling these will energize you and help you as you seek to reach for more ambitious life changes. The following examples will help you see that low lying fruits are readily available in almost all aspects of your life.

In Marriage: Nothing can energize a marriage as much as discovering the strengths of our spouses and affirming them in who they are. Marriage is the place where we are supposed to compliment and support each other. It is often said that “in courtship opposites attract” This should continue long after the honeymoon. Review the Strengths Overview provided in the Appendix. From that view find adjectives that describe your spouse. Start discovering ways how you can support your spouse in developing his or her God-given talents. I can assure you it will do wonders for long-term relationships.

In Parenting: A study by Dr. Elizabeth Hurlock found that students who received praise for correct answers had a 71% improvement in following test scores. Children who were criticized and corrected for their mistakes experienced only a 19% improvement.

At home reject the culture of the “not good enough” world. As you did with your spouse, take time to study the strengths overview provided in the Appendix. Seek for ways to affirm the young ones entrusted to your care.

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For Children ages 10 – 14 consider investing in Strengths Explorer. For young adults 18 - 24 encourage them to try StrengthsQuest. This could be the best investments of their lives.

At Work: Create your Strengths Profile card. Update your work resume at least once a year. Now that you know your strengths keep you antenna open to opportunities where you can volunteer for extra roles where your strength will shine. Seek change whenever possible. Read the book *What Color is Your Parachute*. Always find a way to stretch you and help you grow. Remember, your work world is always changing. If you are not growing there is a very strong chance you will be left behind. I recommend to my clients to spend 10% of your time developing knowledge and skill needed for your next job.

In the Church: The church should be a safe incubator to take risks to help you develop your strength. Pastor Bill Hybel is famous for saying that “*the local Church is the hope of the world.*” Look for opportunities; propose ministry initiatives. With the support of your ministry leaders you will shine the love of Christ into your corner of the world.

Remember the Church is the body of Christ. Take time to know your fellow members. Look for ways to affirm each other. Find ways to help you collaborate together and support each other in short ministry or local mission projects or in lands far away.

To make the change and start living your callings, start with the low lying fruits,

31. Exercise: Enjoy Low Lying Fruits

Prayerfully ask God to show you some low lying fruits. As an opportunity comes to your mind:

- Describe the opportunity
- List what you intend to do about it and
- When you will take appropriate actions.

Low Lying Fruit	What I will do	Target date

Once you have made that commitment create a task list of what and when you will do what you said you will do

Sample Task List	Due Date	
	Start	End
Goals - Tasks and Sub Tasks		

The Greatest of All

"What the World Needs Now Is Love" was a 1965 popular song with lyrics by Hal David and music composed by Burt Bacharach. It first was recorded and made popular by Jackie DeShannon. Since then many artists have tried to influence their fans with the need to focus on love as the solution to all of our problems.

Almost 2,000 years before that Jesus Christ said to His disciples, *"Let me give you a new command: love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another."*³⁵ *This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.*"⁵⁶

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

1 Corinthians 13

First Corinthians Chapter 13 may be the most quoted Bible passage about love. When we read chapter 13 in its context we note that God places chapter 13 between chapter 12 and chapter 14. These two chapters are focused not on love but on Spiritual Gifts. For this reason Dr. Charles Price in one of his T.V. broadcasts says that Chapter 13 of *"First Corinthians really is about Spiritual Gifts."* You see God intended to help us see that his instructions about love are a description of how we apply and use our spiritual gifts.

Indeed, love must be the most important filter that directs our callings. Regardless of what strengths I have, what skill, knowledge or passions may motivate me. Regardless of what rewards I may seek after. If I am not able to demonstrate and act in love, I HAVE NO CALLING.

Please allow me to make a confession. I have the strength of achiever. I like to get things done. I also am an activator; with this I like to get things done quickly. In the process of using my strengths I often run the risk of not being kind or patient. This is something I struggle with and in many cases may lead me away from roles and responsibilities where these qualities are compromised.

The greatest passions for many great callings have sometimes ended in disastrous results because the love filter was not applied.

32. Exercise: Apply the Love Filter

Written in a qualitative, descriptive manner Paul's words are a very helpful tool in the application of the love filter. While the love filter can be applied against all other filters, it is best applied at the activities level. As you examine the activities list or the tasks assigned in your calendar it is good to ask two simple questions:

Where am I likely to see evidence of these love qualities?

Where is there a risk of violating this filter by being unloving?

Stewards Coach

Walk into a gym and along with all the equipment provided you will be offered professional coaching. Most people do not need professional coaching but welcome the advice of friends or those who have gone one step ahead of them. Having a genuine and supportive relationship is one of the most widely used coaching resources. You see it in friends going to the gym together and buddies committing to support each other in a running plan. The same principles apply to living your strengths.

Living your callings coaching comes from a verity of sources and in multitudes of formats and resources. By reading this book or taking this Workshop you already are ahead of most people in understanding and applying strengths. Do not hesitate to be a coach to someone else. Simply sharing some of what you have learned will encourage others, but most importantly, it will affirm you in your learning experience.

33. Exercise: Ready to Coach

Prayerfully ask God to bring to your mind two people who can benefit from what you have learned during this workshop. Commit to meet with them and share what you have learned.

I Commit to share what I have learned with:

I Commit to share what I have learned with:

Note: We like to encourage you to go deeper in understanding and applying some of the fundamentals of coaching. Coaching need not be complicated. For this reason in the Appendix we provided some thoughts and tools that we use in coaching others.

34. Exercise: Stewardship

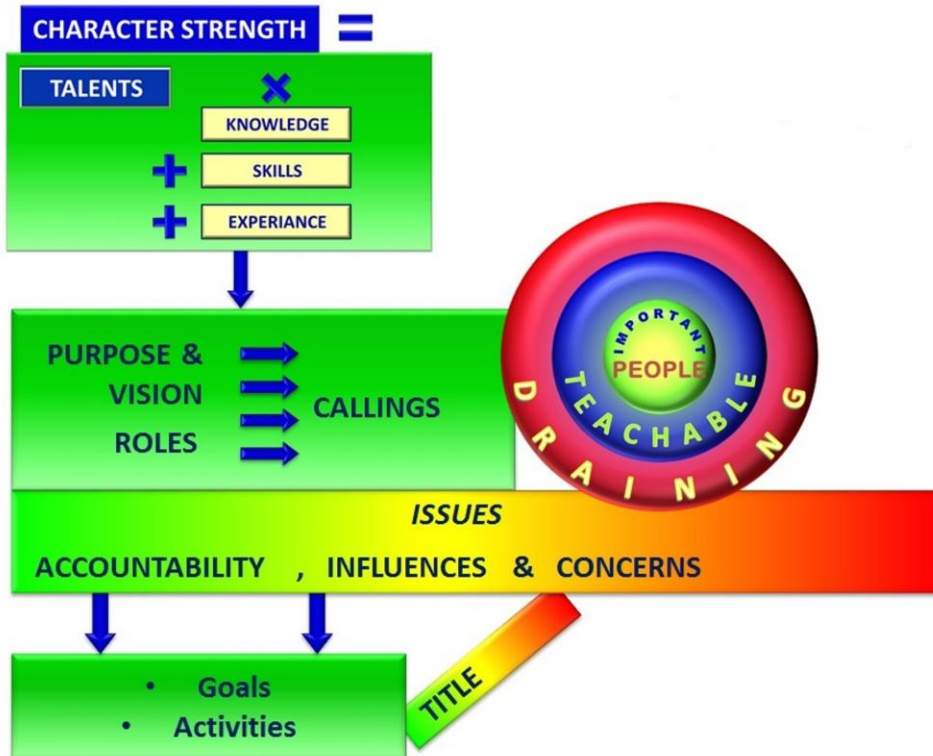
You are a steward of the callings and the learning you are given. A good steward takes great care to apply what he or she has learned.

- Take time to review what you have learned about callings
- List what impressed you the most and
- How you can apply what your have learned over the coming eight weeks

The best I learned	How I will apply it.

If you want to be a master of an art coach it. Think of two people you care about who can benefit from something you learned. Commit to sharing what you have learned. This will not only help them but will affirm your learning experience.

35. Exercise: Steps to Living Your Callings



In this exercise you will try to practice putting what you learned into seven simple steps that you can repeat over and over again. Each frame in the following illustration represents exercises that you will undertake to move you closer to living your strengths. While you will be tempted to use complicated or difficult challenges we ask you to keep it as simple as you can.

For each topic or frame use blank sheets of paper to brainstorm and capture your thoughts as you answer the exercise questions. Once done, summarize your thoughts in the space provided after each question or group of questions. If it helps you download the a set of blank templates from our web site at <http://nomoreoverload.com/lys/notes/Templates.docx>

MAX LUCADO WRITES LIVE YOUR LIFE

“God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.” *Philippians 4.9* Msg

“The Unseen Conductor prompts this orchestra we call living. When gifted teachers aid struggling students and skilled managers disentangle bureaucratic knots, when dog lovers love dogs and number crunchers zero balance the account, when you and I do the most what we do the best for the glory of God, we are ‘marvelously functioning parts in Christ’s body’ (Rom. 12:5 MSG). You play no small part, because there is no small part to be played. ‘All of you together are Christ’s body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it’ (1 Cor. 12:27 NLT). ‘Separate’ and ‘necessary.’ Unique and essential. No one else has been given your lines. . . . The Author of the human drama entrusted your part to you alone. Live your life, or it won’t be lived. We need you to be you. You need you to be you.”¹

I. Focusing Your Strengths

Choose your favourite strengths and then answer the following questions and create a **Strengths Profile Card**:

- What are the best adjectives that describe your talents? (**I am...**)
- What are your favourite or most relevant knowledge and skills? (**I Bring...**)
- What are the most relevant experiences? **I did**
- What are the risks of the shadow of your strengths? (**I fear ...**)

Strengths	Talents Adjectives I am ...	Knowledge Skills I bring ...	Experience I did...	Shadow I fear ...
Strength 1				

2. Focusing Your Roles

You are standing on the stage of your personal life, work life, community life, etc. Which one area represents the greatest need, desires the greatest change? Dream! Dream of the change you can see.

Describe that dream. What thoughts come to your mind that make you think **“I wish I could....”**?

Your roles are your callings. Stand on that stage of life with that dream in mind. Examine the satisfying roles you have played in your past life. If you need to, refer to the roles and skills list in the Appendix, then:

Select only your most preferred role and answer the following:

What do you call this role and how do you describe it?

Why would that role make you feel strong, fulfilled, and validated?

3. People

Reflect on the area where you painted your dream or vision. Who are the important and teachable people who will be impacted by your new roles? These are the people who you can collaborate with in living your callings.

Important people:

Who are the important people whose support or collaboration you will need to fulfill your calling? **Explain why and what roles they are likely to play.**

Teachable people:

Who are the teachable people who are likely to benefit from your roles and callings? **Explain why.**

4. Issues

Your success in living your callings is related directly to how you focus the role you choose around life issues and **your scope of accountability**. Your scope of accountability is the space where you can create reasonable objectives.

Write a clear objective that reflects your scope of accountability.

Write a secondary objective that reflects your scope of influence.

5. Goals

Goals are projects that reflect your commitment and direct the priorities by which you invest your time. Effective goals are **SMART** goals. **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed upon when needed, **R**easonable or realistic, and **T**ime dependent.

For the objective you stated, what are two key **SMART** goals that you can accomplish in 3 months?

6. Activities

“People do not plan to fail; they simply fail to plan”. This is your plan for the activities that must happen in order for your goals to succeed. In sequential order record **What** you must do? **How** long or how many minutes you will commit to it? **When** you plan to do this task?

What	How long	When

7. Rewards

What rewards do you wish to gain from the roles you play?

How can you communicate your reward expectations to your important people?

Summary:

Buried deep in the heart of each of us is a crying need to know what we should do with our life and how to live our life callings. The problem is:

1. You never can be clear on what you should **do**, unless you have clear goals.
2. You cannot have **goals**, unless you know the issues for which you are accountable.
3. You cannot define the **issues** you are accountable for unless you prioritize the important people you must impact for good.
4. You cannot prioritize your important **people**, unless you all agree on the roles you are called to play in relationship to each other.
5. You never can play your **role**, unless you understand and embrace the strengths you bring.
6. To discover your **strengths**, you must believe that you were created for the **purpose** of being fulfilled in living your callings for the good of others and the honour of the creator.

Reverse this process and you will have steps to living your callings.

1. Believe that you were created for the **purpose**, of being fulfilled as you live your **strengths** for the good of others and to honour God your creator.
2. When you discover your strengths, you will know the **roles** you are called to play on the stage of life.

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3. When you know the roles you are called to play, you identify the important **people** you must impact for good.
4. When you prioritize your important people, you define the **issues** you are accountable for.
5. When you articulate the issues, you can define clear **goals** that you must achieve.
6. When you define your goals, you can state what you must **do** to live your calling.

APPENDIX

In here you will find a collection of added material that we hope you will find helpful as you focus your life around your God given strengths.

Strengths Theme Adjectives

One of the easiest ways to understand or identify your strengths or the strengths other people in your life is by the use of adjectives or character attributes. Use the following sample list to help you identify your strengths or lesser strengths, identify the strengths of people you know and also see opportunities where others can complement your strengths.

- Achiever:** energetic, goal-oriented, hardworking, motivated, self-disciplined
- Activator:** impatient, learning, practical, results-oriented, tenacious
- Adaptability:** calm, flexible, productive, reassuring, responsive
- Analytical:** dispassionate, interrogative, logical, objective, rigorous
- Arranger:** adaptable, creative, flexible, innovative, resourceful
- Belief:** altruistic, dependable, family-oriented, responsible, spiritual
- Command:** clear, confrontational, direct, honest, risk-taking
- Communication:** articulate, captivating, conversational, descriptive, expressive
- Competition:** aggressive, aspiring, challenging, driving, striving,
- Connectedness:** accepting, caring, considerate, humble, spiritual
- Consistency:** balanced, ethical, even-handed, fair, unprejudiced
- Context oriented:** counterintuitive, experienced, perceptive, reflective
- Deliberative:** careful, contemplative, private, serious, vigilant
- Developer:** challenging, coaching, encouraging, helpful, nurturing
- Discipline:** efficient, exact, orderly, predictable, structured
- Empathy:** anticipating, appreciative, kind, sensitive, understanding
- Focus:** collaborative, efficient, goal-oriented, independent, impatient
- Futuristic:** energizing, foresighted, inspirational, motivating, visionary
- Harmony:** agreeable, deferential, non-confrontational, peaceable, personable
- Ideation:** abstract thinking, contemplative, conceptual, creative, visionary
- Includer:** accepting, connecting, loyal, non-judgmental, social
- Individualization:** encouraging, impatient, intuitive, listening, observant
- Input:** quick-to-learn, inquisitive, interested, interrogative, studious
- Intellection:** inquisitive, introspective, reflective, studious, thoughtful
- Learner:** assimilative, energetic, inquisitive, motivated, studious
- Maximizer:** demanding, discriminating, focusing, productive, refining
- Positivity:** energetic, energizing, enthusiastic, light-hearted, optimistic
- Relator:** caring, close, genuine, risk-taking, sharing
- Responsibility:** conscientious, dependable, ethical, hardworking, available
- Restorative:** analytical, fixing, identifying, rekindling, resuscitating
- Self-assurance:** certain, confident, independent, risk-taking, self-confident
- Significance** achieving, credible, focused, goal-oriented, independent
- Strategic:** intuitive, observant, predicting, problem solving, reflective
- Woo: (Winning Others Over)** conversational, friendly, networking, sociable

Strengths Theme Long Descriptions⁵⁷

ACHIEVER

Your Achiever theme helps explain your drive. Achiever describes a constant need for achievement. You feel as if every day starts at zero. By the end of the day you must achieve something tangible in order to feel good about yourself. And by “every day” you mean every single day—workdays, weekends, vacations. No matter how much you may feel you deserve a day of rest, if the day passes without some form of achievement, no matter how small, you will feel dissatisfied. You have an internal fire burning inside you. It pushes you to do more, to achieve more. After each accomplishment is reached, the fire dwindles for a moment, but very soon it rekindles itself, forcing you toward the next accomplishment. Your relentless need for achievement might not be logical. It might not even be focused. But it will always be with you. As an Achiever you must learn to live with this whisper of discontent. It does have its benefits. It brings you the energy you need to work long hours without burning out. It is the jolt you can always count on to get you started on new tasks, new challenges. It is the power supply that causes you to set the pace and define the levels of productivity for your work group. It is the theme that keeps you moving.

ACTIVATOR

“When can we start?” This is a recurring question in your life. You are impatient for action. You may concede that analysis has its uses or that debate and discussion can occasionally yield some valuable insights, but deep down you know that only action is real. Only action can make things happen. Only action leads to performance. Once a decision is made, you cannot not act. Others may worry that “there are still some things we don’t know,” but this doesn’t seem to slow you. If the decision has been made to go across town, you know that the fastest way to get there is to go stoplight to stoplight. You are not going to sit around waiting until all the lights have turned green. Besides, in your view, action and thinking are not opposites. In fact, guided by your Activator theme, you believe that action is the best device for learning. You make a decision, you take action, you look at the result, and you learn. This learning informs your next action and your next. How can you grow if you have nothing to react to? Well, you believe you can’t. You must put yourself out there. You must take the next step. It is the only way to keep your thinking fresh and informed. The bottom line is this: You know you will be judged not by what you say, not by what you think, but by what you get done. This does not frighten you. It pleases you.

ADAPTABILITY

You live in the moment. You don't see the future as a fixed destination. Instead, you see it as a place that you create out of the choices that you make right now. And so you discover your future one choice at a time. This doesn't mean that you don't have plans. You probably do. But this theme of Adaptability does enable you to respond willingly to the demands of the moment even if they pull you away from your plans. Unlike some, you don't resent sudden requests or unforeseen detours. You expect them. They are inevitable. Indeed, on some level you actually look forward to them. You are, at heart, a very flexible person who can stay productive when the demands of work are pulling you in many different directions at once.

ANALYTICAL

Your Analytical theme challenges other people: "Prove it. Show me why what you are claiming is true." In the face of this kind of questioning some will find that their brilliant theories wither and die. For you, this is precisely the point. You do not necessarily want to destroy other people's ideas, but you do insist that their theories be sound. You see yourself as objective and dispassionate. You like data because they are value free. They have no agenda. Armed with these data, you search for patterns and connections. You want to understand how certain patterns affect one another. How do they combine? What is their outcome? Does this outcome fit with the theory being offered or the situation being confronted? These are your questions. You peel the layers back until, gradually, the root cause or causes are revealed. Others see you as logical and rigorous. Over time they will come to you in order to expose someone's "wishful thinking" or "clumsy thinking" to your refining mind. It is hoped that your analysis is never delivered too harshly. Otherwise, others may avoid you when that "wishful thinking" is their own.

ARRANGER

You are a conductor. When faced with a complex situation involving many factors, you enjoy managing all of the variables, aligning and realigning them until you are sure you have arranged them in the most productive configuration possible. In your mind there is nothing special about what you are doing. You are simply trying to figure out the best way to get things done. But others, lacking this theme, will be in awe of your ability. "How can you keep so many things in your head at once?" they will ask. "How can you stay so flexible, so willing to shelve well-laid plans in favor of some brand-new configuration that has just occurred to you?" But you cannot imagine behaving in any other way. You are a shining example of effective flexibility, whether you are changing travel schedules at the last minute because a better fare has popped up or

mulling over just the right combination of people and resources to accomplish a new project. From the mundane to the complex, you are always looking for the perfect configuration. Of course, you are at your best in dynamic situations. Confronted with the unexpected, some complain that plans devised with such care cannot be changed, while others take refuge in the existing rules or procedures. You don't do either. Instead, you jump into the confusion, devising new options, hunting for new paths of least resistance, and figuring out new partnerships—because, after all, there might just be a better way.

BELIEF

If you possess a strong Belief theme, you have certain core values that are enduring. These values vary from one person to another, but ordinarily your Belief theme causes you to be family-oriented, altruistic, even spiritual, and to value responsibility and high ethics—both in yourself and others. These core values affect your behavior in many ways. They give your life meaning and satisfaction; in your view, success is more than money and prestige. They provide you with direction, guiding you through the temptations and distractions of life toward a consistent set of priorities. This consistency is the foundation for all your relationships. Your friends call you dependable. “I know where you stand,” they say. Your Belief makes you easy to trust. It also demands that you find work that meshes with your values. Your work must be meaningful; it must matter to you. And guided by your Belief theme it will matter only if it gives you a chance to live out your values.

COMMAND

Command leads you to take charge. Unlike some people, you feel no discomfort with imposing your views on others. On the contrary, once your opinion is formed, you need to share it with others. Once your goal is set, you feel restless until you have aligned others with you. You are not frightened by confrontation; rather, you know that confrontation is the first step toward resolution. Whereas others may avoid facing up to life's unpleasantness, you feel compelled to present the facts or the truth, no matter how unpleasant it may be. You need things to be clear between people and challenge them to be clear-eyed and honest. You push them to take risks. You may even intimidate them. And while some may resent this, labeling you opinionated, they often willingly hand you the reins. People are drawn toward those who take a stance and ask them to move in a certain direction. Therefore, people will be drawn to you. You have presence. You have Command.

COMMUNICATION

You like to explain, to describe, to host, to speak in public, and to write. This is your Communication theme at work. Ideas are a dry beginning. Events are static. You feel a need to bring them to life, to energize them, to make them exciting and vivid. And so you turn events into stories and practice telling them. You take the dry idea and enliven it with images and examples and metaphors. You believe that most people have a very short attention span. They are bombarded by information, but very little of it survives. You want your information—whether an idea, an event, a product’s features and benefits, a discovery, or a lesson—to survive. You want to divert their attention toward you and then capture it, lock it in. This is what drives your hunt for the perfect phrase. This is what draws you toward dramatic words and powerful word combinations. This is why people like to listen to you. Your word pictures pique their interest, sharpen their world, and inspire them to act.

COMPETITION

Competition is rooted in comparison. When you look at the world, you are instinctively aware of other people’s performance. Their performance is the ultimate yardstick. No matter how hard you tried, no matter how worthy your intentions, if you reached your goal but did not outperform your peers, the achievement feels hollow. Like all competitors, you need other people. You need to compare. If you can compare, you can compete, and if you can compete, you can win. And when you win, there is no feeling quite like it. You like measurement because it facilitates comparisons. You like other competitors because they invigorate you. You like contests because they must produce a winner. You particularly like contests where you know you have the inside track to be the winner. Although you are gracious to your fellow competitors and even stoic in defeat, you don’t compete for the fun of competing. You compete to win. Over time you will come to avoid contests where winning seems unlikely.

CONNECTEDNESS

Things happen for a reason. You are sure of it. You are sure of it because in your soul you know that we are all connected. Yes, we are individuals, responsible for our own judgments and in possession of our own free will, but nonetheless we are part of something larger. Some may call it the collective unconscious. Others may label it spirit or life force. But whatever your word of choice, you gain confidence from knowing that we are not isolated from one another or from the earth and the life on it. This feeling of Connectedness

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implies certain responsibilities. If we are all part of a larger picture, then we must not harm others because we will be harming ourselves. We must not exploit because we will be exploiting ourselves. Your awareness of these responsibilities creates your value system. You are considerate, caring, and accepting. Certain of the unity of humankind, you are a bridge builder for people of different cultures. Sensitive to the invisible hand, you can give others comfort that there is a purpose beyond our humdrum lives. The exact articles of your faith will depend on your upbringing and your culture, but your faith is strong. It sustains you and your close friends in the face of life's mysteries.

CONTEXT

You look back. You look back because that is where the answers lie. You look back to understand the present. From your vantage point the present is unstable, a confusing clamor of competing voices. It is only by casting your mind back to an earlier time, a time when the plans were being drawn up, that the present regains its stability. The earlier time was a simpler time. It was a time of blueprints. As you look back, you begin to see these blueprints emerge. You realize what the initial intentions were. These blueprints or intentions have since become so embellished that they are almost unrecognizable, but now this Context theme reveals them again. This understanding brings you confidence. No longer disoriented, you make better decisions because you sense the underlying structure. You become a better partner because you understand how your colleagues came to be who they are. And counterintuitively you become wiser about the future because you saw its seeds being sown in the past. Faced with new people and new situations, it will take you a little time to orient yourself, but you must give yourself this time. You must discipline yourself to ask the questions and allow the blueprints to emerge because no matter what the situation, if you haven't seen the blueprints, you will have less confidence in your decisions.

DELIBERATIVE

You are careful. You are vigilant. You are a private person. You know that the world is an unpredictable place. Everything may seem in order, but beneath the surface you sense the many risks. Rather than denying these risks, you draw each one out into the open. Then each risk can be identified, assessed, and ultimately reduced. Thus, you are a fairly serious person who approaches life with a certain reserve. For example, you like to plan ahead so as to anticipate what might go wrong. You select your friends cautiously and keep your own counsel when the conversation turns to personal matters. You are careful not to give too much praise and recognition, lest it be misconstrued. If some people don't like you because you are not as effusive as others, then so be it. For you, life is not a popularity contest. Life is something of a minefield. Others can run

through it recklessly if they so choose, but you take a different approach. You identify the dangers, weigh their relative impact, and then place your feet deliberately. You walk with care.

DEVELOPER

You see the potential in others. Very often, in fact, potential is all you see. In your view no individual is fully formed. On the contrary, each individual is a work in progress, alive with possibilities. And you are drawn toward people for this very reason. When you interact with others, your goal is to help them experience success. You look for ways to challenge them. You devise interesting experiences that can stretch them and help them grow. And all the while you are on the lookout for the signs of growth—a new behavior learned or modified, a slight improvement in a skill, a glimpse of excellence or of “flow” where previously there were only halting steps. For you these small increments—invisible to some—are clear signs of potential being realized. These signs of growth in others are your fuel. They bring you strength and satisfaction. Over time many will seek you out for help and encouragement because on some level they know that your helpfulness is both genuine and fulfilling to you.

DISCIPLINE

Your world needs to be predictable. It needs to be ordered and planned. So you instinctively impose structure on your world. You set up routines. You focus on timelines and deadlines. You break long-term projects into a series of specific short-term plans, and you work through each plan diligently. You are not necessarily neat and clean, but you do need precision. Faced with the inherent messiness of life, you want to feel in control. The routines, the timelines, the structure, all of these help create this feeling of control. Lacking this theme of Discipline, others may sometimes resent your need for order, but there need not be conflict. You must understand that not everyone feels your urge for predictability; they have other ways of getting things done. Likewise, you can help them understand and even appreciate your need for structure. Your dislike of surprises, your impatience with errors, your routines, and your detail orientation don't need to be misinterpreted as controlling behaviors that box people in. Rather, these behaviors can be understood as your instinctive method for maintaining your progress and your productivity in the face of life's many distractions.

EMPATHY

You can sense the emotions of those around you. You can feel what they are feeling as though their feelings are your own. Intuitively, you are able to see the world through their eyes and share their perspective. You do not necessarily agree with each person's perspective. You do not necessarily feel pity for each person's predicament—this would be sympathy, not Empathy. You do not necessarily condone the choices each person makes, but you do understand. This instinctive ability to understand is powerful. You hear the unvoiced questions. You anticipate the need. Where others grapple for words, you seem to find the right words and the right tone. You help people find the right phrases to express their feelings—to themselves as well as to others. You help them give voice to their emotional life. For all these reasons other people are drawn to you.

CONSISTENCY

Balance is important to you. You are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same, no matter what their station in life, so you do not want to see the scales tipped too far in any one person's favor. In your view this leads to selfishness and individualism. It leads to a world where some people gain an unfair advantage because of their connections or their background or their greasing of the wheels. This is truly offensive to you. You see yourself as a guardian against it. In direct contrast to this world of special favors, you believe that people function best in a consistent environment where the rules are clear and are applied to everyone equally. This is an environment where people know what is expected. It is predictable and evenhanded. It is fair. Here each person has an even chance to show his or her worth.

FOCUS

“Where am I headed?” you ask yourself. You ask this question every day. Guided by this theme of Focus, you need a clear destination. Lacking one, your life and your work can quickly become frustrating. And so each year, each month, and even each week you set goals. These goals then serve as your compass, helping you determine priorities and make the necessary corrections to get back on course. Your Focus is powerful because it forces you to filter; you instinctively evaluate whether or not a particular action will help you move toward your goal. Those that don't are ignored. In the end, then, your Focus forces you to be efficient. Naturally, the flip side of this is that it causes you to become impatient with delays, obstacles, and even tangents, no matter how intriguing they appear to be. This makes you an extremely valuable team member. When others start to wander down other avenues, you bring them back to the main road. Your Focus reminds everyone that if something is not

helping you move toward your destination, then it is not important. And if it is not important, then it is not worth your time. You keep everyone on point.

FUTURISTIC

“Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” You are the kind of person who loves to peer over the horizon. The future fascinates you. As if it were projected on the wall, you see in detail what the future might hold, and this detailed picture keeps pulling you forward, into tomorrow. While the exact content of the picture will depend on your other strengths and interests—a better product, a better team, a better life, or a better world—it will always be inspirational to you. You are a dreamer who sees visions of what could be and who cherishes those visions. When the present proves too frustrating and the people around you too pragmatic, you conjure up your visions of the future and they energize you. They can energize others, too. In fact, very often people look to you to describe your visions of the future. They want a picture that can raise their sights and thereby their spirits. You can paint it for them. Practice. Choose your words carefully. Make the picture as vivid as possible. People will want to latch on to the hope you bring.

HARMONY

You look for areas of agreement. In your view there is little to be gained from conflict and friction, so you seek to hold them to a minimum. When you know that the people around you hold differing views, you try to find the common ground. You try to steer them away from confrontation and toward harmony. In fact, harmony is one of your guiding values. You can’t quite believe how much time is wasted by people trying to impose their views on others. Wouldn’t we all be more productive if we kept our opinions in check and instead looked for consensus and support? You believe we would, and you live by that belief. When others are sounding off about their goals, their claims, and their fervently held opinions, you hold your peace. When others strike out in a direction, you will willingly, in the service of harmony, modify your own objectives to merge with theirs (as long as their basic values do not clash with yours). When others start to argue about their pet theory or concept, you steer clear of the debate, preferring to talk about practical, down-to-earth matters on which you can all agree. In your view we are all in the same boat, and we need this boat to get where we are going. It is a good boat. There is no need to rock it just to show that you can.

IDEATION

You are fascinated by ideas. What is an idea? An idea is a concept, the best explanation of the most events. You are delighted when you discover beneath the complex surface an elegantly simple concept to explain why things are the way they are. An idea is a connection. Yours is the kind of mind that is always looking for connections, and so you are intrigued when seemingly disparate phenomena can be linked by an obscure connection. An idea is a new perspective on familiar challenges. You revel in taking the world we all know and turning it around so we can view it from a strange but strangely enlightening angle. You love all these ideas because they are profound, because they are novel, because they are clarifying, because they are contrary, because they are bizarre. For all these reasons you derive a jolt of energy whenever a new idea occurs to you. Others may label you creative or original or conceptual or even smart. Perhaps you are all of these. Who can be sure? What you are sure of is that ideas are thrilling. And on most days this is enough.

INCLUDER

“Stretch the circle wider.” This is the philosophy around which you orient your life. You want to include people and make them feel part of the group. In direct contrast to those who are drawn only to exclusive groups, you actively avoid those groups that exclude others. You want to expand the group so that as many people as possible can benefit from its support. You hate the sight of someone on the outside looking in. You want to draw them in so that they can feel the warmth of the group. You are an instinctively accepting person. Regardless of race or sex or nationality or personality or faith, you cast few judgments. Judgments can hurt a person’s feelings. Why do that if you don’t have to? Your accepting nature does not necessarily rest on a belief that each of us is different and that one should respect these differences. Rather, it rests on your conviction that fundamentally we are all the same. We are all equally important. Thus, no one should be ignored. Each of us should be included. It is the least we all deserve.

INDIVIDUALIZATION

Your Individualization theme leads you to be intrigued by the unique qualities of each person. You are impatient with generalizations or “types” because you don’t want to obscure what is special and distinct about each person. Instead, you focus on the differences between individuals. You instinctively observe each person’s style, each person’s motivation, how each thinks, and how each builds relationships. You hear the one-of-a-kind stories in each person’s life. This theme explains why you pick your friends just the right birthday gift, why you know that one person prefers praise in public and another detests it, and why

you tailor your teaching style to accommodate one person's need to be shown and another's desire to "figure it out as I go." Because you are such a keen observer of other people's strengths, you can draw out the best in each person. This Individualization theme also helps you build productive teams. While some search around for the perfect team "structure" or "process," you know instinctively that the secret to great teams is casting by individual strengths so that everyone can do a lot of what they do well.

INPUT

You are inquisitive. You collect things. You might collect information—words, facts, books, and quotations—or you might collect tangible objects such as butterflies, baseball cards, porcelain dolls, or sepia photographs. Whatever you collect, you collect it because it interests you. And yours is the kind of mind that finds so many things interesting. The world is exciting precisely because of its infinite variety and complexity. If you read a great deal, it is not necessarily to refine your theories but, rather, to add more information to your archives. If you like to travel, it is because each new location offers novel artifacts and facts. These can be acquired and then stored away. Why are they worth storing? At the time of storing it is often hard to say exactly when or why you might need them, but who knows when they might become useful? With all those possible uses in mind, you really don't feel comfortable throwing anything away. So you keep acquiring and compiling and filing stuff away. It's interesting. It keeps your mind fresh. And perhaps one day some of it will prove valuable.

INTELLECTION

You like to think. You like mental activity. You like exercising the "muscles" of your brain, stretching them in multiple directions. This need for mental activity may be focused; for example, you may be trying to solve a problem or develop an idea or understand another person's feelings. The exact focus will depend on your other strengths. On the other hand, this mental activity may very well lack focus. The theme of Intellection does not dictate what you are thinking about; it simply describes that you like to think. You are the kind of person who enjoys your time alone because it is your time for musing and reflection. You are introspective. In a sense you are your own best companion, as you pose yourself questions and try out answers on yourself to see how they sound. This introspection may lead you to a slight sense of discontent as you compare what you are actually doing with all the thoughts and ideas that your mind conceives. Or this introspection may tend toward more pragmatic matters such as the events of the day or a conversation that you plan to have later. Wherever it leads you, this mental hum is one of the constants of your life.

LEARNER

You love to learn. The subject matter that interests you most will be determined by your other themes and experiences, but whatever the subject, you will always be drawn to the process of learning. The process, more than the content or the result, is especially exciting for you. You are energized by the steady and deliberate journey from ignorance to competence. The thrill of the first few facts, the early efforts to recite or practice what you have learned, the growing confidence of a skill mastered—this is the process that entices you. Your excitement leads you to engage in adult learning experiences—yoga or piano lessons or graduate classes. It enables you to thrive in dynamic work environments where you are asked to take on short project assignments and are expected to learn a lot about the new subject matter in a short period of time and then move on to the next one. This Learner theme does not necessarily mean that you seek to become the subject matter expert, or that you are striving for the respect that accompanies a professional or academic credential. The outcome of the learning is less significant than the “getting there.”

MAXIMIZER

Excellence, not average, is your measure. Taking something from below average to slightly above average takes a great deal of effort and in your opinion is not very rewarding. Transforming something strong into something superb takes just as much effort but is much more thrilling. Strengths, whether yours or someone else's, fascinate you. Like a diver after pearls, you search them out, watching for the telltale signs of a strength. A glimpse of untutored excellence, rapid learning, a skill mastered without recourse to steps—all these are clues that a strength may be in play. And having found a strength, you feel compelled to nurture it, refine it, and stretch it toward excellence. You polish the pearl until it shines. This natural sorting of strengths means that others see you as discriminating. You choose to spend time with people who appreciate your particular strengths. Likewise, you are attracted to others who seem to have found and cultivated their own strengths. You tend to avoid those who want to fix you and make you well rounded. You don't want to spend your life bemoaning what you lack. Rather, you want to capitalize on the gifts with which you are blessed. It's more fun. It's more productive. And, counterintuitively, it is more demanding.

POSITIVITY

You are generous with praise, quick to smile, and always on the lookout for the positive in the situation. Some call you lighthearted. Others just wish that their glass were as full as yours seems to be. But either way, people want to be around you. Their world looks better around you because your enthusiasm is contagious. Lacking your energy and optimism, some find their world drab with repetition or, worse, heavy with pressure. You seem to find a way to lighten their spirit. You inject drama into every project. You celebrate every achievement. You find ways to make everything more exciting and more vital. Some cynics may reject your energy, but you are rarely dragged down. Your Positivity won't allow it. Somehow you can't quite escape your conviction that it is good to be alive, that work can be fun, and that no matter what the setbacks, one must never lose one's sense of humor.

RELATOR

Relator describes your attitude toward your relationships. In simple terms, the Relator theme pulls you toward people you already know. You do not necessarily shy away from meeting new people—in fact, you may have other themes that cause you to enjoy the thrill of turning strangers into friends—but you do derive a great deal of pleasure and strength from being around your close friends. You are comfortable with intimacy. Once the initial connection has been made, you deliberately encourage a deepening of the relationship. You want to understand their feelings, their goals, their fears, and their dreams; and you want them to understand yours. You know that this kind of closeness implies a certain amount of risk—you might be taken advantage of—but you are willing to accept that risk. For you a relationship has value only if it is genuine. And the only way to know that is to entrust yourself to the other person. The more you share with each other, the more you risk together. The more you risk together, the more each of you proves your caring is genuine. These are your steps toward real friendship, and you take them willingly.

RESPONSIBILITY

Your Responsibility theme forces you to take psychological ownership for anything you commit to, and whether large or small, you feel emotionally bound to follow it through to completion. Your good name depends on it. If for some reason you cannot deliver, you automatically start to look for ways to make it up to the other person. Apologies are not enough. Excuses and rationalizations are totally unacceptable. You will not quite be able to live with yourself until you have made restitution. This conscientiousness, this near obsession for doing things right, and your impeccable ethics, combine to create your reputation: utterly dependable. When assigning new responsibilities, people will look to you

first because they know it will get done. When people come to you for help—and they soon will—you must be selective. Your willingness to volunteer may sometimes lead you to take on more than you should.

RESTORATIVE

You love to solve problems. Whereas some are dismayed when they encounter yet another breakdown, you can be energized by it. You enjoy the challenge of analyzing the symptoms, identifying what is wrong, and finding the solution. You may prefer practical problems or conceptual ones or personal ones. You may seek out specific kinds of problems that you have met many times before and that you are confident you can fix. Or you may feel the greatest push when faced with complex and unfamiliar problems. Your exact preferences are determined by your other themes and experiences. But what is certain is that you enjoy bringing things back to life. It is a wonderful feeling to identify the undermining factor(s), eradicate them, and restore something to its true glory. Intuitively, you know that without your intervention, this thing—this machine, this technique, this person, this company—might have ceased to function. You fixed it, resuscitated it, rekindled its vitality. Phrasing it the way you might, you saved it.

SELF-ASSURANCE

Self-Assurance is similar to self-confidence. In the deepest part of you, you have faith in your strengths. You know that you are able—able to take risks, able to meet new challenges, able to stake claims, and, most important, able to deliver. But Self-Assurance is more than just self-confidence. Blessed with the theme of Self-assurance, you have confidence not only in your abilities but in your judgment. When you look at the world, you know that your perspective is unique and distinct. And because no one sees exactly what you see, you know that no one can make your decisions for you. No one can tell you what to think. They can guide. They can suggest. But you alone have the authority to form conclusions, make decisions, and act. This authority, this final accountability for the living of your life, does not intimidate you. On the contrary, it feels natural to you. No matter what the situation, you seem to know what the right decision is. This theme lends you an aura of certainty. Unlike many, you are not easily swayed by someone else's arguments, no matter how persuasive they may be. This Self-Assurance may be quiet or loud, depending on your other themes, but it is solid. It is strong. Like the keel of a ship, it withstands many different pressures and keeps you on your course.

SIGNIFICANCE

You want to be very significant in the eyes of other people. In the truest sense of the word you want to be recognized. You want to be heard. You want to stand out. You want to be known. In particular, you want to be known and appreciated for the unique strengths you bring. You feel a need to be admired as credible, professional, and successful. Likewise, you want to associate with others who are credible, professional, and successful. And if they aren't, you will push them to achieve until they are. Or you will move on. An independent spirit, you want your work to be a way of life rather than a job, and in that work you want to be given free rein, the leeway to do things your way. Your yearnings feel intense to you, and you honor those yearnings. And so your life is filled with goals, achievements, or qualifications that you crave. Whatever your focus—and each person is distinct—your Significance theme will keep pulling you upward, away from the mediocre toward the exceptional. It is the theme that keeps you reaching.

STRATEGIC

The Strategic theme enables you to sort through the clutter and find the best route. It is not a skill that can be taught. It is a distinct way of thinking, a special perspective on the world at large. This perspective allows you to see patterns where others simply see complexity. Mindful of these patterns, you play out alternative scenarios, always asking, “What if this happened? Okay, well what if this happened?” This recurring question helps you see around the next corner. There you can evaluate accurately the potential obstacles. Guided by where you see each path leading, you start to make selections. You discard the paths that lead nowhere. You discard the paths that lead straight into resistance. You discard the paths that lead into a fog of confusion. You cull and make selections until you arrive at the chosen path—your strategy. Armed with your strategy, you strike forward. This is your Strategic theme at work: “What if?” Select. Strike.

Woo

WOO stands for winning others over. You enjoy the challenge of meeting new people and getting them to like you. Strangers are rarely intimidating to you. On the contrary, strangers can be energizing. You are drawn to them. You want to learn their names, ask them questions, and find some area of common interest so that you can strike up a conversation and build rapport. Some people shy away from starting up conversations because they worry about running out of things to say. You don't. Not only are you rarely at a loss for words; you actually enjoy initiating with strangers because you derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection. Once that connection is made, you are quite happy to wrap it up and move on. There are new people to meet, new rooms to work, new crowds to mingle in. In your world there are no strangers, only friends you haven't met yet—lots of them.

Shadows - The Dark Side Of Strength ⁵⁸

- Achiever**
- The need to achieve means you look to your own accomplishments instead of the gospel to feel good about yourself.
 - You can't rest and don't do Sabbath very well.
 - Your constant discontent keeps you from celebrating the wins.
 - You're always moving, but not necessarily in the right direction.
 - You accomplish things that don't really matter.
 - The fire that burns inside of you occasionally burns you and others.
-

- Activator**
- Your bias for action skips necessary analysis and discussion
 - You don't properly value other people (and their processes)
 - You have a hard time being present and aren't a great listener
 - You jump without looking—and don't always land on your feet.
 - You do things too quickly, without thinking it all the way through.
 - You don't do things thoroughly, because you're distracted and ready to move on to the next thing
-

- Adaptability**
- You're too flexible, always bending to the tyranny of the urgent, and not getting to the most important things.
 - You seem to lack conviction and are tossed around like the waves of the sea
 - You seem to lack a plan or intentionality when it comes to organizing your day, your week, your month, your year, your life.
 - Life happens to you, as opposed to you ordering your life. You have an external locus of control.
-

- Analytical**
- Paralysis by analysis. You don't know when its time to stop parsing, and move to action.
 - You are sometimes harsh and confrontational when making someone "prove" their assertions, or when

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you're deconstructing them.

- You skeptical and even cynical, always in a state of “Show Me” (like Missouri)
 - You're not as objective as you like to think you are.
-

Arranger

- You're a perfectionist. Everything has to be “just so” and even the slightest bit “off” throws you off.
 - You desire a level of control over details and variables that real life doesn't often give you—so you settle for the illusion.
 - Your desire for the perfect configuration can lead to loving the optimal system more than the people in it.
 - You get bored when there isn't a complicated, messy situation to fix.
-

Belief

- You become so enamored with your beliefs that you have a hard time making healthy compromises.
 - You are so fixated on your ideals that you dislike—even have contempt—for the mundane.
 - You see things in black or white and view everyone as either with you or against you.
 - You become paralyzed—or combative—when you think your values are being challenged.
-

Command

- You are intimidating and even scary to be around
 - You don't have much use for meekness and humility
 - You run over people who you think aren't doing a good job
 - You grab the steering wheel, even when you're not in the driver's seat
 - You can be overly opinionated, pushy, and confrontational
-

Communication

- You have the gift of the gab—and fail to perceive when others have wearied of your gabbing.
- You over-explain things and take way too long to get to the point.
- You place too much emphasis on communicating (particularly your communicating), and not enough on doing.
- You look down on those who don't communicate as well as you do.
- You use your communication skills to obscure, gloss over, obscure, blow smoke, flatter, and even deceive.

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Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are over-competitive, or compete over the wrong things.• Your win at all costs mentality leads you to run over people who get in the way.• Your win at all costs mentality leads you to cut corners of integrity and character.• You are consumed with comparing yourself to others.• Everyone is either a teammate or an opponent—and opponents must lose.• Your yardstick is self-oriented, not defined by God.
Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You see connections that aren't there• You become fatalistic and occasionally lose your sense of agency• You get stuck if you don't see or feel the connections• You get misled by your feelings
Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are constantly outraged by unfairness and inequity you see all around you• You keep score of who has wronged you—and may even think about how to get even• You have a hard time giving and receiving grace and forgiveness.• You insist that everyone else be fair, but you're not as evenhanded as you think
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You not only get excited in the past; you get stuck there• You overexplain things and give way more backstory than is needed• You grow frustrated and dismissive of people who don't know as much as you• You trust your version of the past too much
Deliberative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are too careful, cautious, and risk-averse• You are too reserved with others• You take too long to make a decision• You have a hard time adjusting to surprises
Developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have a hard time letting people and things just "be."• You try to develop people who aren't ready or willing to be developed• You can't turn off the desire to make something "just a

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little bit better.”

- You are too married to your version of development
-

Discipline

- You need to be in control and struggle if you're not
 - You hate surprises
 - You're impatient with mistakes
 - You are rigid, inflexible, and too attached to your routines, deadlines, and plans.
 - Your love of order keeps you from rolling with changes
-

Empathy

- You feel everyone around you and are distracted and even incapacitated because you can't turn it off
 - You carry burdens that you're not meant to carry
 - You trust your feelings too much
 - You don't value those who process more logically or deliberately
-

Focus

- You ignore people and things that aren't a priority
 - You are overly impatient with delays, obstacles, and other time-wasters
 - You run over (or avoid) people who hurt your focus
 - You value efficiency more than love
-

Futuristic

- You have a hard time living in the present
 - Your dreaming keeps you from doing the hard work that's needed now
 - Your visions of the future are unrealistic, and keep you aloof and detached
 - You don't value pragmatic, real world solutions
-

Harmony

- You settle for “peace, peace, when there is no peace.”
 - You avoid good and healthy conflict
 - You cover over obvious and important differences that need to be dealt with
 - You value getting along more than getting to the right decision
-

Ideation

- You live in the world of ideas and have trouble coping with the inelegance of reality
- You think your ideas are best, and don't have much to learn from others'
- You don't accept what works, because it isn't yours and it isn't new
- You take too long generating ideas and never get to

action

Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're indiscriminate, not realizing some people don't need to be in some situations • You're indecisive and find it hard to say no, especially to needy people • You're generous to a fault, and prone to being taken advantage of by people
Individualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You only see trees, not the forest. Ground level, not 30,000 feet. • You have a hard time prioritizing the group ahead of the individual • You're distracted by all the nuances of everyone's differences and miss the big picture perspective
Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't distinguish between helpful and worthless information • Your mind is cluttered with less-than-useful info • You spend too much time gathering info and not enough time doing
Intellection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're too introspective; you live in your head • You're a loner who values thinking more than people • You constantly over-think things and don't take action • You trust your own thoughts, you're not a good team player
Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're a know-it-all • You can talk the talk but don't walk the walk • All your learning doesn't translate into getting things done • Always a student but afraid of being the teacher
Maximizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're a perfectionist: nothing (and no-one) is ever good enough • You're constantly reworking everything you touch and are never content • You're dismissive of those who don't work to constantly improve like you do
Positivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have difficulty dealing with negativity • You fake it sometimes • You're naïve to how hard life really is for others (if not for you)

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- You keep things light and superficial to avoid anything negative

Relator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You stick to only those you already know; you're cliquish• You play favorites with those you like and trust• You have a hard time letting new people in to your world
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Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You're a micro manager—you have difficulty delegating• You can't say "no", take on too much• You over commit out of fear things won't get done• You're obsessed with doing things right and can't let anything go
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Restorative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You're overly focused on weaknesses• You find your identity by pointing out the failures of others, so you can fix them• You're negative, critical, and blaming
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Self-assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You feel superior to others, and don't mind if they know it• You're overly confident, and ignore threats• You're stubborn and aren't open to others' input• You're arrogant and bristle when challenged
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Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You crave recognition, and will settle for sizzle over steak• You're self-focused, instead of being focused on others• Your ego is needy and needs frequent stroking• You get your identity through others' opinions
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Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You make decisions too quickly• You don't connect the dots for others• You get fixated on a solution and become closed-minded• You love your strategy more than people
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Woo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You live on the surface; you don't get to know people deeply• You lack substance and are sometimes fake• Winning others over matters more to you than what you win them to
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Strengths Domain Description

Over the years, Gallup has studied thousands of executive teams. In most cases, our leadership consultants conduct an in-depth interview with a team's formal leader (usually the CEO) and also conduct interviews with each member of the leadership team. This enables us to compare the strengths of each person sitting around the table so that we can start thinking about each one's individual development and succession planning -- and perhaps most importantly, how the team looks as a whole.

As we worked with these leadership teams, we began to see that while each member had his or her own unique strengths, the most cohesive and successful teams possessed broader groupings of strengths. So we went back and initiated our most thorough review of this research to date. From this dataset, four distinct domains of leadership strength emerged: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking.

While these categories appear to be general, especially when compared to the specific talent themes within the StrengthsFinder assessment, it struck us that these broader categories of strengths could be useful for thinking about how leaders can contribute to a team. A more detailed language may work best for individual development, but these broad domains offer a more practical lens for looking at the composition of a team.

We found that it serves a team well to have a representation of strengths in each of these four domains. Instead of one dominant leader who tries to do everything or individuals who all have similar strengths, contributions from all four domains lead to a strong and cohesive team. Although individuals need not be well-rounded, teams should be.

This doesn't mean that each person on a team must have strengths exclusively in a single category. In most cases, each team member will possess some strength in multiple domains. A tool like Gallup's StrengthsFinder assessment can be useful in determining how all team members can maximize their contribution to the group's collective goals.

According to our latest research, the 34 StrengthsFinder themes naturally cluster into these four domains of leadership strength based on a statistical factor analysis and a clinical evaluation by Gallup's top scientists. As you think about how you can contribute to a team and who you need to surround yourself with, this may be a good starting point. (See graphic "The Four Domains of Leadership Strength" to see how the 34 StrengthsFinder themes sort into the four domains of leadership strength.)

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Leaders with dominant strength in the **Executing** domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to implement a solution, these are the people who will work tirelessly to get it done. Leaders with strength to execute have the ability to "catch" an idea and make it a reality.

For example, one leader may excel at establishing a quality process using themes such as Deliberative or Discipline, while the next leader will use her Achiever theme to work tirelessly toward a goal. Or a leader with strong Arranger may determine the optimal configuration of people needed to complete a task.

Those who lead by **Influencing** help their team reach a much broader audience. People with strength in this domain are always selling the team's ideas inside and outside the organization. When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence.

Executing	Influencing	Relationship	Strategic Thinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Achiever . Arranger . Belief . Consistency . Deliberative . Discipline . Focus . Responsibility . Restorative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Activator . Command . Communication . Competition . Maximizer . Self-Assurance . Significance . Woo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Adaptability . Developer . Connectedness . Empathy . Harmony . Includer . Individualization . Positivity . Relator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Analytical . Context . Futuristic . Ideation . Input . Intellection . Learner . Strategic

For example, a leader with a lot of Command or Self-Assurance may use few words, but her confidence will continue to project authority and win followers. In contrast, a leader using Communication or Woo might get people involved by helping individuals feel comfortable and connected to the issue at hand.

Those who lead through **Relationship Building** are the essential glue that holds a team together. Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts.

Within this domain, a leader with Positivity and Harmony may work hard to minimize distractions and to keep the team's collective energy high. On the other hand, a leader with Individualization might use a more targeted approach to getting people involved. Or a leader with strong Relator or Developer may

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be a great mentor and guide as he pushes others toward bigger and better achievements.

Leaders with great **Strategic Thinking** strengths are the ones who keep us all focused on what could be. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions. People with strength in this domain continually stretch our thinking for the future.

Within this domain, a leader using Context or Strategic might explain how past events influenced present circumstances or navigate the best route for future possibilities. Someone with strong Ideation or Input may see countless opportunities for growth based on all of the information she reviews. Or a leader drawing from his Analytical theme might help the team drill into the details of cause and effect.

In recent years, we have studied leaders who built great schools, created major non-profit organizations, led big businesses, and transformed entire nations. But we have yet to find two leaders who have the exact same sequence of strengths. While two leaders may have identical expectations, the way they reach their goals is always dependent on the unique arrangement of their strengths.

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<http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content/113338/what-makes-great-leadership-team.aspx>

Growing an Engaged Church

A leadership Note for Pastors and Leaders

Overloaded? At a recent gathering of pastors, I asked those who often feel burdened and overloaded to put their hand up. The vast majority of the pastors put their hands up.

Why? Why are most pastors overloaded? Could it be because in most churches 10% of the congregations do 90% of the work?

Why? Why is it that few do so much while the majority do so little? Could it be, as research indicates, that congregational engagement is declining and the church is losing its relevance in the lives of its people?

Growing congregational engagement will not only reduce the burden on overloaded pastors and leaders but will also help parishioners enjoy the abundant life promised by Jesus Christ. How do we enhance congregational engagement in a manner that pleases the heart of God?

Towards fulfilling this objective, in this paper, we take advantage of the work by Gallup researchers and Dr. Al Winsman's book, *Growing an Engaged Church: Stop Doing Church and Start Being the Church Again*.⁵⁹

The Myths: Dr. Winsman lists three myths that Church leaders must confront before discovering the road to enhanced congregational engagement:

1. **Faith leads to belonging:** Coming to faith in Christ does not automatically lead to the sense of belonging and commitment to active service. Just as a newborn baby cannot be expected to play active family roles, belonging and engagement in the life of the church require a disciplined of discipleship process.
2. **Faith leads to action:** There are many non-Christian organizations that boast very high levels of volunteer engagement without any faith or spiritual motivation. How do they do it? Maybe we can learn from their example.
3. **An active member is a faithful member:** If we examine the lives of the 10% who carry the majority of church ministry, we often find signs of resentment, overload, and even burnout. This is not consistent with the abundant life Christ promises His followers.

What is the church?

The church is not the building, its financial assets or its many programs. The church is its people and their relationships. Based on extensive Gallup research, Dr. Winseman suggests that there are three distinct groups in the church family: **engaged, dis-engaged, and actively disengaged.**

1. **Engaged People:**

Engaged people prioritize their faith and personal relationship with God. They exhibit a genuine emotional and spiritual commitment to the church family. This commitment goes beyond the normal attendance and financial support. Based on Gallup research engaged parishioners are:



- a. three times more likely to be satisfied with their personal, work, and family life
- b. ten times more likely to invite others to the church at least once a month
- c. giving more than 2.5 hours per week serving the church or community
- d. giving on average 5% of their income to church ministries

2. **Disengaged People:** These are the nice people in the church. While they identify with the church and may consider themselves members, they are less likely to exhibit more than regular attendance and limited financial support. We believe that many of these people can to be more engaged in the church life with the right mix of discipleship and ministry opportunities.
3. **Actively Disengaged:** Dissatisfied, critical, and even adversarial may be some of the qualities that describe this group of parishioners. By their conduct and attitude, they attract a lot of attention and consume a disproportionate amount of pastoral time and energy. It is suggested that the negative impact of one actively disengaged person destroys the positive influence of four engaged parishioners.

Steps to Member Engagement

Researching many churches Gallup paints a four stage model that leads to optimum engagement called the **Member Engagement Hierarchy:**

1. **Receiving: Can my needs be met?** Complaining, one pastor said that people come to church with a consumer mentality, “**What’s in it for me?**” This is accurate and true. People seek the church for two interrelated and specific needs:

Steps to Member Engagement



- a. **Spiritual needs:** This is one basic need which people seek when they come to church. Blaise Pascal, the renowned scientist philosopher, said that, *“There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man.”* All other needs can be filled by other sources outside the church; the church is the natural source of meeting the spiritual hunger in the world today.
 - b. **Clear Expectations:** In return for meeting our spiritual needs, we all have a need for well-defined expectations. **Healthy relationships are reciprocal relationships** Ambiguity is a most destructive cause in any relationship. Having clearly communicated expectations enhances personal and corporate commitment. For fear of losing people, the church often fails in setting reasonable expectations of its members. It is interesting to note that the fastest growing church, the Mormon Church, sets very clear expectations of their members. Setting high standards of conduct and commitment on its followers, Islam is often called the fastest growing religion.
2. **Giving: What can I contribute?** Healthy relationships are reciprocal. **In the church can I do what I do best?** We all love to do what we do best. This is what Gallup calls playing to your strengths. Playing to your strengths is energizing and rewarding. Most of us do not have this

opportunity in our work life. Ministry opportunists that are a good match to members' talents and skills could be the most affirming and enriching human service the church can offer to its parishioners. This can be the road map to solving the 90/10 crisis facing the church.

3. **Belonging: How do I belong?** There are many factors that contribute to a clear sense of belonging:
 - a. **Purpose:** Jack Welsh, the ex-chairman of General Electric said, ***“People work for money, but would give their life for a purpose.”*** Church leaders must continually communicate and reaffirm a clear purpose that ignites the passion of its members.
 - b. **Mission:** Mission gives direction and helps church members define objectives and life and ministry goals that they identify with.
 - c. **Recognition:** From early childhood we have a need to be recognized and appreciated for who we are not only for what we do. Leaders have a responsibility to create a culture of appreciation and recognition.
 - d. **Friends:** Friendship is the comfortable space where openness, transparency, and support flourish. We all need friends. Christ identified this need and provided a wonderful model through his relationship with His disciples.
4. **Grow: Am I developing?** Deep in the heart of each of us is a natural instinct and desire to grow. Providing a structure that supports measurable sustainable growth enhances the sense of belonging. **We value what we measure.** While it may be hard to measure spiritual growth, as church leaders are responsible to measure what we can and let God measure what we can't. This creates a culture of clear expectations as well.

It's about talent stewardship.

Most pastors find it hard to preach about tithing and giving. One pastor told me, “We do not want people to think that we are always after their money.” “The church has been seen in the past as hungry for people's money.” I understand how pastors feel, money matters is one of the most awkward topics to preach about. But the need today is to preach about talent stewardship. It is not about money anymore. It is about the stewardship of life.

We each are stewards of the life and talents we are given. In Matthew 25 Jesus highlights that a good steward is responsible to know and articulate what he or she is given as well as accountable to invest that stewardship where it brings the best results. Congregational engagement follows when leaders help their people know and appropriate their talents in the service of the church.

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The same sense of stewardship responsibility applies to pastors and church leaders. **We measure what we value.** Apart from the word of God and the Spirit of God, human talents are the greatest asset of the church. Pastors and leaders have a God given responsibility to know the talents God has entrusted in their church and to create a culture where people are engaged and invested in the church by using their God given talents.

Maybe, we can help?

As a ministry of integrity + consulting we are pleased to **donate two services to the Church:**

- **Building Strengths Based Congregation.** This is a facilitated discussion for Pastors and leaders. It is based on John 10, Mathew 9, and 20 and John 21. This discussion seeks to build a bridge between Biblical truths, a purpose driven church, common sense principles, supported by our thirty-five years of experience in organizational change management.
- **The Living Your Strengths Workshop:** This workshop is a stewardship and leadership development tool. Based on the talent stewardship teaching in Mathew 25, and using the world renowned StrengthsFinder as an assessment tool. This workshop is designed to help God's people discover their God-given talents and apply their Strengths in fulfilling life calling at home, at work and in the church. For more information please see <http://integrity-plus.com/wp/sm/sw/>

**Church leaders are
stewards of creating a
culture of engagement.**

**Parishioners are stewards of
their God given strengths.**

**Together they are
accountable for building
strength based
congregations.**

Roles and Skills List

- Accountant
- Activator
- Activist
- Administrator
- Advisor
- Advocate
- Analyst
- Arbitrator
- Author
- Baker
- Banker
- Boss
- Builder
- Carpenter
- Catalyst
- Champion
- Change agent
- Chemist
- Cleaner
- Coach
- Commander
- Consoler
- Consultant
- Cook
- Counselor
- Decorator
- Dentist
- Designer
- Developer
- Diplomat
- Director
- Doctor
- Driver
- Economist
- Editor
- Electrician
- Employer
- Encourager
- Enforcer
- Engineer
- Entrepreneur
- Facilitator
- Farmer
- Firefighter
- Fisherman
- Gardner
- Geologist
- Groomer
- Guard
- Guide
- Helper
- Herbalist
- Homemaker
- Host
- Hydrologist
- Hygienist
- Immunologist
- Influencer
- Inspector
- Interpreter
- Interrogator
- Investigator
- Investor
- Journalist
- Judge
- Landscaper
- Leader
- Lecturer
- Legislator
- Librarian
- Listener
- Manager
- Manufacturer
- Mediator
- Mentor
- Microbiologist
- Missionary
- Model
- Moderator
- Motivator
- Musician
- Negotiator
- Navigator
- Networker
- Nurse
- Nutritionist
- Observer
- Organizer
- Orthodontist
- Overseer
- Painter
- Parent
- Partner
- Pastor
- Pathologist
- Peacekeeper
- Pharmacist
- Philanthropist
- Photographer
- Physiotherapist
- Pilot
- Planner
- Plumber
- Policeman
- Policy-maker
- Politician
- Problem solver
- Professor
- Programmer
- Promoter
- Prospector
- Protector
- Provider
- Psychologist
- Realtor
- Receptionist
- Researcher
- Resource
- Sailor
- Secretary
- Servant
- Server
- Social-worker
- Soldier
- Solicitor
- Sportsman
- Statistician
- Stockbroker
- Stock-keeper
- Supporter
- Surgeon
- Teacher
- Technologist
- Therapist
- Trader
- Trainer
- Translator
- Trendsetter
- Veterinarian
- Videographer
- Visionary
- Watchdog
- Writer
- Add More

Lord, Is It Warfare?

Playing to your strengths is countercultural. In the church, when you move from acting like a Christian to truly being a true Christian, this is countercultural. Being countercultural may lead you into territories and experiences that offend our enemy, the devil. It is in times like these that you may enter into the realm of spiritual warfare.

Spiritual warfare is real. I know. This is a true story based on our own life experiences. For this reason it is included. **Please read it and share it especially with Christian pastors and leaders.**

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:12

SO “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

My thoughts go back to that time in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Things were going well for my growing family and spiritual warfare was hardly on my mind. Suddenly my friends and spiritual leaders began facing personal and family tragedies that I could not understand or explain.

These friends were solid Christians who had a significant impact on my family for years. Their families had been on the cutting edge of Christian ministries with great success. Through no fault of their own these friends were going through “**hell on earth**”. The stress and pain they were going through had demoralized them and even forced them out of their ministry roles.

Extremely distressed by this, I could not help but ask, “Why? Why God? Why do you allow your faithful servants to endure such pain? Why do you allow the enemy to attack them and their loved ones in such destructive ways?”

Shortly after, God seemed to answer my many questions.

It’s Warfare:

We do not like to talk about it much. I understood it even much less. Along with the topics of hell and pain, warfare is never a popular pulpit topic. But, my heavenly father felt I needed to learn some of the realities of spiritual warfare. It was late in February 1991 when I heard a message on spiritual warfare that had a significant impact on my life.

The speaker was Mr. Bob Jacks. Bob was a very successful and prosperous businessman

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who after becoming a Christian started a very fruitful ministry called “Your Home a Lighthouse”. His book by the same title is highly recommended. Most of the men and women gathered that day were involved in full time Christian ministry and Bob chose to talk about spiritual warfare as a warning and a challenge to them. I cannot quote him exactly but I will try to highlight what he said and why it impressed me so much.

Bob said:

*Anytime we, as Christians, seek to do something significant for God we should always expect that our spiritual enemy would be displeased. The devil will seek to fight us anytime we seek to expand God’s kingdom on earth. If the devil is displeased he will seek to oppose us and attack us. When the devil fights, he fights dirty. His goal is to eliminate us from ministry. He tries to hit us where we are likely to hurt the most - **in our marriages, our children, our health and/or our finances.***

As I listened to Bob Jacks, my mind went to my friends who are struggling. I noted that his words were true in their experiences. Bob’s illustration rang true as my mind raced to other Christian leaders and televangelists whose lives and ministries were destroyed in the recent past. As I listened I was gripped with concern for those gathered that day and how they would feel about their full time ministries. Are they the targets of the evil one? Thankfully, I was reminded by the fact that “**God did not give us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**” **2Timothy 1:7**

Bob’s Advice:

Bob Jacks drew his listeners by referring to the 1991 Gulf War that had just ended. The allied success during that war was very impressive. In less than a few days, the belligerent Iraqi leader and his armies who taunted the world and invaded their neighbors were destroyed.

Bob went on to say:

Please picture a strapping American marine who has been training for years to go to war. He has been anxious to put all his training and skills to action. The day comes when he is called to active service. He boards the plane and lands in the Middle East. He jumps out of the plane and wasting no time he rushes to the front line. This zealous soldier attempts to fight the battle all alone. What are his chances of success? What are the chances that he will come back alive?

*We all know that his chances are nil. Military commanders know this full well, so they place these fighters in small groups. **Their first priority is not winning the war or killing the enemy. Their first priority is caring for each other.** Regretfully, in Christian circles we often find Christian fighters who are all alone. We send them off to mission fields where they are surrounded by evil forces and wonder why they fall victim to the evil one.*

As I thought about this, I realized that even in our own congregations and within our church walls there are pastors and Christian workers who are among the loneliest in the church. They are expected to focus on their ministries, show strength and spiritual stamina, while they feel tremendously alone. Yes, even our own churches can be a lonely place especially for those in leadership.

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Bob went on to remind his listeners that The Gulf War was not won because of mighty ground forces. The Gulf War was won because of air superiority. It was the air cover provided to those on the ground that gave them the victory in that Gulf war. It was the highflying intelligence airplanes that were in constant communication with the ground troops that gave them the upper hand. Air cover and power were the deciding advantage in that new type of warfare.

*Bob reminded us that day that **in our spiritual warfare our air cover is our prayer cover**. Prayer cover is the faithful prayer warrior who intercedes on behalf of those who are on the front lines. It is those who are in faithful communications that make the difference in our spiritual war “against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”.*

The picture became clear to me that day. While we are engaged in ministry we are seeking to expand the kingdom of God on this earth. We are doing this against the will of the evil one who will naturally fight us. With these thoughts in mind, I thought again of my friends who had fallen in the battle or those who were badly scarred and defeated. I began to ask some questions.

- Did they have adequate prayer cover for their tasks?
- Did those who promised to pray for them really pray?
- Do we, as Christians, understand the role of prayer cover in our lives? Do we take it as seriously as that of the intelligence officer in his highflying airplane?
- Does the Christian soldier understand the accountability he/she must have before those who speak on his or her behalf before the throne of God?

Before my thoughts went too far I asked myself, how often do I pray for the Christian leaders and missionaries that I promised to pray for? I am an average Christian. How much time does an average Christian pray each day? Five, ten, maybe fifteen minutes a day? If they are like me by the time I finish praying for my personal needs, my work, and my family it is time to rush to daily demands that cry for my attention. No, I must confess I do not take my responsibility for providing prayer cover seriously enough. I confess I have been negligent in my roles of providing prayer cover for those who counted on me. Yes, my negligence may have caused the suffering of Christian brothers and sisters who counted on me for support and accountability.

That day in February 1991 I decided that:

1. I would never tell others that I would pray for them unless I am sure I can keep my role as a prayer cover.
2. I would never accept any ministry responsibility unless I have adequate prayer cover. Unless I have those who can commit to pray weekly for Gods guidance and protection on **my marriage, my children, my health, and my finances** I would not engage in any Christian ministry. Unless I am ready to OBEY and be held FULLY accountable to those who pray for me I will not accept any Christian ministry.
3. I also promised that I would not encourage anyone to accept any ministry unless I ask him or her if they have adequate prayer cover.

You see, as Bob Jacks said, “Christ does not delight in the pain of his soldiers.”

Now you may understand why I am scared of ministry without prayer cover.

Now you understand why I included this paper in the book about Living your Strengths and fulfilling your callings.

These are some thoughts; I hope you will share with any one involved in the works of the kingdom

By the way, remember:

*“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds”. **2Corinthians 10:4** So please,*

*“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints”. **Ephesians 6:18***

About Your Coaching Toolbox

Writing about the Christian life, the Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of running in a race. Athletes all around the world appreciate the value of personal coaching. The same applies to each of us in the game of life with its challenges and uncompromising demands.

As Christians our life is centered by our relationship with Jesus Christ and His Spirit within us. God the Father has given each of us strengths to equip us to win and fulfill our life purpose and callings. If we are to excel and be the best we can be, we cannot escape the need for the training and coaching in the critical aspects of our life.

Dr. Albert Winseman, pastor, author and Senior Executive Coach with the Gallup organization, says, *“Everyone needs a coach and every one can coach.”* Coaching trainer and author, Tony Stoltzfus, offers a course titled Peer Coaching. He says that coaching is *“a relational structure where two or three friends meet regularly for a clear purpose to help each other grow.”* The Bible tells us that *“as iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another.”* Proverbs 27:17. This is Christ Centered Coaching. Later we will highlight that coaching is at the heart of making disciples.

Living your strengths is not easy and we want give you all the tools you need. It was wisely said that *“If you want to be the master of an art teach it”*. The same applies when it comes to strengths. This is why we say ***“if you want to be a master of Strengths, coach it.”*** For this reason at our eStore, we offer you a gift copy of our booklet *“Christ Centered Coaching”* To get your gift copy go to <http://estore.strengthsworkshop.ca/?product=coach-2> at the Checkout use Coupon Gift code **Coach1942**

This booklet is written to encourage and foster coaching relationships in the church and community. Our objective is that it would serve as a catalyst in three different settings to:

- be an encouragement to use your God-given strength as a coach
- serve as an introductory tool that coaches can give to individuals seeking their help
- help each of us prioritize our need for coaches as we navigate the challenges of life and fulfill our life callings

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- ⁵⁸ © Stephen Lutz 2016, Stephen Lutz is pastor, Author, Church consultant and ministry coach. More at <http://stephenlutz.net/>
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