

Defining and Discovering Your Calling

The General Call and The Specific Call

Scripture References *All verses quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

Psalm 139:13-14

"For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well."

Nehemiah 8:10b

"Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Ephesians 1:17-18

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints."

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Ephesians 4:4-6

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

Ephesians 4:11-12

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

1 Peter 4:10 *"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

Revelation 3:20-22

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Part One: Understanding Your Foundation

Before You Pursue Your Calling

To fulfill the calling on your life, you first need to know where you stand with the Most High God.

Before anything else, you must understand:

- What God has done for you through Christ
- Your relationship with Him as His child
- His posture toward you—that He is FOR you
- That He delights in you
- That He has blessings in store for you
- That He is always with you and will never leave or forsake you

When you know these truths beyond a shadow of a doubt, THEN you can confidently do what He asks you to do without constantly wondering if you've taken a wrong turn.

A Word of Caution

It is possible to overthink calling and purpose in unhealthy ways, obsessing about them or even idolizing them.

While it's good to understand who God has made you to be, be careful not to let the pursuit of clarity become a stumbling block. God doesn't unfold everything all at once. He reveals things step by step, and sometimes you only have full clarity at the end of your life.

Part Two: The Two Dimensions of Calling

The General Call (Universal for All Believers)

Every believer shares a common calling as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is not based on specific gifts—it applies to everyone:

- **The Ministry of Reconciliation** — God has entrusted all believers with the message that He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
- **Ambassadors for Christ** — We represent Christ to the world, with God making His appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- **The Priesthood of All Believers** — We are all ministers of the gospel, not just those with seminary degrees or official titles
- **The Great Commission** — Jesus calls every disciple to go and make disciples of all nations

Key Insight: Just because you have a specific gift (teaching, administration, etc.) doesn't mean you're "off the hook" for the general call.

We are all called to minister the reconciliation that God offers to the people in our everyday lives.

The Specific Call (Unique to Each Believer)

While we share a universal calling, God has also uniquely designed each of us with specific gifts, strengths, and purposes:

- **Natural Strengths** — Your personality, behaviors, and ways of thinking that were "knit together in your mother's womb" (Psalm 139)
- **Spiritual Gifts** — Special abilities given by the Holy Spirit for building up the body of Christ
- **Equipping Functions** — Leadership gifts described in Ephesians 4:11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers)

Think of calling as a summary of your gifts—like putting all your different gifts in a bowl. The bowl is the calling. Over the course of your life, your calling will mainly be the use of all the different gifts God has given you.

Part Three: The Nature of Calling

Calling as Invitation, Not Pressure

The Greek word for "calling" is *kaleo*, which means "to summon or invite."

This is a beautiful reframe:

- God is not **PUSHING** you into a calling
- He is **INVITING** you to follow Him
- It's not pressure put on you to accomplish something
- It's an invitation into His plan

Five Sample Universal Invitations

These are five general invitations that God extends to all believers:

- **Follow Me** — The foundational invitation to walk with Christ
- **Die Daily** — Surrender yourself and your agenda to God each day
- **Make Disciples** — Invest in others and help them grow in Christ
- **Serve Others with Your Life** — Use your life for the benefit of others
- **Equip the Saints for Works of Service** — Help others discover and use their gifts

Your spiritual gifts are the tools given to you specifically to fulfill these invitations. Think of it as **two sides of the same coin**: the head side is the general call to do these things, and the tail side is the gifts He's given you to fulfill them.

Part Four: Discovering Your Specific Gifts

How to Identify Your Gifts

- **Pay attention to what brings you joy** — Our areas of gifting typically bring us joy. As Eric Liddell said in *Chariots of Fire*: "When I run, I feel the pleasure of God."
- **Notice what you do naturally** — If you're doing something without even thinking about it (like naturally having people over), it may indicate a gift
- **Ask others to speak into your life** — We often don't see ourselves accurately. Others can sometimes see our gifts more clearly than we can
- **Reflect on your past** — Looking back, what activities or roles have made your life "make sense"?
- **Consider where you feel "in the zone"** — Times when you feel God's pleasure while serving

The Importance of the Body

The body of Christ is not a collection of the same types of organs—it's a diverse collection of different parts working together.

This means:

- You don't have to do everything or minister to everyone
- You need to discover what "body part" you're supposed to be
- You need others who have gifts that complement yours
- Starters need finishers; visionaries need implementers

Key Insight: God does call us to operate in areas of weakness at times, but He gives us strengths for a reason—He wants us to know them and use them. Be a good steward of the manifold grace God has given you (1 Peter 4:10).

Part Five: Getting Unstuck

The Holy Spirit wants to help us get unstuck in our understanding of calling. If you feel paralyzed or overwhelmed, consider these truths:

Common Areas Where People Get Stuck

- Feeling like you need to see God's entire plan all at once
- Fear of missing your calling or taking a wrong turn
- Not knowing if you're supposed to minister to everyone
- Confusion about your specific place in the body of Christ
- Guilt around experiencing joy or pleasure in certain activities

Practical Steps Forward

- **Ask God daily:** "Lord, what do You want me to do today? Where do You want Your kingdom to come and Your will to be done in me and through me?"
- **Embrace your finitude:** You can't be friends with everyone, minister to everyone, or be everywhere. That's okay—it's how God designed it.
- **Find people one or two steps ahead:** Identify someone further along in an area where you want to grow. Ask them to walk with you for a season.
- **Recognize that life comes in seasons:** God may be teaching you specific things right now.
Ask: "What is God teaching me in this season?"
- **Let go of guilt around joy:** If something brings you genuine joy and isn't sinful, God may have made you that way on purpose.

Part Six: A Final Perspective

The name of your ministry is _____ (your name).

It's not "Disciple-Making Collective" or "E3 Ministries" or any organization. The function of the ministry is Jesus. But the FORM of that ministry—what you think about, how you live, who you serve—is uniquely expressed through **YOU**.

Remember David's example: He knew his calling so deeply that when his closest friends urged him to kill Saul and take the easy path to kingship, he refused. He said, "That is not the path God has given me."

Sometimes following your calling means saying no—even to close friends—because you're obeying God alone, who has the right to give you your calling and purpose.

Discussion Questions for Reflection or Group Study

1. Do you identify primarily as a child of God? How does knowing you are His child (not just His servant) affect how you approach your calling?
2. Can you articulate your purpose? If not, what obstacles prevent you from having clarity?
3. Can you identify your spiritual gifts? What evidence in your life points to specific gifts God has given you?
4. Can you articulate your calling? How would you describe it in one or two sentences?
5. How do you determine your assignments? What criteria do you use to decide what to say "yes" to and what to say "no" to?
6. What brings you joy? What are your "doors of joy"—activities where you feel God's pleasure?
7. How do you hear God's voice? In what ways does God typically speak to you and give you direction?
8. Where do you feel stuck? What area of calling, purpose, or identity do you need the Holy Spirit to help you get unstuck in?
9. How does the voice of the enemy show up in your life? What lies do you tend to believe about your calling or identity?
10. What help do you need to be single-minded in your calling? Who could you ask to walk with you in this season?
11. Thinking about the general call to the ministry of reconciliation—who are the specific people in your everyday life that God may be calling you to reach?
12. How can you better embrace both the UNIFORMITY (what all believers share) and the DIVERSITY (your unique gifts) of calling in the body of Christ?

A Closing Invitation

Jesus speaks these words to you today:

We often use the following passage as a call to salvation. However, this call was made to a persecuted church (Laodicea) in the 1st Century. This invitation was made to believers, but promised specific rewards in eternity. Let us answer the call and open new doors for Him to inhabit our minds, wills, and emotions in order to advance His reign in our hearts and in our world,

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."

— *Revelation 3:20*

This is a calling. He is not pushing you—He is inviting you. Will you open the door?