

Week 43 Practice

All of us, along the way, absorbed messages about what matters in life and what doesn't. Often, we are told either implicitly or explicitly that success has to do with recognition, popularity, monetary gain, and material wealth. In churches, we often receive the message that the only actions that matter are those which directly save souls for eternity. Other times, we are taught both explicitly and implicitly that the only lives that matter are the lives that "make a difference," which usually means affecting the world in some well-recognized way. And the list of our false criteria for what matters goes on and on.

This week, we are going to challenge the voices from our past with regard to the meaningfulness of particular vocations or callings or passions. First, take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle, dividing it into two columns. At the top of the left half, write "Meaningful." At the top of the right half, write "Meaningless." Now list every job, career, passion, vocation, or calling you can think of, placing them into one of the two categories, based upon the messages of your youth. For instance, based upon the voices from my past, "missionary" or "pastor" would definitely go in the "Meaningful" column, while "attorney" and "environmental protection" would go in the "Meaningless" column.

Now, take a second sheet of paper, replicate the columns from the first sheet, and based upon the voices from your past, place all of the passions you have identified so far in these months of living in one column or another. Next to any passion in the "Meaningless" column, elaborate by writing down the messages from your past about that passion (e.g., "Environmental protection is a waste of time because there's nothing wrong with the environment, and even if there is, what could one person do to make a difference?" or "You can't make a living as an artist, study something that can earn you a paycheck").

Pay special attention to these passions placed in the "Meaningless" column. Based upon the messages from your past, you might be particularly likely to overlook, neglect, or reject these passions. Based upon the messages from your past, you might actually be here on this planet to do something you've always considered meaningless. Conclude this week by talking back to the voices from your past. Tell them you're not here to make lots of money or make a big difference.

You're here to be you.