

Know Your Why: Finding and Fulfilling Your Calling in Life

By Ken Costa

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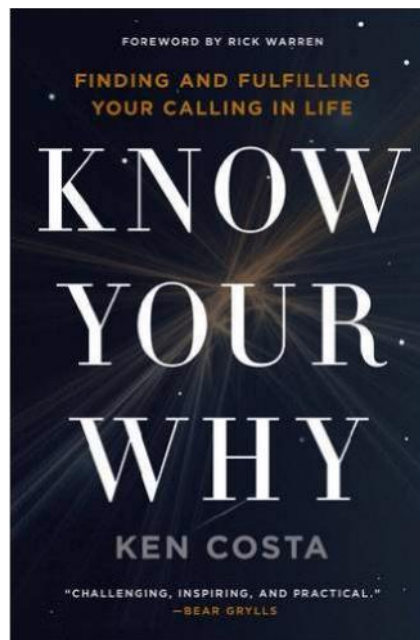
If you buy this book, be careful, it might just change the direction of your life! Don't get me wrong – I really do hope that as many people as possible will read this book. But if they do, they must be prepared to be deeply challenged as they allow God's Spirit to lead them towards their God-given callings.

The book begins by posing a question we all ask at some stage in our lives: 'Why am I here?' (p.xix). The calling of every Christian, Costa says, is to follow the 'Great Commandment of Christ' to love God with all that we are and our neighbours as ourselves; to respond to the Great Commission of Christ by making disciples; and to follow the 'great call to compassion': "act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8) in obedience to Christ. Costa knows that in the complexity of our world, with its dizzying array of choices, identifying one's calling is no easy task. Nevertheless, he is determined to help every Christian who reads the book to discover their calling.

The first three chapters therefore explore the meaning of calling or vocation. We are 'Called to Passion' (ch. 1), to recognise the unique desires and gifts that God has graciously given to each of us to use for the good of others and his glory. We are also 'Called to Engage' (ch. 2), responding to the many injustices in society not by retreating into Christian sub-cultures but rather by being empowered by God's Spirit to live as salt and light. We should therefore see our workplaces as 'a continuation of our worship and love of God, not an interruption of God's work from Sunday to Sunday' (p.28). This chapter is especially helpful to anyone struggling with 'inferiority complexes regarding their vocations' (p.27) as Costa demonstrates why every lawful form of work can be a calling from God.

As we live out our vocations we are 'Called to Flourish' (ch. 3), not just to get by or settle for 'satisfactory underperformance' but to recognise that Jesus calls us to

"abundant life" (p.56). Instead of falsely believing that our work is insignificant, we can remember that God often uses small acts of obedience to bring about large results. And rather than being constrained by other people's expectations of us, we are challenged to recognise that 'only you know the gifts that God has given to you...The question is, will you be intentional about using them?' (p.60)



Chapters 4-6 paint a realistic picture of the difficulties involved in discerning and stepping into our callings. These chapters are packed full of the practical wisdom that comes from Costa's reflections on the Bible, the pursuit of his own calling and the years he has spent advising younger Christians. He suggests 'Ten Winning Ways in the Waiting Room' (ch. 4 'Called to Wait'); 5 steps for 'choosing well' (ch. 5 'Called to Choose'); and 'five "fear flippers" – tools that will help us turn from fear to faith' (ch. 6 'Called to Courage'). Alongside this practical guidance we find motivations to see the challenges that come our way (as we wait, choose and step out in faith) as

opportunities. God uses painful seasons of waiting to grow our dependence on him and our Christlikeness. We can learn to fail well and to fight the fears that stop us from stepping into our callings.


In the final chapters we are challenged to press on in our callings and to keep the flame that fuels them alive. We need to grow by learning how to say 'no' to anything that might distract us (ch. 7 'Called to Focus'). More practical wisdom follows with 'steps to deal with distractions', including guidance on sustaining our callings by taking time each day to read the Bible, pray and listen to God's promptings. Next, we are 'Called to Persevere' (ch. 8) and to dream big, looking beyond the disappointments (the 'mountains' that seem to rise up before us) to pursue the work God is directing us to. We are reminded that 'sometimes our God takes his time in

removing those mountains, as he teaches us about his faithfulness, tests our trust in him and edifies our characters' (p.163). Persevering and dealing with setbacks must all also take place in the context of worship (chapter 9 'Called to Worship'), the place 'where our callings start, are strengthened, and are sustained' (p.179).

The final chapter ('Called to Break Borders') leaves the reader with a stirring challenge to 'confront the borders of our comfort zones in the power of the Spirit' (p.200). We are reminded that in a world that desperately needs to hear the gospel and to be filled with Christians who confront injustice, 'God is not calling someone else. He's calling you. Calling you to join him in the transforming work of the Kingdom of God.' (p.202)

This is a realistic, down-to-earth book that pulls no punches about the challenges of our world and of living out our callings within it. But, alongside this realism, it is also a hope-filled book brimming with encouragements from Scripture and real-life stories that 'earth' the principles he sets out. Many of these stories encourage

the reader not to limit their expectations of what God might choose to do through their callings. In others Costa shows a raw honesty as he details some of the hardest moments in his pursuit of his own calling. Above all, Costa's passion to help people to discover their God-given vocations spills out over every page and I finished the book with the feeling of having spent time with a wise friend and mentor.

This is a very suitable book to put into the hands of those who are starting out in the working world, as well as being full of material relevant to those considering changing jobs or facing other big life decisions. If I have one criticism, it is that Costa could have usefully given more advice on making the most out of the book. A study guide at the end of each chapter would have been very helpful, especially as it is an excellent resource for use in churches or small groups. But this is a minor point. *Know Your Why* is an exceptionally helpful book. It encouraged me in the pursuit of my own calling and I pray it will do the same for many others. I have no hesitation in suggesting that you get a copy, read it, and give it away! 



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Christian values in a secular business world?

FiBQ's editors put out the challenge to you, our readers, to create a set of Christian values that would bring broad acceptance in our multi-cultural, multi-religious, non-religious secular business world. (See the final paragraph of 'In This Issue', page 1.)

Phil Jump asks (see p.30):

As the reality of a set of mono-cultural, moral norms has increasingly diminished, might this have simply created a vacuum in which financial return has become the only remaining communal indicator of achievement? If society's tectonic plates are now shifting, is this an opportunity for a new and shared moral framework to emerge? If so, what common values and principles will define us?

Felix Breidenstein asserts (see p.14):

Churches and Christian individuals earn the right to the prophetic call – so fundamental in the Old Testament – to warn companies and corporations that they also are liable before God.

Unwelcome though it may be in secular Europe, Church leaders do have the right to call the corporation and its leadership to frame their actions in compliance with a God who has established in the Ten Commandments a pattern of behaviour that all human institutions must live by now, and by which they will ultimately be judged.

Religious education in schools may offer an insight. Increasingly, Christian teachers and speakers at school assemblies are talking 'values' without specifically calling

them 'Christian values'. These values are often set in the light of Jesus' parables – the Good Samaritan gives insight into the 'For whom am I responsible' stakeholder question; the equal payment to the farm workers speaks of ensuring everyone makes a living; Luke 12.48 has a word to employers and well-paid professionals: 'To whom much is given, much also will be required.'

The Editors' challenge

Might these value-concepts be helpful in formulating a business ethic for the globalised 21st Century? And is it helpful or counter-productive to indicate that the source of these values lies in the Christian framework bequeathed to us in the Gospel narrative, the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth? Your thoughts and ideas solicited!
The Editors