

Jimmy Owsley
'11-'13



“We make our way through the occupations of life, hoping and hoping that as we do our vocation becomes clearer to us, that over time we will come to know more and more about who we are and what matters to us, and who God is and what matters to Him.”

—Steve Garber, Visions of Vocation

During my time in seminary, I was asked to discern and justify my calling time and again. “Something involving faith and service,” I would say to professors or fellow students. Or if I wanted to give more depth, I’d say, “During my time as a one-year volunteer at CAP, I felt God calling me to lead people in applying their faith through service.” Not surprisingly (at least in hindsight), that feeling of being called by God brought me back to CAP as a Volunteer Life Manager in May 2015.

As you might know, Volunteer Life Managers have a wide range of responsibilities—from resolving conflicts and creating retreats to managing programs and employees. One of my biggest joys in this role, however, was having the opportunity to listen to a volunteer’s goals and doing my best to help him/her achieve those goals during that year of service. I wanted each volunteer to leave CAP feeling like their service had an impact both on themselves and on the world around them. Of course, this didn’t always go according to plan (secret: it rarely did), because personal development is unique to everyone. But that’s the beauty of vocation.

Which leads me to another thought: what seminary failed to teach me (or probably more accurately, what I failed to learn in seminary) was that vocation is nebulous. Like silly putty in the hands of our Eternal God, it’s ever morphing and shifting. Or as author Steve Garber alludes in my opening quotation, one moment you’re seeing a crystal-clear vision of your vocation and the next moment it’s blurred. This change can even happen imperceptibly for those of us who aren’t paying close attention.

So while I was busy devoting myself to volunteer development, God was busy at work developing me. During my years as a manager, I learned about my strengths and weaknesses, and about things like boundaries

and priorities. Whether it was exploring the Enneagram with my wife, Kelsey (nee DeVesty), '11-'13, or working on emotional intelligence with CAP, I have been consistently provided with tools for self-growth and better self-awareness. And as I gained a clearer picture of myself, I've made changes to use my task-oriented strengths and focus on things that give me energy.

So after five years in one role, I find myself in a new position as IT Coordinator (I started in April, 2020), where I am able to use a different skillset to make CAP more efficient. As I look back, I am so grateful for the time I was able spend in the Volunteer Program. The relationships I've made along the way are invaluable to me. And while I still have opportunities to engage with volunteers and to invest in people, I also have more balance in my schedule and my routine.

We've had our share of change as a world lately. And so I wonder if many of you are adjusting your vision as well, realizing that your vocation isn't quite as clear as it once was. As I adjust to my changes and attempt to set my sights on what my vocation might be becoming, I hope you'll join me in continuing to listen and watch, "hoping that as we do our vocation becomes clearer to us, that over time we will come to know more and more about who we are and what matters to us, and who God is and what matters to Him."

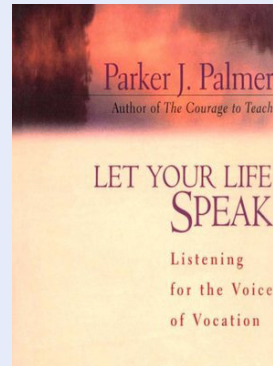
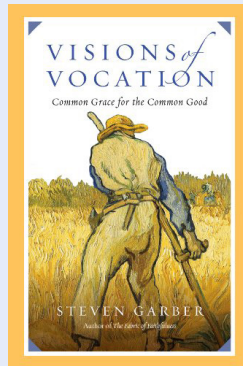
JIMMY'S RECOMMENDATIONS



Podcasts:

"The Enneagram Journey" with Suzanne Stabile
theenneagramjourney.org/podcast

"Unlocking Us" with Brené Brown
brenebrown.com/unlockingus



Books:

Visions of Vocation by Steve Garber
Let Your Life Speak by Parker Palmer

Tools:

CliftonStrengths Assessment
gallup.com/cliftonstrength

Daily Meditation from Henri Nouwen Society
henrinouwen.org/read-nouwen/free-daily-meditation