

Book Review - *Your Personal Renaissance - 12 Steps to Finding Your Life's True Calling*
By [Gloria DeGaetano](#)

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Your Personal Renaissance: 12 Steps to Finding Your Life's True Calling

By Diane Dreher

Your Personal Renaissance supports an integral process of finding or refining clarity about what we want to do with our unique talents. Diane Dreher, the author of bestsellers such as *The Tao of Personal Leadership* and *Inner Gardening* has a knack for revealing her supportive heart in every word-encouragement and inspiration jump off the pages. Based on a combination of leading-edge research, practical steps for self-growth, and engaging stories about human creative capacity, the book provides guidance for culling out what really matters. It's perfect for recent college graduates and those of any age who wish to re-think their careers or dive more deeply into new creative ventures.

Dreher supports each of the Renaissance practices she discusses with current research from neuroscience, positive psychology, and vocation development. The reader moves through the practices in this order: Faith, Examen, Community, Contemplation, creativity, Reading and Reflection, Exercise, Discipline and Dedication, always with an eye on what motivates and fulfills.

Dreher's love (and extensive research of over one hundred artists, scientists, scholars, etc. from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment) of interesting, creative people captivates the reader with the engaging narratives sprinkled about in each chapter. Who knew John Locke studied medicine, tried diplomacy, and was urged by friends to become a minister? If Locke had chosen any one of these paths, the Enlightenment may not have been so enlightening. But following "his calling to help people gain greater understanding," Locke became a philosopher-not the expected choice, and probably the most unpopular choice, but the one he wanted-lucky for anyone interested in democracy. Most of Dreher's stories about multi-talented people of the past contain surprising facts-so the book serves as an interesting history lesson, as well as an intelligent self-help guide.

Because it can be a scary revelation to find out just what Spirit calls us to do, it's comforting to have a kind companion such as Diane Dreher with us on this journey. Her personal stories are mini-pep talks of encouragement and affirmation.

About her friends: "My friend Carol Flinders wrote her book *Enduring Lives* about four contemporary women of faith: Etty Hillesum, Jane Goodall, Sr. Helen Prejean, and Tenzin Palmo, all of whom possess what she calls a 'very powerful interior life,' making them compelling spiritual models for our time."

About herself: Dreher shares several events in her life, including a precious story about how she came to study Renaissance literature, ending the tale with, "Books, libraries, journeys, discoveries-these are some of my personal themes. Now it's time to look for yours."

Personalizing the book in this way makes it inviting to read. You really feel like you are sitting down and talking with an old friend who knows you well and wants the best for you. Why, even the notes/references pages are written to the reader, giving little-known websites to look up and additional articles or books for further reading. Job hunters will find solace in the book when feeling the normal panic that arises when out of work. Being able to slow

down, and go through the discernment process laid out in the book will keep the jitters away and provide a wise plan of action based on an internal methodology.

Dreher shows us how our personal choices contribute to the greater good. Here again, she uses interesting examples to highlight the importance of deeply listening to our inner nudges no matter where they may lead us, not only for our own gain, but for the world's benefit, as well. A central message of the book is: Contribution to the greater whole magnifies the meaning of our lives. Perhaps that's key to understanding the purpose of one's life purpose? Dreher tells us St. Teresa of Avila "reminded people 'to take care that they do not hide their talent; for it may be that God has chosen them to be the edification of many others, especially in these days.'" "Being the edification to many others" usually isn't the central thought most of us wake up with in the morning. This book allows us to take time to contemplate, recognize, and act upon our central part within the larger scheme of things.

At the end of each chapter, the reader finds several appropriate do-able activities for practicing the chapter concepts. As the reader makes progress, Dreher is there along the way with congratulations and affirmations. She applauds each step, because right up front in the Introduction she lets us know "one powerful secret": "Small actions over time produce monumental results." Which translates for the job hunter--leave no stone unturned--do your best every day, submitting those resumes, talking with people, networking--all tried and true strategies. Now as you take these actions you have a companion by your side in this book that supports you every step of the way.

Throughout *Your Personal Renaissance* mentor extraordinaire, Diane Dreher shows us that it's our day to day choices, those seemingly "little things", that over time combine to bring about important positive changes--whether putting together a plan for improved personal health or launching a new career--taking our next necessary step is what a dynamic self-growth process is all about--the surest way to a personal Renaissance. And a most hopeful guidepost for society, as well.

Gloria DeGaetano <http://GloriaDeGaetano.com/> is the founder and CEO of The Parent Coaching Institute, (The PCI™), <http://thepci.org> the originator of the parent coaching profession. An acclaimed keynote speaker, Gloria is a sought-after favorite for major national and international conferences because she is a recognized leader in family support and media/digital literacy who provides very specific and practical tools for parents to successfully navigate the stresses of modern day culture. An innovator in parent education, Ms. DeGaetano often trains parent educators and agency staff on how to best help moms and dads in our digital age which often divides family life, making it even more difficult for healthy parent-child relationships. Gloria's popular Best Solutions Programs are tailored to the specific needs of participants, resulting in positive outcomes for the agencies and the parents they serve. Ms. DeGaetano, a best-selling author, has written *Screen Smarts: A Family Guide to Media Literacy*; *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie, and Video Game Violence* (with Lt. Col. Dave Grossman), and manuals for parent professionals. Her latest book *Parenting Well in a Media Age*, has won the 2007 i-Parenting Media Award for excellence. Ms. DeGaetano's books and articles have been translated into Spanish, German, Danish, Romanian, Korean, Chinese, and Turkish.

Ms. DeGaetano's ideas and articles have appeared in numerous publications including McCall's Magazine, American Baby Magazine, The Boston Globe, the American Academy of Pediatrics Newsletter, and Catholic Faith and Family Magazine.

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