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Lessons on
God's Call



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Lessons on the Call of God

What do we know about God's call on a life?

1) It is not a position to strive for!

Hebrews 5:4 "No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was".

Not for people with big egos who want to be in charge of people.

2) The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable

Romans 11:29 "for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable".

Another translation says that they are "without repentance", giving the message that there is no going back on or removing of the gifts and call of God.

3) It can't always be logically explained.

Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you".

Hebrews 11:8 "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

"We don't always know the logical reasons for why God is choosing to lead as He is, but we can trust Him. Can you imagine Abraham trying to explain this to his neighbors, or to his in-laws?

Careers lend themselves to formula and blueprints, a call only to a relationship. A career can be pursued with a certain amount of personal detachment, a call never.

When Moses heard God call him to free the slaves in Egypt, he first responded as though he were presented with a career decision. Was he qualified? Did he have the proper experience and unique skills required by such an undertaking? He talked to God as though he were in a job interview: Who am I to do such a thing? What if the people don't follow? And doesn't God know that I am a poor public speaker?

All of this was irrelevant to God. All that mattered was that Moses believe God could be trusted when he said, "I will be with you."

In short, all that mattered was the call, and that Moses bind himself to the one who issued the call. There were no road maps, only the Voice." (Cedar, P. A. (1991).

Mastering the pastoral role. Series statement from jacket. [Mastering ministry] (Pages 27-28). Portland, Or.: Multnomah; Christianity Today, Inc.)

Insights into God's Call On Biblical Characters:

Look up the following passages in your Bible, and let God speak to your heart as you consider the context of God's call on each life:

Joshua:

Numbers 27:18 So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him.

Deuteronomy 31:14 The LORD said to Moses, "Now the day of your death is near. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tent of Meeting, where I will commission him." So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at the Tent of Meeting.

It is God who calls people. It is not a popularity contest. I cannot think of a single time in Scripture where the people voted for who the leader would be. Yet Moses trained Joshua, and Elijah trained Elisha, and Paul trained Timothy to take over.

Yet it is interesting to me that most churches never think about the benefits of training and equipping leadership to carry on to the next generation. Few churches have the vision and foresight to prepare for the Senior Pastor's retirement by grooming the next man.

Personal insights: _____

Gideon:

Judges 6:11-12 The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."

Judges 6:14-16 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

Personal insights: _____

Samuel:

1 Samuel 3:4 Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am."
1 Samuel 3:10 The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times,
"Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

We must be paying attention and recognize the voice of the Lord. I have to believe that God is calling more people into His ministry than the number of people who are responding. Obviously God is not willing that any should perish, and often the greatest need today is for laborers for the harvest to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Romans 10:14 "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? NIV).

Personal insights: _____

Isaiah:

Isaiah 6:8-10 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Isaiah was being sent to a people who would not respond! There is no guarantee that when God calls, there will be a response! Noah preached for 100 years and no one, but his own family, got on the Ark.

Personal insights: _____

Jonah:

Jonah 1:1-2 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Jonah didn't even have a heart that desired for the people to respond to God. Yet God called him anyway! Let this hot potato burn deeply as you consider how God may even have a calling for your life that is not in accord with your

personal “passions”, or “desires.” Remember, Jesus didn’t desire to go to the cross, but submitted His will to the will of the Father – “Not My will, but Thy will be done.”

Personal insights: _____

Amos:

Amos 7:14-15 Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

God called and powerfully used a simple sheep herder and fig plucker. He wasn't anything special, except for the fact that God had called him. Pride can be a killer! Watch out for the person who thinks that he/she is God's gift to the ministry. The ministry is no place for the ego-maniac who is trying to make a name. At the most basic level, ministry requires a servant's heart (Matthew 23:11-12).

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” NIV

Personal insights: _____

Disciples:

Matthew 4:21-22 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Personal insights: _____

Paul:

Acts 22:10 "What shall I do, Lord?" I asked. "Get up," the Lord said, "and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do." NIV

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." NIV

Acts 13:2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Personal insights: _____

God's Call to All:

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Don't doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light.

All of us are called to full time ministry! That is what the Lordship of Christ is all about. We offer our lives up to the Lord with whatever our hands find to do (Colossians 3:17). Could God be calling you into full time, professional Christian ministry as a vocation? He called Amos right where he was, and God is still in the business of calling men out of their existing careers to be used in ministry as a profession.

God's timing is very important. Pay attention to this aspect of God's call as well. Take the time to pray and discuss this with your wife and family. It has been a joy for me to know that God is speaking to my wife and family, as he has been speaking to me. In 1994 when I began to wrestle with God's call to launch out and start a new church, I was amazed when I compared notes with my wife to find out that He was preparing her, and speaking to her heart in like fashion. While I was fretting about the sacrifice and hardship that it would cause my family to leave a large and established ministry, God was already preparing the soil for this step of faith.

"In *Wishful Thinking*, Frederick Buechner writes, "There are all different kinds of voices calling to you, all different kinds of work. And the problem is finding out which is the voice of God, rather than of society, say, or the super-ego or self-interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this: The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work, (a) that you need most to do, and (b) that the world most needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of

your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you've not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping your patients much either. Neither the hair shirt nor the soft berth will do."

I like the way Buechner concludes: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Cedar, P. A. (1991). *Mastering the pastoral role*. Series statement from jacket. [Mastering ministry] (Page 28). Portland, Or.: Multnomah; Christianity Today, Inc.

Ultimately, life is an adventure, and there is nothing more exhilarating than being consciously aware that you are doing what God has planned for you from eternity past. You have been uniquely created by God for a unique purpose. Push the limits, and dream great dreams for how God might choose to use you to build His kingdom. More than 300 years before the time of Christ, Alexander the Great was marching across Asia Minor. He led the greatest army ever put together up to that time. They had conquered every foe. No one could stand up against them. They reached the Himalaya Mountains and the advance leaders came back to Alexander full of concern and dismay. "We have marched off the map," they said. "We should go back to where we know."

And they had literally marched off the known map of that time. Alexander listened to them and then said this. "Mediocre armies always stay within the known areas. The great armies always march off the map."

What is unique about God's calling on your life? Bill McCartney, the founder of the Promise Keepers Conferences as said, "the great need today, is not just to see men get cleaned up, live morally pure lives, and help each other love our wives, but we must take the next step and challenge men to take on the "work" that God has for us to do, and to lay hands on men and challenge them to risk something to build the kingdom of God."

What are your spiritual gifts?

"A primary purpose of the Church is to help us discover our gifts and, in the face of our fears, to hold us accountable for them" (Elizabeth O'Connor).

Are you doing what God has gifted you to do?

"Whoever does not have a sense of being predestined by God to service, will never do a great work for God. He who is destined for a work for God must have a full conviction that God is acting directly and consciously and with power upon him and through him. Unless you have a sense of a Divine call before you were ever born you will never be committed to the degree it takes to make a difference in your world. If you see yourself as some tack-on or add-on, or God using you when He could not get something done any other way, you have missed the whole point of your life. The fact is whatever task God has for you He predestined that before you were born. That is why you exist!" Dean Nellman

Personal insights: _____

1 Corinthians 12:18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

Are you convinced you are functioning as the Lord desires in the body of Christ? _____

If you could do anything in the Lord's work, and know that it wouldn't fail, what would you do to the glory of God?

