

# From a Faith Perspective: What worthy calling can fill your free time?

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“What do you mean, ‘You feel called?’” my colleague asked. His tone was wary. He was looking at me in a strange way. I realized that my enthusiasm and those words made him anticipate something bizarre.

People often preface disturbing behavior in that way. By passionately claiming some sort of divine mandate, they justify being judgmental and controlling. They imply that God has directed their actions and they must obey the call. The way my friend questioned my words revealed that he expected such a motivation.

My meaning is quite different. The calling I am speaking of is the end point of a discernment process about how I want to use my time and whether what I’m considering serves a worthy purpose. It’s usually a calling to be of service. One doesn’t “feel called” to sign up for a tropical cruise. The motivation is **not amusement or self-interest**.

Being called starts with recognizing something that needs attention and work. The discernment process answers the question, “Is this mine to do?” I may have a talent or resource at my disposal. Or the deed might be something that I do with ease or joy, where others would struggle. Usually, I feel called to do things that don’t benefit me personally—not tangibly.

In my avocations and professional work, I have acquired expertise in certain mundane but utilitarian skills and trades. I feel called to volunteer those skills. For example, I devote time and energy to procuring commercial printing at wholesale prices for the League of Women Voters. There’s a bit of creativity, but it’s ninety percent clerical work dealing with the jargon and arcane practices of the commercial printing world.

Another such charitable calling is rehabilitating obsolete computers for use by refugees. I have the knowledge and skills to do work that others see as mag-

ical. Some would say it’s a waste of time. Why not write a check if I feel these young people need computers? I could use my time for reading, or writing, or pursuing my other personal interests.

I wouldn’t get the same satisfaction. It pleases me to rescue the old phones and computers from the waste stream and the scrap yard. Those who donate devices may enjoy their new replacement all the more knowing the old one helps someone else.

As a service to the donor, I assure that their personal data is secure by erasing it from the device. Often that’s not something they can do themselves. And finally, there is the personal, visible support the beneficiaries experience. These devices help young refugees to become independent and self-reliant. Each refugee knows that a stranger has given his time and effort to make their new life better.

My call is not a burning bush, nor a thunderous voice from the clouds. Nor is it a sense of righteous duty, a **defense of faith, or a sacrificial act**. It simply feels like a worthy undertaking—the right thing to do. It’s my opportunity to serve others, achieve a greater good, to be unselfish, to act neighborly, to let my life speak for my values.

Humanity, through the ages, has prospered because we band together as families and as communities of mutual support and benevolence. In one way or another, we are all called to **engage and contribute**. This interdependence is the foundation of commerce, education, the performing arts, civic order, economic prosperity, and all of our diverse spiritual communities.

When we embrace what we are called to **do**, we experience passion and enthusiasm. (The word enthusiasm comes from a Greek word meaning to be possessed by a god.) Being called is the affirmative manifestation of social conscience—the still small voice within that summons us to serve and be our best selves.