



# Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation

*By Parker J. Palmer*



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With wisdom, compassion, and gentle humor, Parker J. Palmer invites us to listen to the inner teacher and follow its leadings toward a sense of meaning and purpose. Telling stories from his own life and the lives of others who have made a difference, he shares insights gained from darkness and depression as well as fulfillment and joy, illuminating a pathway toward vocation for all who seek the true calling of their lives.



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## **Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation By Parker J. Palmer Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

The old Quaker adage, "Let your life speak," spoke to author Parker J. Palmer when he was in his early 30s. It summoned him to a higher purpose, so he decided that henceforth he would live a nobler life. "I lined up the most elevated ideals I could find and set out to achieve them," he writes. "The results were rarely admirable, often laughable, and sometimes grotesque.... I had simply found a 'noble' way of living a life that was not my own, a life spent imitating heroes instead of listening to my heart."

Thirty years later, Palmer now understands that learning to let his life speak means "living the life that wants to live in me." It involves creating the kind of quiet, trusting conditions that allow a soul to speak its truth. It also means tuning out the noisy preconceived ideas about what a vocation should and shouldn't be so that we can better hear the call of our wild souls. There are no how-to formulas in this extremely unpretentious and well-written book, just fireside wisdom from an elder who is willing to share his mistakes and stories as he learned to live a life worth speaking about. --*Gail Hudson*

#### From Publishers Weekly

A gifted academic who formerly combined a college teaching career with community organizing, Palmer took a year's sabbatical to live at the "intentional" Quaker community of Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania. Instead of leaving at year's end, he became the community's dean of studies and remained there for 10 years. Palmer (*The Courage to Teach*) shares the lessons of his vocational and spiritual journey, discussing his own burnout and intense depression with exceptional candor and clarity. In essays that previously appeared in spiritual or educational journals and have been reworked to fit into this slim volume, he suggests that individuals are most authentic when they follow their natural talents and limitations, as his own story demonstrates. Since hearing one's "calling" requires introspection and self-knowledge (as suggested by the eponymous Quaker expression), Palmer encourages inner work such as journal-writing, meditation and prayer. Recognizing that his philosophy is at odds with popular, essentially American attitudes about self-actualization and following one's dreams, Palmer calls vocation "a gift, not a goal." He deftly illustrates his point with examples from the lives of people he admires, such as Rosa Parks, Annie Dillard and Vaclav Havel. A quiet but memorable addition to the inspirational field, this book has the quality of a finely worked homily. The writing displays a gentle wisdom and economy of style that leaves the reader curious for more insight into the author's Quaker philosophy. (Oct.)

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#### Review

**News Flash! Utne Reader** names Parker J. Palmer as one of "**25 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World**"--people who, in the editor's words, "don't just think out loud but who walk their talk on a daily basis." See the October-November 2011 print or online issue.

"Parker Palmer's writing is like a high country stream-clear, vital, honest. If your life seems to be passing you by, or you cannot see the way ahead, immerse yourself in the wisdom of these pages and allow it to carry you toward a more attentive relationship with your deeper, truer self." (John S. Mogabgab, editor, *Weavings Journal*)

"An exuberant and passionate book. I was deeply moved and I cannot, nor do I want to, shake off the haunting questions that it raises for me. This book penetrates the soul, and it will definitely stir you to

explore more of your own inner territory. What an extraordinary achievement." (Jim Kouzes, coauthor, *The Leadership Challenge* and *Encouraging the Heart*; chairman, Tom Peters Group/Learning Systems)

"At a time when our culture is seeking a new language for expressing the spirit in everyday life, Parker Palmer is our leading voice of clarity and wisdom. In *Let Your Life Speak*, Palmer continues to deepen our ways of understanding the relationships between the inner life of spirit and the outer life of action." (Rob Lehman, president, The Fetzer Institute)

"In our search for authentic vocation, this book should be the starting point and deserves a prominent place in every home, school, and college. It is vintage Parker Palmer, providing his unique insight to the interconnectedness of selfhood and vocation with eloquence and personal experience." (Doug Orr, president, Warren Wilson College)

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Dorothy Stanek:**

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**Beulah Chavez:**

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