FREE GIFT — A master-list of 75 questions designed to help you clarify your sense of calling and passion. Adapted from *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*and *Vital Signs: Discovering and Sustaining Your Passion for Life*, by Gregg Levoy

**CALLINGS QUESTIONS**

1) If you were standing at the Pearly Gates and asked what you liked best about your experience of a human life, what would you list? (Be specific; don’t say friendships, name names. Don't say nature, name places.)

2) What is the most prominent quote or affirmation you have tacked/taped/framed up in your house and/or office?

3) Italian writer Alberto Moravia said it’s important to know “the one problem you were born to understand.” What might that be for you?

4) Name a subject(s) you can speak about with genuine authority because you’ve lived it personally?

Living in another country

Growing up in a family with a disability

Being a cancer survivor

Supporting yourself as an artist

5) What section of the bookstore do you always go to first, or spend the most amount of time in?

6) What book(s) are you in the middle of reading right now? What’s the theme(s)?

7) If you’ve ever thought that someday you might write a book, what would the subject of that book be?

8) What have always been your most natural abilities? The courses you always aced in school, the skills that always came easily to you?

9) A Harvard psychologist named Howard Garnder popularized the idea of “multiple intelligences,” rather than a simple (and limiting) notion of IQ as based on old IQ-tests. Rank the following multiple intelligences in order, from those that most closely describe yourself, to those that least describe you:

Linguistic intelligence (word smart)

Logical/mathematical (number/logic smart)

Visual/Spatial (picture smart)

Musical (music smart)

Interpersonal (people smart)

Intrapersonal (self/self-reflective smart)

Naturalist (nature/environment smart)

10) If you were to go back to school---not for the sake of establishing a new career or making money, necessarily, but just for the love of learning---what subject(s) would you most want to study?

11) If you could test-drive an entirely different profession than the one you’re currently in---or a different version of the one you’re in---what would it be?

12) If money and logistic were no object, what 3 activities would you most love to pursue/experience?

13) When were you the happiest? What was going on at that/this point in your life?

14) Name an experience you consider among the high-points of your life (could be as simple as sitting in front of a sunset or as elaborate as travelling in Europe for a summer). Write the ingredients list of this experience. What were the factors that made this experience a high-point for you?

15) Have you had a dream in the past week that really struck you? What was the dream about, and what was your interpretation of it? (Or perhaps just the last dream that you vividly remember?)

16) If you ever found yourself at a career crossroads (say, coming out of college, or out of a marriage), and had to make a choice between one of several directions to go in, in making whatever choice you made, what was the road **not** taken?

17) Were there directions or choices in life that you parents either explicity or implicity did not want you to go in? (It might have been different for each parent.)

18) You’re going to a Halloween party next week: what do you really want to come dressed as?

19) Name a decision in your life that really needs to be made now, not back-burnered another month or another year?

20) Name something people have been telling you all your life, about yourself. Something positive and something negative.

21) If you had an hour’s worth of prime-time television, and an international audience, what subject would you talk about for that hour?

22) If I were to say to you, “Just Go For It!” what might the “It” in “Go For It” be?

23) What would you say is the most satisfying accomplishment of your life so far?

24) What is the most important thing *missing* from you life right now?

25) What act of boat-rocking would you engage in right now that would shake your life up, for the sake of helping it be stimulated, challenged, grow, adapt, evolve?

26) What have you avoided or ignored in the course of your life that follows you around anyway and seems determined to claim you-----your creative side, leadership, public speaking, writing a book, a simple life in the country, self-employment? What keeps coming back?

27) People often won’t make significant change in their lives until they become sick of a pattern, until their own suffering forces their hand. Name a pattern in your life that you’re sick of?

28) Have you had any synchronicities lately---meaningful coincidences? What was the event, and how did you interpret it?

29) What social causes most attract or inflame you?

30) Write down the name of someone whose life you envy, and why?

31) What magazines or newsletters do you subscribe to?

32) Think of a time when you were the most outspoken you’ve ever been about something; took a stand, made sure your voice was heard. What was it about?

33) If you could teach every child in the world one life lesson, and have them truly learn it, what lesson would that be?

34) Write down the names of 3 or 4 of both your favorite movies and your favorite books. What if any themes do they have in common? What personal interests do they reflect?

35) One of the most powerful forces operating in people’s lives is the unlived life of their parents----the dreams they had that didn’t come true, the callings they had that went unanswered. What---if anything---is the unlived life of each of your parents (my Dad always wanted to be a.....what? My mother always wished she could have......what?) and what effect has that had on the decisions/choices you’ve made?

36) Write down the names of at least 3 people who know you the best. Let them answer the following question, as if you were asking it of them: “What do YOU think my real passion is right now? What do YOU think I’m truly called toward right now? What is trying to emerge in my life right now?

37) What is the most consistent message or urging you’ve been hearing in your head in the last year about a change that wants to happen in your relationship to work?

And the most consistent urging you’ve heard about a change that wants to happen in a non-work arena: relationship, community life, lifestyle, health or spiritual regimens?

*Tying it together: skim through your responses to all the preceding questions and circle all recurring themes. Any word or phrase that continually shows up. You’re looking for patterns.*

**VITAL SIGNS QUESTIONS**

**1) What Inspires Passion:**

*These questions are designed to help you (or your clients) identify where passion/enthusiasm/vitality well up to the surface in the course of your everyday life, and what your own life-force wants from you at this juncture.*

1) Make a list of pleasures. Part of living passionately is acknowledging and celebrating the simple pleasures of life, and just figuring out what they are so you can do more of them. Examples:

Eating chocolate mousse

Spooning with your dog

The sound of mourning doves

Taking a long, hot shower

Playing the piano

Nursing your baby in the middle of the night, curled up in the big chair.

2) The original definition of the word adventure was “something about to happen”---as in Advent, which celebrates the birth of Christ. So a sense of adventure is related to a sense of *anticipation* about life, which is helped along immeasurably if you always give yourself something to look forward to.

Name some activities or involvements that you most look forward to doing, that when they come up on your calendar most consistently fill you with excited anticipation? (Or add some that *would*.)

Getting together with a certain friend

A road trip

Getting to facilitate a workshop

Meeting with your men’s group or women’s group

Going to your painting class

3) Wonder and awe are among the essential ingredients in living passionately. Name a few things that predictably wow you.

Ruins

Mountain vistas

The view from the top of skyscrapers

Musical and artistic genius

Natural history museums

Encounters with wildlife

Rocket launches.

4) In the book *Corner Office*, 700 CEO's were asked what qualities they see most often in people who succeed. #1 on their collective lists: passionate curiosity.

What are you most passionately curious about, and fascinated by? What do you love to study and research, write about, blog about, investigate and try to understand?

5) A flow state is one in which you’re utterly absorbed and focused in some activity you enjoy, energized, oblivious of time, content even when it’s difficult.

Which, if any, of your involvements and activities typically make you feel like you’re in a flow state? (And if you can’t think of any, write down when the last time was that you felt like you *were* in a flow state?

6) Having a feel for what wants to emerge in any given situation---a conversation, a relationship, a career, a life---is a valuable skill in living fully. What might be trying to emerge in your life at this juncture? What’s trying to happen, to come to fruition?

7) Among the most consistent precursors of what are called “spontaneous remissions” from disease, is a profound and affirmative personal change just prior to the remission. It could be a revelatory experience, a reconciliation with a long-despised parent, the radical assumption of responsibility for your own life, a significant confession or admission, allowing a long-buried and essential part of you to finally emerge and be expressed, or the pursuit of a long-denied passion.

Name some profound and affirmative personal change you could make (or perhaps should make) that even if it didn’t heal your body, would still have a profound healing effect on your life.

8) If you were granted one superpower, what would it be?

9) What is your favorite quality about yourself?

10) What movie(s) have you watched over and over? What’s the theme?

11) What kinds of things do you pray about the most often? Or pray for?

12)Name someone who inspires you with their approach to life. What is it you admire most about the way they live?

13) If you could choose a mentor, dead or alive, to help guide you back---or forward---to a sense of aliveness, who would it be, and why?

What advice would s/he would give you regarding how to find your way to this sense of aliveness and vitality?

14) Name a time in your life when you were unusually bold (by your *own*standards)?

What might boldness look like right now in your life?

15) Name one positive change you’d love to see in your work life?

16) What kinds of scenes in movies most often make *you* choke up?

Dramatic reconciliations

Acts of kindness

People sticking up for other people

Underdogs triumphing over obstacles

17) What if anything do you have a chip on your shoulder about? (Grudges are a form of passion and energy, a potential source of power and sense of mission, and can motivate us to action.)

Being raised with certain disadvantages

Not going to college

Something your parents suppressed in you

Some way you’ve been victimized

18) What issues or stories in the news predictably fill you with indignity and outrage?

19) The secret of life, the sculptor Henry Moore once said, is “to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to. And the most important thing, he said, is that “it must be something you cannot possibly do.”

When our passions are hooked up to a larger frame of reference, something bigger than ourselves, it can help inspire and motivate us. Name some meta-motivation, some value or vision that much of your work and your passions are geared toward achieving (or that you’d *like* them to be geared toward achieving).

Protecting the environment

Helping empower people affected by cancer

Inspiring lifelong learning

Strengthening communities

Creating a more informed public

Helping people laugh.

20) Compose a bucket-list. 10 things you’d love to do or experience before you die.

Learn how to ski

Swim with dolphins

Get a tattoo

Run a marathon

Write a book

Forgive someone.

21) Where in your life— in what places, doing what things, with which people— can you say, “I like myself here”?

22) You're standing at a crossroads. There's a signpost in front of you with two signs on it, pointing in different directions. What's written on each of the signs (a word or short phrase)?

23) The psychologist Arnold Mindell, founder of Process Oriented Psychology, says that symptoms are usually dreams trying to come true. Name some recurring symptom in your life that has your attention. Then give it a voice, let it speak to you and tell you: “My dream is that you would………….:”

24) The novelist Toni Morrison once sat down and wrote all the to-do list items she had to get done in the average day—work and non-work related—which was many pages long. At the end of it, she wrote: “What must I do or I shall die?” She came up with only two items: be a mother to my children, and write! Ask yourself the same question: What must I do or I shall die?

25) What decision you could make today that your future self would thank you for?

26) If you could program a subliminal message onto your own computer, and have it flash at you 500 times a day, what message would you plug in?

27) If you died tomorrow, what would be your biggest regret about what you *didn't* do in life, or didn't get to do?

\*\* Now take a spin back through your responses to the questions, and look for patterns by circling all recurring themes.

**2) What Defeats Passion:**

*These questions are designed to help you identify where passion and vitality drain out of your life.*

1) What pleasures/passions/involvements have you let slide or lost touch with over the years that you miss the most?

2) Every culture has a word for vampire, for a creature or force so needy it sucks the lifeforce out of others. And part of reclaiming our vitality is identifying where in your life you lose it, where it drains out.

Name a few of the activities and involvements in your life where your energies tend to drain out. That take vitality from you rather than give it.

Socializing out of guilt or obligation

Driving in rush hour traffic when you don’t have to

Television

Letting yourself be trapped by talkaholics

Digital busywork

3) Now do the same for *beliefs and attitudes* that tend to take energy from you rather than give it; that rob you of optimism, faith or joy. In other words, undermining, glass-half-empty self-talk. The kind of stuff you probably wouldn’t put up with if someone *else* was saying it to you:

I’ll never lose weight

There are no decent jobs out there, or decent men, or decent women

I’ll never learn this---I’m hopeless

Life is unfair

I’m too old to learn new tricks

I never have enough time

I stink at making money

I’m not good enough

4) There are essentially two kinds of boredom. One is situational---you’re stuck in the checkout line, in traffic, in the waiting room, in a tedious class. The other is existential: you’re bored with your work, your marriage, your life, even your own company. The French call it ennui, the Germans call it unlust, and scientists call it hyperboredom.

Identify any aspects of your life that you feel *deeply* bored with.

5) The remedy for boredom is typically action. But with the deeper kinds of boredom, the remedy is more likely to be *insight*. That is, if you dig a bit you’re likely to find some thwarted desire or energy that the boredom and restlessness are masking.

To whatever degree you feel plagued by hyperboredom and inertia, go with your gut and see if you can identify what passion or desire may be underneath it that wants expression.

6) Name a few things that are on the top of your list of things you procrastinate around. (There’s often something compelling about what we procrastinate around, something that has a charge for us.)

Making a career change, or a relationship change

Going back to school

Starting an exercise regimen

Doing service work

Having a certain conversation with a certain someone

7) If you could change one thing about your personality, how would you be different?

8) Name a thing or two that your parents tried to suppress in you.

Some part of your personality

Forbidden behavior

Activities that were frowned on.

9)What fear have you struggled your whole life to overcome?

10) Restless Legs Syndrome is characterized by having a hard time resting or sleeping, uncomfortable sensations in the legs that patients typically describe as “creepy” and “crawly,” and the compelling urge to move. In fact, the medical literature says that actually getting up and moving usually offers immediate relief.

In what arena of your life do you feel the most restless, if not stagnant? Where you feel the least forward momentum?

And answer this question: what wants to move and where does it want to go?

\*\* Again, look through your responses to the questions, and see if you can find patterns by circling all recurring themes.