

THE MINISTRY OF TEACHING

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Different people want different things out of life but one of the things that most people want is to be happy.

This, however, can be an elusive thing. In his recent book, *Authentic happiness*, Martin Seligman explores what it takes to really make us happy. He explains that happiness comes in three kinds. At the lowest level is 'the pleasant life', where you experience positive emotions. Then there is 'the engaged life', which consists of using your greatest character strengths as frequently as possible to obtain gratification in your life. Finally, there is 'the meaningful life', in which you use your character strengths in the service of some cause larger than you are. True happiness only occurs when people experience satisfaction at all three levels.

Seligman's theories easily translate to the workplace. Psychologists have distinguished between three kinds of work: a job, a career and a calling. A job is something you do for nothing other than the pay cheque at the end of the week. A career involves a deeper personal investment in work; you mark your achievements through money and advancement with each promotion bringing you higher prestige. A calling or vocation, on the other hand, is a passionate commitment to work for its own sake, and you find the work fulfilling in its own right. 'Individuals with a calling see their work as contributing to the greater good, to something larger than they are', says Seligman.

So how do you find a calling? Seligman suggests that you need to identify your signature strengths, choose work that lets you use them every day, and choose a career in which you are making a substantial contribution to forces greater than yourself.

So how do I do all of that? For some people, choosing teaching as a profession is the answer. Research into why people choose to become teachers has identified that teaching is perceived as a good job with satisfactory pay scales, holidays etc.... Teaching is also seen as a good career. Teachers enjoy working with children and have a feeling that teaching brings high job satisfaction. But there is more to teaching than this. Teachers wish to sustain, share and use their knowledge and they have a profound wish to improve students' life chances. They see teaching as more than a job, more than a career—it is a calling. Christian

teachers see the profession of teaching as a ministry. It is an act of serving young people as they move toward the realization of their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual potentials.

Over the years, people have chosen teaching as their life's work because they genuinely believed that they could make a difference to the lives of children and adolescents. As the Christian education sector expands in Australia and throughout the world, there is a great need for more people to enter the Ministry of Teaching. Students in classrooms across the world are waiting for teachers to come and impact their lives.

Are you a senior high school student who is passionate about making a difference in this world but unclear about what direction you should take after school?

Do you feel unfulfilled in your present job? Are you looking for something more satisfying than just a job, career or salary? Do you want to follow your heart and live out your purpose? Do you want to take a completely new direction in your life?

If you feel that you fit into one of these categories, you should stop and ask if God is calling you to the Ministry of Teaching.

In recognition of this ministry, Avondale College has created a special website to profile the Ministry of Teaching. It contains the reflections of practising teachers along with information about pathways into the Ministry.

The Ministry of Teaching website is also designed to serve those already working in the Teaching Ministry. An exciting section of the website is the new online journal of Christian education called *TEACH*. The journal contains recent research findings in education, and articles on administration and teaching & professional practice. There are also general interest items including: initiatives such as Storm Co, chaplaincy programs, book reviews, and personal experiences of Christian teachers. Teachers can visit the site to be affirmed in their ministry and to be informed about aspects of their professional practice.

So happiness and life satisfaction may be elusive for some, but teachers' lives are filled with pleasure, engagement and meaning. Is God calling you to the Ministry of Teaching?

Visit the *Ministry of Teaching* website at www.ministryofteaching.edu.au **TEACH**

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