

SUMMARY

THE PATH MADE CLEAR

OPRAH WINFREY



Summary of “The Path Made Clear” by Oprah Winfrey

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Oprah’s guide to life.

Oprah's guide to life.

2

Introduction

5

Find Your Calling

6

Listen to the Warning Signs

8

Embrace Fear

10

How Can I Serve You?

12

Final Summary

14



**DO YOU WANT THIS BOOK
AS AN 20-MINUTE AUDIOBOOK?**



**Get the key insights of non-fiction books
in minutes instead of hours. Listen to
our free audiobooks while you workout
or on your commute to work.**



**DOWNLOAD
OUR FREE APP**



Introduction

Do you ever feel as though you woke up in a life that doesn't belong to? Like you can't remember how you got stuck in this job you don't like or the relationship that isn't as meaningful as you wanted? Do you ever feel like your life was supposed to be something more? If you do, you're not alone! Oprah acknowledges that this feeling is one of the most common emotional afflictions in America; it leaves millions feeling as though they're lost in their own lives. Fortunately, however, there's a cure! And it's not as complicated as you might think; creating a meaningful life is as simple as getting back on track. That's why Oprah wants to make that path clear. And over the course of this summary, we'll take an in-depth look at some actionable steps that will help us get on the right path.

Find Your Calling

Do you feel drawn to your job? Do you feel as though you're doing the work that you were meant to do? Most of us are likely to answer "no" to that question; no, we don't feel called to life insurance or to flipping burgers, we just do it to pay the bills. Acknowledging this is the first step to making life's path clear, because this invites us to recognize that our dissatisfaction often occurs because we feel out of touch with our calling. We feel like something is missing-- and it is! So, that's why finding your calling is the first and most important step you can take to get your life on track. And even if you feel like you're not talented or special, Oprah wants every single reader to know that this is not true. In fact, every single human being has a calling! But don't be confused-- your calling isn't necessarily the "best," "coolest," or flashiest job you can imagine. Instead, your calling is defined by the work that will be most meaningful to you.

For example, let's say you work in hospitality at a hotel. The day-to-day tasks of running a hotel might not be the most exciting thing in the world to you... but what you're really passionate about is working with people and making them feel at home. In that case, your calling wouldn't be defined by the act of assigning rooms, scheduling housekeeping, and keeping track of guests, but by the warmth and hospitality you show to your guests. You would be able to identify hospitality as your calling because you would feel a deep sense of satisfaction and connection as you welcome weary travelers, ask them about their day, and work to provide them with a warm and welcoming stay.

As you can see from this example, your life's calling isn't something magical, mystical, or hard to ascertain; instead, it will be evident in the things you're naturally drawn to. If we expand on the earlier example, we can easily imagine some scenarios that would identify hospitality as your calling. For example, some early signs might include the fact that, as a child, you loved playing house and wanted all your friends, toys, and stuffed animals to be comfortable. Maybe you drew an immense amount of

satisfaction from pretending to prepare meals and play house. As you grew up, maybe you were always the “mom friend”-- the one who always checks on everyone, ensuring that they’re happy, safe, and have everything they need. Maybe you love organizing things and knowing that someone’s day is a little better because of you. All of these things are indicative of your core values and desires; they demonstrate what matters most to you and what brings you the deepest sense of fulfilment. So, take a moment for some deep introspection and look for these signs in your own life! Then prepare to alter your life choices-- and possibly your career-- based on what you find.

Listen to the Warning Signs

Much like the budding seeds of your calling, vital warning signs are present if you simply look for them. But because these warning signs often manifest as a still, small voice in the back of our minds, we often ignore it and miss out on important updates that can direct the future of our lives. So, what are warning signs and why do we need them? Let's take a closer look. Have you ever been so stressed, sad, or anxious that you developed physical symptoms? Have you ever struggled with unexpected headaches, shakiness, or experienced knots in your stomach? If you're like most people, you've probably suffered from at least one of these symptoms at some point in your life. But knowing how to respond to them is key.

Many people experience physical manifestations of stress and blow them off, assuming that they can and should push through it. Many others will try to ignore their symptoms altogether. That's what happened to author Shauna Niequist, who was a guest on Oprah's Super Soul podcast in 2017. Shauna was experiencing extreme stress as she tried to balance the demands of motherhood along with her high-pressure job. These conflicting responsibilities left Shauna feeling as though she was being torn in two different directions at the same time and she began suffering from severe migraines. But despite the presence of these warning signs, Shauna, like many of us, hoped to push her stress aside and power through it. Unfortunately, however, this was impossible; her stress intensified and so did her symptoms. She finally decided to listen when she came dangerously close to suffering a severe mental breakdown. Realizing that it was impossible to continue ignoring her body's warning signs, Shauna bravely chose to seek help. As a result, her health and her relationship with her son grew stronger!

Oprah acknowledges that Shauna's story is likely a familiar one. Most of us feel as though our lives are tearing us in half and this can result in significant stress and anxiety. But Oprah also understands that Shauna's story can serve as a great example for others who are in the same boat.

From Shauna's example, we can learn that it's important to get help before it's too late. Don't wait until you're almost at the brink of collapse and don't ignore your warning signs! Listen to them while they still manifest as a still, small whisper in the back of your mind, gently urging you to seek help.

Embrace Fear

“A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor.” This cliché is often used in reference to life’s obstacles; it’s meant to be an empowering reminder that the easy road isn’t always the best road. Sure, it might be smoother, less challenging, and more enjoyable, but that doesn’t mean it’s what’s best for us. But sometimes, when the going gets tough, we’d rather trade our beneficial “sailing experience” for that smooth sea. Sometimes we wish we could take the easy way out because facing our fears is scary. And if you find yourself being held back by fear, Oprah wants you to know that you’re not alone. Human beings have evolved to protect ourselves and seek survival at all costs; we don’t want to run toward the things that scare us. But sometimes, that’s exactly what we have to do.

Author Steven Pressfield learned this first hand and he shared his insights with Oprah during an interview in 2013. Although running from fear is our instinctive and understandable reaction, Pressfield understands that resisting this temptation is crucial for our personal development. He also believes it’s vital for achieving any form of success. That’s because any goal we have is going to be met with an obstacle. No matter what we hope to accomplish, we’ll have to defeat something in order to meet that goal. And when we encounter that resistance, we have to ask ourselves a simple question: is my passion greater than my fear? Answering “yes” to this question doesn’t mean you aren’t afraid and it doesn’t mean your fear isn’t valid. Rather, it simply means that you’re courageous enough to face your fear head on because you know you have something worth fighting for.

If we can reconfigure our understanding of fear in this way. Pressfield theorizes that we will find both comfort and empowerment. That’s because accepting this reality will allow us to acknowledge that our fear is normal, but that we have the skills to fight it. This mentality can also help us avoid succumbing to despair or giving up on our dreams at the first sign of resistance. This is an important step because despair often sets in when we try something and it doesn’t work out. All too often, we choose to interpret

our failure as a sign of something disheartening, assuming that it means we are stupid, wrong, or doomed to fail. But if we understand that resistance is a natural part of pursuing any goal, we can avoid this common pitfall and charge ahead, empowered!

How Can I Serve You?

We're often asked this question at restaurants or in other hospitality industries. But how frequently do we ask that question ourselves? How many times do we look at another person and consider how we can be of help to them instead of what they can do for us? Oprah observes that we often fail to do this because our culture has become increasingly self-centered. The pressure and prevalence of social media motivates us to become shameless self-promoters; our Instagram feeds and our interaction with others are more likely to scream, "Look at me!" than "How can I serve you?" That's why Oprah wants us to remember that it's important to challenge that. Oprah reminds us that there is more to life than being the center of attention or social media fame. And although we often ascribe a gargantuan level of importance to both of these activities, the truth is that neither will bring us lasting happiness.

So, if we want to cultivate true happiness and really make a difference in the world, we need to alter our priorities so that they center around service. However, Oprah acknowledges that that doesn't necessarily mean engaging in performative actions like volunteering, donating, or posting on social media. Because the sad truth is that you can do all of these things for the wrong reasons and still never have the right attitude at heart. So, don't think about service as an act-- think about it as an attitude. If your attitude is service-oriented, it will show through in everything you do. It will influence the way you talk to people, the way you treat them, and even the way you think of them. It will lead you to be more deliberate, more conscientious, and more considerate in everything you do. Because if you truly have a heart for service, you won't care if the help you can give is Instagrammable or even if it's tangible. Instead, you'll just be happy that you could lend someone a helping hand.

Sometimes, that might be in the form of emotional support. Sometimes, you might have to step outside your comfort zone and challenge yourself to understand someone else's point of view. Sometimes, you might have to do

the hard work of acknowledging and correcting your own bias or privilege. But it doesn't matter what you do as long as your heart is in the right place. To help you cultivate this attitude, Oprah suggests asking yourself a simple, guiding question: what do I want my legacy to be? What do you want to be remembered for?

This question can put our approach to service in perspective because it invites us to take an honest look at the message we want to leave behind. Do we want to be remembered as someone who genuinely cared for others? Someone who devoted their lives to being kind? Most of us would probably say yes to that question! So, if you want to leave a legacy you can be proud of, don't think about your personal goals or preferences or how many likes you'll get on Instagram. Instead, run everything through the filter of how you can be kind to someone else. Oprah observes that when you do this, you are not only generating lasting happiness for yourself and others, you are also building up a treasure far more valuable than any material goods. You're cultivating emotional wealth that will live in your heart and the hearts of those you help. And in so doing, you're unlocking the true meaning of human existence.

Final Summary

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it's easy to lose sight of what's really important. It's easy to find ourselves drifting, purposeless, as we wonder what life is all about anyway. Oprah writes with the aim of making life's path clear and helping readers achieve personal and professional satisfaction through the spiritual insights she has gleaned over the course of her career. To redirect your life and get on the right path, Oprah advises that you start by finding your calling. This step will help you identify your life's purpose and discover the work that will be most meaningful to you.

Once you've done that, it's important to cultivate your mental and physical health by listening to the warning signs your body is sending you. Next, pursue success by embracing fear. And last but not least, generate emotional wealth by living a life of service. Start each day and each interaction with the question, "How can I serve you?" and concentrate on building a legacy of kindness. This final step is of critical importance because Oprah believes that being kind and helping others is the true meaning of life.



**DO YOU WANT THIS BOOK
AS AN 20-MINUTE AUDIOBOOK?**



**Get the key insights of non-fiction books
in minutes instead of hours. Listen to
our free audiobooks while you workout
or on your commute to work.**



**DOWNLOAD
OUR FREE APP**

