

Where *What Color Is Your Parachute* meets *Purpose Driven Life*

CRAFT YOUR CALLING

"A must read life changing book!"
- Inside Edge Publishing

Marc Casciani

A close-up, black and white photograph of a wolf's head, focusing on its eye which is glowing with a bright blue light. The wolf's fur is detailed and textured.

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AFTERWARD

DAY 1

EVERYBODY HAS A STORY

I'm sure you've heard the statement, "Everybody has a story." But have you ever really reflected on it? My guess is that it's usually used in a superficial way during *small talk* between two or more people. But it has so much meaning behind it, and in fact, truly understanding it denotes one's ability to empathize with someone else's story.

Here's a fair question to ask yourself, "Is my story working for me?" If not, then perhaps it's time to write a new story.

If your current story, which has been built over time as a function of your circumstances, experiences, and relationships, isn't taking you where you want to go, then what good is it? It's time to create the circumstances you want to craft the story you want. It's time to make lemonade out of lemons.

You don't need a new city, a new job, a new house or a new thing, but a new story. One that's different. One that's useful. One that's about opportunity and possibility. One that's about connection and trust. A story that's about your "why", "for what" and "with whom". A story that's in harmony with who you want to be. When I realized this, it changed my life for the better.

My Story

Life is messy. It took me 43 years to understand what that really means. Until then, I had experienced only two major

losses in my life that triggered grief, the loss of my maternal grandmother, and my dog. As pain associated with losing a loved one goes, one might say that's pretty good. In early 2013, little did I know what was in store for me. I was about to be hurt by the person I loved more than any other in this world and in a magnitude I would not have thought was humanly possible.

I was naive. My life experiences to that point did not prepare me for what I was about to experience. I was blindsided. I was unprepared. "What is the worst thing I could do to you?" my wife asked. And then I answered the question. In hindsight, I wish I would have given a different answer. However, had I answered differently I would not have been *refined in the fire*, which has been a blessing, albeit a painful blessing.

My wife and I met in 9th grade. We were 14 years old. Later in high school, we were the classic *sweetheart* couple. I played football and a few other sports. She was a cheerleader. We went to the same college and somehow found a way to stay together. She never finished, but went on to have a successful modeling career in New York City. I finished my BS and MS in engineering and then took a job to be close to her. We were engaged in 1992 and married in 1994.

I have moments where I ask a lot of questions. Why her? Was I obsessed with her because she was my first love? I used to think this was a big reason, but I know now it's not. Was it because I am so physically attracted to her? Absolutely. It was as true 30 years ago as it is today. If I were to design a woman for me, with every feature thoughtfully engineered to resonate with my hormones, then she would be the result. She has an innate attractiveness that I find irresistible.

And what about her personality? While on the surface she appears to not be my type because we're so different, I

have always been attracted to it. She's not boring, and I don't want boring. Perhaps deep down I knew she was what I needed. She has brought out dormant qualities in me that have made me a better person. She would say the same of me.

While my attraction to her physical beauty and personality provides some clues to the "why her" answer, it certainly does not provide the complete answer. There has to be more to explain why we are together. Our paths crossed 30 years ago and since, we've been on the same path, the same journey.

She has a dark side; in fact, she has always had it. I've never been able to completely understand it because I believe she wanted to protect me from it. In 2013, that all changed.

To simply say she had an affair is an understatement. It was premeditated. She wanted to really hurt me. She calculated with whom she would have it, a willing accomplice who would serve as the perfect terrorist for me. It was documented with more pictures than I can comprehend. I suspect there are more than her and I have accumulated in 30 years. She also constructed an alternate life on Facebook with him. It was the worst thing she could do to me, and she executed it to perfection.

Today, I suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is under control thanks to many techniques described in this book. I also suffer from depression, for which I take 20 mg of Escitalopram daily.

I share my story because by being vulnerable, I hope to become more human to you. What this book presents is not "ivory tower" thinking or some academic exercise. It's based on my real-life experiences and the need for relief from the pain. Rather than wallow in self-pity and depression, harbor hatred and the need for revenge, or seek relief by using drugs and alcohol, I decided to build my relationship with God. It is in that effort that something

miraculous happened. It was not easy, but very worthwhile. It was so worthwhile that I can honestly express gratitude for the pain because, without it, I would not have found true happiness. I would not have crafted my calling. I would not be living my life to the fullest and doing work that really matters. My favorite verse in the Bible is Romans 8:28, "*We know that in all things God works for the good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.*"

In all things give thanks, not *for all things*. Bad things happen because humans hurt other humans. We hurt each other. However, for those of us who have a genuine relationship with God, we are assured he will make a good result from the bad. It's a promise, provided you love him and submit to his will. This book is my testimony to Romans 8:28.



DAY 2

WHO'S IN YOUR BOAT?

When someone else's decision turns your life upside down, can you proceed with a calmness about you?

When someone else's mistake puts you in a difficult situation, do you gracefully handle the situation?

When you feel like you're losing everything, are you able to optimistically believe that good will result from the bad?

You are uniquely you, and you are comprised of body and spirit. Your spirit determines what your body does. It's your navigator.

On their own, our spirits are unreliable. They have a tendency to think of themselves first, others second. They are selfish in nature.

Because of this fact, our Creator gives us access to a helper, a spirit that can intercede for our spirits to help us make good decisions. The condition is that our spirits must want help. Have you ever tried to help someone who does not want help? It's impossible.

Let's call this spirit the Holy Spirit. If we allow our spirits to be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, then the answer to each of those above questions will be "yes".

It's really that simple.

Our personal lives and professional lives were never meant to be separate. They evolved that way largely because of the Industrial Age. Fortunately, the Information Age is giving us a chance to reclaim the original intent.

Therefore, let's presume your calling is the single thread that weaves everything together. It's the one thing you apply many different ways to many different situations, i.e. your role as father or mother, your job, your role as a friend, son or daughter, etc ... It's what you're good at, what you like doing moment to moment, day after day, year after year. When you do it, you don't even realize you're working. Work doesn't feel like work.

When your spirit is subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and you allow yourself to be under His leadership and accept His help, then you will get to know what your calling is. The process of cultivating your calling is quite remarkable and fun. The journey itself is not easy, but the concept is simple.

Please permit me to illustrate the concept with two stories. Let's say you make your livelihood catching fish. In fact, many stories in the Bible involve fishermen. Their lives and their work were interwoven.

Story #1: Jesus and his disciples were on a boat out at sea and a storm hit. The disciples became terrified as Jesus slept like a rock. They woke him up out of fear for their lives and upon waking, Jesus calmly assured them not to be afraid and then proceeded to quiet the wind and the waves.

Story #2: After fishing for 11 hours and coming up empty, a few disciples returned to Jesus tired and depressed. He told them to immediately go back out to deep waters and cast down their nets. He also offered to join them. While skeptic, they listened to him and proceeded to catch an abundance of fish. It was the same lake, same boat, same nets, same fishermen and fish. The difference was Jesus' presence in the boat. It was a game-changer.

Now, Jesus modeled the concept of Holy Spirit subordination. He allowed himself to be under its leadership and accepted its help. He showed us how to do it. We only need to study his character, his habits, how he treated

people, how he handled day to day situations. He's the ultimate player-coach. We have the benefit of knowing how he felt about things and can follow his guidance.

In both stories above, the disciples had Jesus in their boat. And because his spirit was in harmony with the Holy Spirit, it too was in their boat. In these stories, the boat is synonymous with our life's work. When we have the Holy Spirit in our boat, our life and our work is blessed with an abundance that otherwise appears out of reach. It's what guides us to build our craft.

It begs the question, "Who's in your boat?"

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