

Careers, Vocation, and Calling

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Most people decide to get an MBA for the practical reason of getting a better paying job. Typically, MBA's earn more than people who just have a Bachelor's degree, and they are considered more promotable. But is that all there is?

Business schools and in particular, MBA programs, have been criticized for developing graduates who are trained only to focus on the bottom line. The recent scandals in business have been attributed to too much focus on material wealth and not enough focus on what is good for the greater society.

Yet most leaders are very ethical, and are committed to making a positive difference in the world through their products, services, and through giving back to the communities in which they live and work. We have many exemplary models of this form of leadership in Northwest Arkansas. These leaders are often guided by their faith and spiritual traditions, and see their work as a vocation and calling.

This course explores the relationship between careers, vocation, and calling. The words "vocation" and "calling" have traditionally been used in a religious sense, such as being called to be in the ministry, or to be called to be a pastor of a church. In the past 10 years or so, more and more people are seeing their work in corporate and in non-profit settings as their vocation and calling. We will examine the different mind-sets of being focused just on career, versus the mind-set that your work is a vocation and calling.

The course is highly experiential and self-reflective. You will have the opportunity to assess your own attitudes towards your career, and explore what work means to you. You will participate in a values clarification exercise that helps you to see which values are core to who you are and which values you would like to integrate more into your life and work. You will learn about research that has been conducted on the role of faith and spirituality in career development and will have the opportunity to explore what role, if any, faith and spirituality have played in your work life.

You will be provided with practical tools that will help you to make decisions about your career, vocation, and calling. The course concludes with your development of an action plan and an analysis of what kind of support you will need to take the direction you have chosen.

The style of this course is highly interactive and designed as a workshop. There is no textbook or assigned readings, although there will be reading resources for those who want them. We will meet four Friday afternoons from 1-5pm. The dates of the course are:

Session 1: February 19: The Meaning of Work

Session 2: March 5: Values and Career Development

Session 3: March 19: Career Decision-Making

Session 4: April 9: Action Planning