

## Calling – Bible Study

1. How do you think one might find and fulfill the central purpose of their life? (Without knowing this purpose, even the most productive lives can become hollow and meaningless.)
  - “For the secret of man’s being is not only to live...but to live for something definite. Without a firm notion of what he is living for, man will not accept life and will rather destroy himself than remain on earth...” From Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, an account of what happens to the human soul when it doubts its purpose.
  - “Answering the call of our Creator is “the ultimate why” for living, the highest source of purpose in human existence.” Os Guinness The Call
  - St Augustine, “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”
2. Example of Moses Read Exodus 3,4 What can you learn about the concept of God calling people in this account? How did God call? What was Moses called to do? How did Moses respond? How did God respond to Moses’ objections?

### General Calling/Specific Calling

3. What does the word ‘calling’ mean to you at this time? Look up the word in a dictionary and summarize how it is used. How is the word used in the Bible? How are the following verses related to calling?
  - a. Mt 4:18
  - b. Jn 13:34-35
  - c. Mt 28:18-20
  - d. Romans 1:7
  - e. 1 Cor 1:2
  - f. 1 Cor 1:9
  - g. 1 Thess 2:12
  - h. 1 Tim 6:12
  - i. 1 Peter 2:9
  - j. Others
4. What do you think of the following definition? Agree? Why or why not?
  - “Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.” Os Guinness
5. Study carefully 2 Cor 5:14-6:1 as it relates to the calling of believers.
  - a. Does this passage apply to only some called people or to all believers? Why?
  - b. Would you consider this passage a description of a calling? If so what is it a calling to?
  - c. What are some right and wrong motivations one may have for accepting this calling?
  - d. What is the job description?
  - e. What are the qualifications that are needed?
  - f. What would it look like if a person received God’s grace in vain 6:1?

6. Primary calling as followers of Jesus is by Him, to Him, and for Him. We are called to Someone, not to something (motherhood, politics, teaching) or to somewhere (place). Our secondary calling is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for Him.  
Do you agree with the distinction defined above between primary and secondary callings?  
Do you find this helpful or confusing?
7. Two distortions of calling.
- a. Catholic distortion – a form of dualism that elevates the spiritual at the expense of the secular.
    - i. The perfect life (spiritual) vs the permitted (secular)
    - ii. Two tier view of life. Higher and lower. Active vs contemplative – monasticism
    - iii. Answering the call meant leaving one way of life for the other.
  - b. Luther and the reformers rejected this distortion. Luther argued that everyday work is imbued with spiritual significance. He wrote in [\*The Babylonian Captivity of the Church\*](#) that, *...the works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ on whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks...all works are measured before God by faith alone.*
  - c. Calling means that everyone, everywhere, and in everything fulfills his or her (secondary) callings in response to God's (primary) calling. Guinness
  - d. Protestant distortion – is a secular form of dualism, elevating the secular at the expense of the spiritual. With Calvin work began to be equated with calling. In the Puritan era such words as work, trade, employment, and occupation came to be used interchangeably with calling and vocation.
    - i. Secondary callings replaced primary callings. Work was made sacred.
    - ii. Protestant work ethic. "The man who builds a factory builds a temple" President Coolidge.
    - iii. "Work is the salvation of the human race, morally, physically, socially." Henry Ford
8. Which of these two distortions have you tended to lean towards in your experience? Which one has influenced you more in your life and in your decisions? Explain?

"Beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for Him...The one aim of the call of God is the satisfaction of God, not a call to do something for Him." Oswald Chambers

9. What do you think about the above quote, agree or disagree? Why? How do we keep from falling into either of the two distortions of calling in our own life?
10. Jesus' calling. In John 17:1-19 (20-26) Jesus seems to review the purpose and calling of His life. Using this passage as a basis, write down what you think Jesus would say was His calling in life and how did He live this out?

“Are we the kind of people who love our work, virtually worship our work so that our devotion to Jesus is off-center? Do we put our emphasis on service, or usefulness, or being productive in working for God - at His expense? Do we strive to prove our own significance? To make a difference in the world? To carve our names in marble on the monuments of time?”

Os Guinness

11. Consider the parable of the talents in Mt 25:14-30 in light of our calling. What does this parable teach regarding the calling of His servants?

“The key to answering the call is to be devoted to no one and nothing above God Himself”

Os Guinness

- In our world, our jobs have come to define us. We become what we do.
- “Calling reverses this thinking. A sense of calling should precede a choice of job and career, and the main way to discover calling is to follow the line of what we are each created and gifted to be. Instead of, “you are what you do,” calling says: “Do what you are.”
- Special calling - refers to those tasks and missions laid on individuals through a direct, specific, supernatural communication from God.
  - There is not a single instance in the NT of God’s special call to anyone into a paid occupation or into the role of a religious professional.
- Ordinary calling is the believers’ sense of life-purpose and life-task in response to God’s primary call, “follow Me.”

12. Peter’s calling. Read John 21:15-23 What can you learn about the idea of calling from this passage?

13. Paul’s calling. Which aspects of Paul’s calling are unique to him and/or which apply to every believer? General calling vs particular or special calling

- a. Acts 9:6, 15-16, 26:15-18, 13:1-2, 13:46-47 (Is 49:6), 20:24
- b. Romans 1:5,14,15, 15:19-21
- c. 1 Cor 9:16

14. Consider the following passages. What do they say in regards to your design and gifting? What relationship do you see between them and calling? What do you believe are your gifts and abilities?

- a. Ps 139:1-6, 13-18
- b. Jeremiah 1:1-10
- c. Romans 12:3-8
- d. 1 Cor 12
- e. Eph 2:10 Eph 4:7-15
- f. 1 Pet 4:10-11

15. Calling and selection of elders and deacons. 1 Tim 3:1-7 Titus 1:6-9 How do these qualifications for the position of elder/bishop and deacon relate to the question of calling? Can a person feel called to be a deacon but not qualified? Could these or similar qualifications be applied to a pastor, missionary or campus worker?

16. Who are you living to please? “A life lived listening to the decisive call of God is a life lived before one audience that trumps all others – the Audience of One. John 5:44 How does this concept apply to the idea of calling and how you make decisions?

“I live before the Audience of One. Before others I have nothing to prove, nothing to gain, nothing to lose.” General Charles Gordon

17. What are some possible competitors to calling in terms of what directs people’s lives?

- a. 1 Jn 2:15-17
- b. 1 Tim 6:6-10
- c. Mt 6:24

18. “The closeness between calling and conceit is easy to see. Chosenness and conceit have grown so close that many people confuse the two. Such expressions of pride and vanity are not uncommon among people with a profound sense of calling.” What do you think is the connection between a strong sense of calling and pride?

19. How and where does the Navigator calling statement fit into your personal view of calling?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMTdUe5OC-A>

20. Roles vs calling. What roles do you currently have, or hope to have in the future? How do you think your God given roles relate to your calling?

Al Mohler

First, there is an inward call. Through his Spirit, God speaks to those persons he has called to serve as pastors and ministers of his Church. The great Reformer Martin Luther described this inward call as “God’s voice heard by faith.” Those whom God has called know this call by a sense of leading, purpose and growing commitment.

This sense of compulsion should prompt the believer to consider whether God may be calling him to the ministry. Has God gifted you with the fervent desire to preach? Has he equipped you with the gifts necessary for ministry? Do you love God’s Word and feel called to teach?

Spurgeon warned those who sought his counsel not to preach if they could help it. “But,” Spurgeon continued, “if he cannot help it, and he must preach or die, then he is the man.” That sense of urgent commission is one of the central marks of an authentic call. Charles Spurgeon identified the first sign of God’s call to the ministry as “an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work.” Those called by God sense a growing compulsion to preach and teach the Word, and to minister to the people of God.

Second, there is the external call. Baptists believe that God uses the congregation to “call out the called” to ministry. The congregation must evaluate and affirm the calling and gifts of the believer who feels called to the ministry. As a family of faith, the congregation should recognize and celebrate the gifts of ministry given to its members, and take responsibility to encourage those whom God has called to respond to that call with joy and submission.

Comments/questions: Contact Tom Williams Resource: [The Call](#) by Os Guinness