

CAREER SERVICES *at Whitworth*

A Guide to Theological Reflection on Vocation at Whitworth University (Top Ten Questions for Faculty, Staff and Students)

We present the following guide for faculty, staff and students when considering how to connect theological reflection and vocation. Our hope is that as reflection takes place in class, in mentoring relationships, in service-learning experiences, and on internships that the following questions might be helpful ways of thinking about this topic. Whitworth is a university with a deep heritage in both the Evangelical and Reformed traditions, and it is from those theological well springs that the following is offered.

Definition:

Vocation comes from the Latin *vocare* which means “call” or “calling.” In a Christian context it prompts our reflection on what God is expecting us to do in the world. In a general sense, our calling is to love and honor God by loving our neighbor as ourselves. When we do that in our daily life we are fulfilling our essential vocation.

Top Ten Questions:

- 1) Gifts** – What gifts do you think God has given you? Vocational discernment requires us to examine our lives for the purpose of discovering the many gifts that might be utilized as a part of our vocation.
- 2) Passions** – What are you the most passionate about? We believe that human beings have the capacity as well as the responsibility to exercise passion on behalf of loving one’s neighbor and working for justice; vocational discernment should prompt reflection about what seems to evoke passion in each of us.
- 3) Skills** – What skills do you think you already have as well as what else do you need to develop in order to be effective in accomplishing your vocation? Vocational effectiveness not just happen; it requires skills such as communication, computation, organization, and leadership, but others might need to be identified and developed still further.
- 4) Purposes** – What do you believe is your primary purpose on this earth? Vocational discernment requires reflection on this question. Whitworth’s mission statement of honoring God, following Christ, and serving humanity is an excellent starting point, but thoughtful discernment should also prompt other competing answers to the question of purpose in life.
- 5) Convictions** – What are your deepest convictions? Vocational discernment asks an individual to reflect on what he or she believes is most important about the nature of cosmos. Vocation requires reflection on what one believes to be the most important truths in the universe.

Vocation is not simply about one's major or future career. We believe that there are five realms where vocational reflection is important:

1) Work – How might you live out your vocation in the workplace? Vocational reflection most readily lends itself to the question of career or work. How one combines gifts, skills, passions, purposes, and convictions is the great challenge. How one sees work as service and even love toward one's fellow human beings is a great theological question.

2) Family – How might you understand your role within your family as a vocation? Whether it is about being a son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, uncle or aunt, father or mother, vocational discernment should center on how one thinks about his or her current role as well as future roles.

3) Church – How might you think about your role within the larger body of Christ? Vocational discernment is more than simply an individual journey; utilizing theological traditions and resources as well as thinking about what it means to be a part of an institution or a church should be a part of the reflective process.

4) Community – What does vocation have to do with social justice? Vocational reflection prompts questions about how to be engaged in the community in which one lives. How one connects his or her vocational discernment to a responsibility to work on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, and the disadvantaged is an important part of the discernment process.

5) World – How should you think about vocation in the context of the larger world? Christianity calls one to be a citizen of the world. It requires that one think of neighbor in the largest terms possible and therefore one needs to consider the implications of being a global citizen.

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