



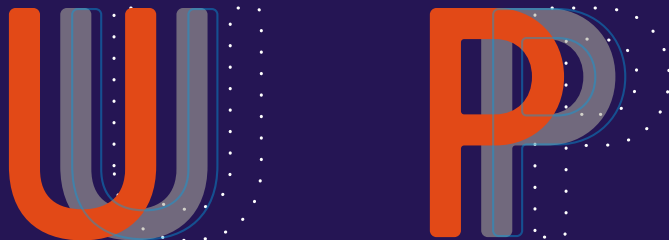
NAVIGATING CALLING



AFTER COLLEGE



PAIGE WILEY & LUKE BOBO



PAIGE WILEY AND LUKE BOBO

WORKED UP

NAVIGATING CALLING
AFTER COLLEGE



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Table of Contents

07 **Introduction**

08 CHAPTER ONE:
The Big Story

14 CHAPTER TWO:
Dispelling Myths

22 CHAPTER THREE:
Don't Panic

30 CHAPTER FOUR:
**Work is Service.
Passion is Privilege.**

36 CHAPTER FIVE:
**Finding
Your Calling**

42 CHAPTER SIX:
**Cultivating
Virtue**

49 **Now What?**

50 **Additional
Reading**

52 **About
Made to
Flourish**

53 **Acknowl-
edgements**

Cultivating Virtue

LUKE BOBO

Whether you know it or not, you are participating in a social system known as the economy, and upon graduation you will continue that participation through your daily work. Your daily work — a creative service — will contribute to a “mysterious, enormous, and organic collaboration with others for the sake of the life of the world.”¹⁰

Volitional and moral human beings are the engine behind the economy. This implies, of course, that our economy has an urgent need for virtuous workers. This need for virtuous workers begs two questions. One, “What am I becoming today?” and two, “How will I cultivate virtues such as love for God and love for neighbor?” Life and work are more than finding the right fit or settling into a comfortable place of employment. All of life requires us to “live, move, and have our being” in a virtuous way, hopefully making the world around us a little better. This only occurs, though, when we live in such a way that our responses to life, including our jobs, are virtuous, or seeking of the good, true, and beautiful in all pursuits, decisions, and actions.

formation or malformation

Workplaces, by the mere reason that we will spend more than 90,000

hours in them over our lifetimes, can form us and malform us. Even if you work remotely, you are still being formed by your work culture. So active participation in our spiritual formation is vital.

So how do we resist this tidal wave of being malformed? The Bible shows us the antidote is relentlessly and rhythmically cultivating godly virtues, for a lifetime.

God uses the workplace, along with the church, as cultivating virtue schoolhouses, to grow us into maturity. And our maturity has a goal: a maturity with a “stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (Eph 4:13).

liturgical audit

Our discrete daily habits, which subversively and unconsciously become daily liturgies, reveal much about what kind of persons we are: virtuous or not virtuous. Our habits also reveal what or who we truly love and serve. Our daily habits reveal what story or cultural narrative we are living by, and they reveal who or what we truly worship.

The first step to reorder our loves and to cultivate godly virtues is to perform an inventory. Reflect on the rituals and rhythms of your life. Reflect upon your daily, weekly, monthly, and annual routines. These rituals,

rhythms, and routines add up to daily, weekly, monthly, and annual liturgies. To identify these liturgies, we need to ask, “What is my vision of the good life?” Or “What are other competing cultural narratives?” Our vision of the good life and these cultural narratives fuel our liturgies.

The goal here is to uncover idols you love, serve, and therefore, worship in place of or alongside of God. Loving, serving, and worshipping idols is not benign; loving, serving, and worshipping idols shape our habits and, consequently, our loves, affections, desires, thirsts, and hungers. In short, idols malform us and we will become like them if left unchecked (Ps 115:8).

“Virtues,
quite simply,
are good
moral
habits.”

—James K. A. Smith

Idolatry Inventory¹¹

Identify two to three statements that might describe something you love too much, or which you derive too much of your worth from.

I only have worth if /life only has meaning if..

1. **Power idolatry** I have power and influence over others.
2. **Approval idolatry** I am loved and respected by _____.
3. **Comfort idolatry** I have this kind of pleasure experience, a particular quality of life.
4. **Control idolatry** I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of _____.
5. **Helping idolatry** People are dependent on me and need me.
6. **Dependence idolatry** Someone is there to protect me and keep me safe.
7. **Independence idolatry** I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities to take care of someone.
8. **Work idolatry** I am highly productive and getting a lot done.
9. **Achievement idolatry** I am being recognized for my accomplishments, and I am excelling in my work.
10. **Materialism idolatry** I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions.
11. **Religion idolatry** I am adhering to my religion's moral codes and accomplished in its activities.
12. **Individual person idolatry** This one person is in my life and happy to be there, and/or happy with me.
13. **Irreligion idolatry** I feel I am totally independent of organized religion and am living by a self-made morality.
14. **Racial/cultural idolatry** My race and culture is ascendant and recognized as superior.
15. **Inner ring idolatry** A particular social grouping or professional grouping or other group lets me in.
16. **Family idolatry** My children and/or my parents are happy and happy with me.
17. **Relationship idolatry** Mr./Ms. Right is in love with me.
18. **Suffering idolatry** I am hurting, in a problem; only then do I feel worthy of love or able to deal with guilt.
19. **Ideology idolatry** My political or social cause is making progress and ascending in influence or power.
20. **Image idolatry** I have a particular kind of look or body image.

substitution: old for new

Once you have completed your personal inventory, ask, “What are the habits that support these idols?” For example, one habit that supports work idolatry (see 8) is routinely skipping a Sabbath rest. One habit that supports image idolatry (see 20) is being obsessed with fashioning and managing the most perfect and attention-getting image on Instagram.

Substitute these bad habits with virtue forming habits. And we must practice these good habits so they become like muscle memory.

There are three ways to acquire new habits/virtues.

First, we learn virtues by entering Jesus’ apprenticeship program. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus offers us a gracious invitation to his brand of apprenticeship or discipleship. Jesus is inviting us to follow him, to serve him, and to learn from him so that we can live freely and lightly.

Second, we learn virtues by imitating exemplars of virtuous living. Scripture encourages us to imitate virtuous people. Consider the Apostle Paul’s words to the Corinthian church, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Third, learning virtues takes practice because “good moral habits are like internal dispositions to the good—they are character traits that become woven into who you are so that you are the kind of person who is included to be compassionate, forgiving, and so forth.”¹²

Reflect on what old habits need to be replaced with new habits. What required practices come to mind to cultivate these new habits? For example, to avoid work idolatry, routinely practice rest. To avoid image idolatry, take regular and intentional social media sabbaths. Share these practices with a friend of virtue who will keep you accountable.

We should issue a warning at this point: These new habits must be grounded in Christ, through the disciplines, to avoid falling victim to legalism or creating a form of false piety. Have a long view; establishing virtuous habits will be a lifetime journey.

Give yourself a break and be patient with this life-long cultivation of new habits and virtues. You aren’t alone in the virtue formation process. A combination of community and the Holy Spirit help us become who we are meant to be.

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¹⁰ *For the Life of the World (FLOW) Video Curriculum*, Creative Service, Episode 3.

¹¹ This inventory was originally created by Tim Keller.

¹² James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016) 16.

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NAVIGATING CALLING

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AFTER COLLEGE

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PAIGE WILEY & LUKE BOBO

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Navigating life after college is hard. Friendships change, transitions are tough, and answering the "right" call to work may feel like a job in and of itself. Regardless of how you feel about this new chapter - excited, enthusiastic, anxious or nervous - answering the "call" to work after years of endless homework, curated schedules, and fewer limits on free time can often leave us feeling worked up, for one reason or another.

If you're in a season of change after college, *Worked Up* is for you. It's for all the weary college students, the stressed-out high schoolers, and those shackled by anxiety surrounding the future.

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Find more resources at
madetoflourish.org