

"To Your Soul Be True: The Soul and Our Calling"
Luke 4:18-19

"What do you want to do when you grow up?" This familiar question shapes our early years, often implying that our career will define our entire lives. Even as adults, we rephrase it: "What do you do for a living?" or "What did you do before retirement?" Notice the consistent emphasis on **doing**. But what if the truth of who we're called to be goes far deeper than our work? Today, I invite you to consider your calling from a **soul perspective** – a timeless way of being in the world that is larger than any job or role.

This past January, I attended a workshop where an artist offered "soul portraits." I'd never heard of such a thing but was intrigued enough to ask her to draw one of me. Initially, the image meant little, but her interpretation was astonishing. It resonated deeply with my life as someone created to be an **alchemist**: someone who brings different realms of knowledge together to transform things for the better. This artist's passion was to help people remember the beautiful and powerful image of God within them – that each person has a unique way of being the light of God in the world.

What we **do** in life isn't always who we are as souls. While our work can align with our deepest selves, think of the many times we find ourselves in jobs we dislike or roles where we feel disconnected from grace and joy.

One simple yet profound book that illuminates our life's calling is *Healing the Purpose of Your Life* by Dennis, Sheila, and Matthew Linn. The authors use the beautiful image of our agreeing to a unique way of giving and receiving love before we even come to Earth. These agreements become our "sealed orders" from God, which we then uncover and live out in this world. They write, "Our sealed orders are first of all a **way of being**." For example, if your sealed orders — your covenant with God — are to bring wholeness to others, then your career might take many forms. And when you retire, you are still that soul. This is the overarching theme of your life.

A powerful guiding question emerges from this idea: **"What is the unique way I was created to give and receive love in this world?"**

Jesus understood his own essence, his unique way of giving and receiving love. In Luke 4:18-19, we hear Jesus announcing his "sealed orders" to the world. Let's listen:

18 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'

Here, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah, clearly stating his purpose. He came to Earth to give and receive love by bringing good news to those on the margins of society. This was his mission! Every action and teaching Jesus offered was perfectly aligned with this statement. He reached out to Samaritans (a group despised by his own people), to women, the outcast, the sick, and the oppressed. He taught about love, kindness, compassion, and justice. He called his people to practice the Year of Jubilee (the year of the Lord's favor) to release debts and land, offering everyone a chance to begin again. He redeemed those who seemed beyond redemption, like Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho who cheated people out of their money.

When challenged, Jesus knew exactly what to say and do because he was deeply grounded in his mission. In fact, immediately after proclaiming his soul's mission, the people in his own hometown were ready to throw him off a cliff! When the tempter offered him worldly power and esteem in the wilderness, he did not veer off course. When his disciples strayed from the ways of love—as in Luke chapter 9, when they wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village that refused to welcome Jesus—he was not swayed by their immaturity or fear. Even on the cross, Jesus never lost sight of his mission to love the world and bring good news to a broken world.

Jesus provides an incredible example of the power of being grounded in our soul's calling, our covenant with God. Through his love, we are invited today to discover or affirm our own soul covenant with God.

I invite you to engage in a healing process to rediscover or affirm your soul's calling, adapted from *Healing the Purpose of Your Life*. You might find it helpful to use your non-dominant hand for writing or drawing, as it can access deeper truths beyond habitual thinking:

1. **Quiet Your Soul:** Take a moment to grow quiet. Breathe in the love of God.
2. **Imagine Your Covenant:** You might imagine God speaking to you the words God spoke to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jeremiah 1:5). Imagine yourself with God before you were born. You and God have been discussing the special purpose of your life, and you have agreed to it. At the end of this conversation, God hands you an envelope containing your covenant.
3. **Receive Your Revelation:** What do you imagine is contained in that envelope? It might be helpful to revisit the question: "What is the unique way I was created to give and receive love in this world?" Trust whatever intuitions come to you, no matter how partial or incomplete.
4. **Deepen the Conversation:** If you wish, continue your conversation with God. Is there anything God wants to say to you now about your sealed orders, or anything you want to say to God?
5. **Share Your Truth:** If possible, share as much of your "sealed orders" as you wish with a trusted friend.

If nothing comes to you today, be patient. Return to this practice knowing that God is always there to guide you on this journey.

Once you discover and/or affirm this larger calling, all of life begins to fall into place. See it as the unchangeable thread woven through all your life's experiences, much like the poet William Stafford shared in his poem, "The Way It Is":

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread. Amen.