



The Art of Work: A Proven Path to Discovering What You Were Meant to Do

Jeff Goins

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Jeff Goins, a brilliant new voice counting Seth Godin and Jon Acuff among his fans, explains how to abandon the status quo and live a life that matters with true passion and purpose.

The path to your life's work is difficult and risky, even scary, which is why few finish the journey. This is a book about discovering your life's work, that treasure of immeasurable worth we all long for. It's about the task you were born to do.

As Jeff Goins explains, the search begins with passion but does not end there. Only when our interests connect with the needs of the world do we begin living for a larger purpose. Those who experience this intersection experience something exceptional and enviable. Though it is rare, such a life is attainable by anyone brave enough to try.

Through personal experience, compelling case studies, and current research on the mysteries of motivation and talent, Jeff shows readers how to find their vocation and what to expect along the way.

The Art of Work: A Proven Path to Discovering What You Were Meant to Do Details

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Nancy H Vest says

I had high hopes when I started this book. I've read books by this author before, and I have enjoyed many of his blogposts.

The part of the introduction where the author talks about letting go of what could have been led me to write of list of what to let go of and what to embrace instead. It was cathartic. Then came a brick wall.

I was dragging myself through the first chapter which is entitled Listening to Your Life. It all seemed rather touchy-feely, vague, and 'out there' to me. I was about ready to put the book down and stop reading altogether, but an acquaintance who'd finished the book encouraged me to read on. I'm glad I listened. The parts that were bothersome in this chapter were completely clear by the end of the book.

This book delves into the why's and how's of meaningful work in ways I hadn't considered. The author provides real world examples to illustrate his points, and he uses people from all walks of life. He helps readers to see that there is value in nearly any kind of work, and the value isn't necessarily a money thing. (What work doesn't have value?...illegal things,stuff like that. My assertion here, not anything the author blatantly says in the book)

I underlined and highlighted again and again, and if a friend wanted to borrow my copy of this book I would instead buy him a copy of his own. I wouldn't want to risk losing the notes, etc, that I made while reading.

Read this book. It's worth the time.

Lisa says

Rarely do I breeze through a non-fiction book, especially one that's more business-minded. But that's what I love about Jeff Goins' writing. It's creative, inspiring and encouraging, and not once while reading The Art of Work did I find myself bored or the writing dull. (I received an advance PDF copy of the book as a result of preordering.)

The Art of Work will change your idea of calling and propel you toward embracing your purpose. Goins' principles and observations are so simple they should be obvious but I found myself renewed and challenged by his way of thinking. Thoughts like calling being a journey and not a one-time event and how a life lived in multiple arenas is not chaotic but a portfolio. I will refer back to this book often to practice the principles and listen to my life.

If you're not sure your life has a plan, or you're following a plan and now find yourself lost, or you're facing a career transition, this is a book that needs to be in your hands, not just on your shelf. Goins lays out an easy-to-follow guide that can be tailored to whatever your life entails. It's not a how-to book in that it will give you a list of steps to follow to find your calling. It's an invitation to listen and act based on what is already a part of your life.

I'd give this book more stars if I could!

Kymerly says

Instead of pushing you to complete lists and brainstorming sessions in the search for your calling, Jeff takes a more introspective and relaxed approach. Encouraging readers to listen and observe, find common threads in tasks they enjoy, and not feel like a failure for changing tracks, it's a refreshing read.

The stories are of 'normal' people, not the usual famous names seen in many of these books. This makes the search for a calling seem more realistic.

There are religious threads, and one 'illustrative' story, so this book won't be to everyone's taste.

Bethany Turner says

I read Jeff's blog and listen to his podcast, so when the opportunity came to pre-order this book I took it. "The Art of Work recaptures the ancient understanding of vocation as more than a job, or even a career, but as a passion-fueled calling that makes each day an exciting adventure." This book won't give you the answer to what your calling is, but it sure helped me think through my calling and life in general. And I am adding it to my must read every year list. "Your calling is not a single event in your life; it's the whole body of work you make - including your job, your relationships, and the legacy you leave behind."

Katie M. Reid says

This book is not just for writers, it's for all those who want to pursue work that matters

Throughout this book Jeff shares accounts from around the world of those who live(d) their callings. A common thread appeared through these accounts: mistakes were made, they learned to pivot when things didn't go as expected, they kept going and were true to their convictions.

The Art of Work is interesting, practical and inspiring.

My favorite sections came at the end—so be sure to read it all the way through. In fact, as you will see below, page 167 spoke the loudest to this try-hard woman.

"Sometimes all the little things in life aren't interruptions to our calling. They are the most important part." (The Art of Work, pg. 167).

As I write this post little ones are interrupting and I'm not handling it well—not handling their hearts well as I snap and say, "Quiet! I'm trying to work here." But, as we talked about before, maybe the small things are the most important after all.

"As you endeavor to do something amazing with your life, don't forget that without people to support your dream, your work will always be incomplete" (The Art of Work, pg. 167).

Tonia Harris says

I just finished crying all the way through the conclusion of this book. I joined an online writer's group reading this and it was one of the best decisions of my summer. Sometimes, it's very easy to get lost in the forest- to forget we are our own compass and that we have everything we need to commit and fulfill our life's calling. And that it never ends, not even when we die. There's this word, legacy, and what it means is how we, instead of working to live, live to work, to be our best selves, and how this can impact others. Well, Mr. Goins, you're leaving a fine legacy. It's touched me and I hope I can utilize all I'm learning to do the same.

I had already been part of a group building a library for our small communities, but the day to day grind, the red tape, the politics, the trying to share the vision with others who can't believe in something so large- I was overwhelmed. This book broke it down for me. That it's all a process and calling is not about doing something on your own, and how much impact we can have by living our daily lives the best way possible.

It also helped me to say, "I am a poet." That may sound like such a small thing to many, but knowing this clarified so many things for me and now I feel like I'm on the right path. The path may throw me for a loop or several, be hard, scary, uncomfortable, but I know it's the true path. I'm not just a poet with words, but with my life. Sometimes, a book like this can open you up to what was already there, obvious to perhaps many but yourself.

I am on fire again. Only it's not a consuming fire. It's life-affirming and my hope is I leave behind a legacy of light and warmth for many others.

Great book. Go out and get your copy. :)

Siska says

Despite of the high rating, I somehow did not quite enjoy this book, let alone being inspired by it.

One of the main values of this type of writing is how the writer connect between one source to another, and then bring an interesting conclusion from these connections. To this I feel Goins did not do well enough. His points are mostly superficial, very few of them feel original or made me feel as if they came from meaningful eureka moments. Every now and then, he would quote some good writers such as Handy, and these are the parts where I enjoyed most.

I wonder if maybe the ideas were brilliant, only that they were not being properly laid. Some parts were longwinded and there were quite a few unnecessary repetitions, especially when describing the real life stories. So many parts are quite boring.

Regardless, there are still one or two meaningful propositions, which I appreciate, and while I do not understand how it can be, I hope this book continues to inspire people.

Grace says

How does one classify this book? It's equal parts self-help, inspirational, amazing stories, and heart felt passion for life. Yet, is it something so much more raw than any of these books. Within these pages you'll find a series of insights that describe every human's primal need to do something *better* with their life.

Goins uses a combination of stories around the world, purposely choosing "normal" folks that we do not see their faces plastered all over the internet and top news sites to weave through the lessons he has learnt from them about the nature of finding our calling and vocation in life. He choose these people by design to show us that finding our callings is not something grand, but rather something beautifully complex, somewhat accidental, and not at all contrived. It's a delicate balance that has blindness on one side and addiction on the other.

Goins takes us on a trip through the stages that one usually goes through to find their vocation, see it through, and leave a legacy. From wishing, to listening, to discovery, to doing, and finally to legacy, the whole story of "how to be great" is there. The point that impressed upon me the most is how we all need to be great in our own way, not in someone else's way. What is "great" for one is not necessarily the "greatness" for another. And, oddly, it's rarely what we think it should be.

Now, I should warn those of delicate sensibilities that cannot tolerate anything with a religious content. On pages 91 - 97 Goins uses a bible story to illustrate a particular point he's trying to make about listening to the cue of your life to figure out what your calling and vocation is. Sometimes it's obvious, but sometimes it is not. For those of you that can't stomach a little of this sort of discourse, feel free to skip these pages; it will be a great book without them.

The book ends with a summary of sorts, which I must say, is an asset to the book as you can get overwhelmed in reading it, then want to go back to your notes and be out of sorts. The appendices do a great job of summarising everything, giving actionable steps, and getting you going after the entirety of the book has made you restless and wanting to hear your own calling.

Emily Mills says

I read this fast- maybe not the best for absorbing but I will reread for sure. The writing style and content kept me interested- I didn't feel like I needed to take a break.

I feel like this was a good, gentle read. A lot of books in this genre can be so encouraging and informing that it feels fast-paced and like the author is shouting at you- "FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS ALREADY!" I feel like Jeff's writing style is more calm, collected, and gradual. Over the course of the book he brings up good points which build on each other. Segues from one point to the next are intuitive.

The questions at the end- I thought they were wonderful. Too often books preach great content but then leave you hanging as to how to apply the concepts to your own life. Some readers might not even know how to do that without a prompt. Helping readers evaluate their own lives is an important step too many authors overlook or choose not to do.

Leah Good says

After seeing a friend frequently retweet the author of this book and then review the book itself on her blog I decided to read it myself. Since I am currently between jobs and finding it difficult to determine what's next,

it seemed especially applicable.

The Art of Work is an encouraging book. It pulls "pipe dreams" down from their lofty but unreachable heights and encourages honest evaluation and planning to make dreams a reality. "Anything less than such proactivity is a cheap imitation of the life you were meant to live," the author encourages. This is a book that redeemes confusion and failures and turns them into stepping stones on the path to reaching your calling. When presenting one man's story, Goins summaries, "He didn't come to his life's work by success. He found it through failure."

Because I read most of this book while tired and a bit discouraged, I found it a little hard to focus and some of the stories difficult to relate to. However, there were a lot of encouraging nuggets that I tucked away into my memory vault to draw continued inspiration from.

If you're thinking of reading this book, check my friend's review out. It's a very well thought out summary of the positive aspects of the book.

JonathanT says

Answering a call will sometimes feel that way. It won't make sense and may even open you up to rejection and criticism, but in your heart you will know it's right. How? There will be confirmation. You will take a step, and things will happen. Opportunities will reveal themselves. Through the words of others and even in the pit of your stomach, you will know this is the path to take- not because it's easy or safe, but because it is right.

Hm. Okay. So my question here is: WHAT ON EARTH.

It's getting two stars, because I'm tired of political correctness, I'm tired of flowery language, and I'm tired of authors trying to beat around the bush. And I'm not quite harsh enough to give it one star, heh.

On the one hand, this is filled with inspiring stories of people who rose above difficulties and challenges in their own lives. It's got some great themes about determination, hard work, and overcoming obstacles. It's very well written, with a style that's never choppy or hard to read.

BUT. That's where the good stuff comes to an abrupt stop. The idea behind this book is actually kinda brilliant- but the execution is fatally flawed.

It's a book about finding your calling, and it's from an author who I THINK (don't quote me on this) claims to be Christian. And yet there's something conspicuously missing here: God.

Instead of reading the Bible and praying, the author advocates things like 'listening to your life' to determine what your calling might be. What does he mean by this statement? I read a whole chapter about it, and between the flowery language and evasive, vague structure, I have no clue.

Whispers of New Age are strung throughout this. But it's almost always more implied than direct. Although at one part I got hit with this:

You have everything you need to be your whole self; it's already in you. Now you just have to become it.

The statement above is easily the strongest reference to New Age in the entire book- and like I said, it's still not all that direct. The parallel between this statement and New Age seems clear to me, but then again, it's

hard to tell exactly what the author means by this statement and other statements that are even less clear.

Plus, author Brennan Manning and his book *Ruthless Trust* are cited twice (I think) in the extensive list of notes in the back of the book, and since Manning was a well-known Catholic mystic, this says a lot. But at the same time, could Mr. Goins just be citing Manning out of ignorance?

It's hard to tell anything really. This is just so, so, so incredibly vague and politically correct that it's near impossible to tell what the author himself believes.

He seems to advocate some sort of New Age form of Christianity, but there's nothing explicit in here that advocates the view that he has a belief in EITHER. (He does tell a Bible story at one point, but he avoids mentioning God or pointing out that the story came from the Bible.)

Basically this frustrated me to no end. The question here is: What exactly does this author believe? And what is he trying to say? It's like abstract art- only instead of colors thrown onto a canvas, it's words thrown onto a page. And it left me scratching my head and saying "WHAT DOES IT MEAN??"

Dwayne Morris says

I understand that Jeff and/or publishers titled this book in such a way as to hit a larger audience. However, this book is more about finding your God-given purpose/calling than it is about your work. I get that they go hand-in-hand.

It's FULL of nuggets that you can use for conversations with others about determining what they want to do "when they grow up", even if they are 50 years old.

GREAT work, Jeff! Congratulations on another well-written book!

Voni says

This book far surmounted what I expected. I read it on my Kindle, highlighting countless pages. Now I'm going to print those pages, so I will have a handy reference of notes on my computer. I'm 82... and have learned over the years about calling and how that applies in my life. However, I was surprised by what I learned from Jeff's illustrations: they enriched my own understanding, helping me think and better clarify those things I still long to do (like get my first book finished this year.)

Jeff is strengthening and encouraging thousands of everyday people as he shares what he is learning. His writing style makes me think he's sitting at our table with a cup of coffee in his hand, talking, as I listen and understand.

Keep writing, Jeff - and come sit at our table anytime.

Conrad Zero says

If this book doesn't change your life, then you haven't read it.

The Art of Work is an excellent book, but you should expect no less from Jeff Goins. Highly motivational, inspirational and well crafted, this is a book you'll want to keep around and read several times during your stay here on Earth.

More than just a bunch of concepts, The Art of Work contains real-life stories about real people searching for their "calling." A meaningful career path. A life well-lived. The book shows you how to find that path and walk it, all the way from Preparation through Action to Completion. The highly useful Appendix has lists of exercises and discussion questions for you to turn theory into practice.

I don't like the cover. Crashed paper airplane? Representing boredom in a dead end career, I guess? And the title is sure to get this book lost in a sea of all the other "Art of..." books. Should have used "calling" or "purpose" or "meaning" in the title instead, as they have more to do with the content than either "art" or "work." A book about your calling sounds better to me than a book about work. At least it doesn't have the word "girl" in the title.

Covers and titles aside, nothing can tarnish the 5-star content inside this book. If nothing else, you'll buy this book thinking it's going to get you out of your drab cubicle and into a corner office. But instead... you'll be amazed.

-Zero

Michelle says

Sometimes originality isn't in dreaming up something no one has ever thought of before, but in synthesizing many different pieces into a cohesive and inspiring whole. This book offers the opportunity to change your thinking about work in a similar way Steven Pressfield did with creativity in "The War of Art".

This isn't a self- help book full of celebrity heroes on seemingly special journeys unavailable to the rest of us, it is full of everyday relatable people whose lives didn't turn out as they expected and what they discovered when they changed those expectations.

The last reviewer, Grace, said it perfectly:

"...finding our callings is not something grand, but rather something beautifully complex, somewhat accidental, and not at all contrived. It's a delicate balance that has blindness on one side and addiction on the other."

The book is organized into a series of themes that, when broken down don't attempt to define 'THE path' which doesn't exist, but a way to open ourselves up to our own unique journey.

Even if you have discovered your 'calling', Jeff offers a new way to look at what that means. It is realistic. The struggles on our journey, obstacles in practice and apprenticeship can forge our characters and highlight what is uniquely our own. A change in thinking, awareness and the reframing failure is not only a good idea, it's necessary. The book encourages us to consider redefining the meaning of success and legacy.

I find the weaknesses of the book to be in the narrative. Jeff can be a little too economical with his storytelling, making this reader's connection with his interviewees tenuous. He breaks the narratives to make a point and sometimes this is ok, but it makes some chapters too choppy. This is why I couldn't quite give it a perfect rating. The book was really a 4.5 star experience.

There are Christian overtones to the book, but they aren't intrusive or proselytizing. Take those snippets or leave them.

The Art of Work is the second book I have read from Jeff Goins and he is living up to his potential. I am going to be reading this book again when my print copy arrives and getting out the old school highlighter and writing in the margins. The "Art of Work" can remind us to open our minds, be willing to let go of our expectations and LISTEN to life.

Highly recommended.
