

Lesson 1 - Introduction to Calling and John 21

1. What are you hoping to learn from this study as it relates to the topic of calling? Please record a few of your **hopes** and **expectations**.
2. **Consider** 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."

3. **Jesus' interaction with Peter in John 21**

With a group, read John 21 three times with the following prompts:

1. In the first reading, what words or phrases stick out to you from this passage?
 2. For the second reading, imagine you are Peter. What are you thinking or feeling? Are you excited, worried, scared, etc? What might Peter be thinking or feeling before or after this interaction with Jesus?
 3. Before the third reading, please skim over the questions below.
- Summarize what seems to be Jesus' main message to Peter in this passage. What does Jesus want him to remember?
 - What calling from Jesus in this passage may apply to all believers? What other Scriptures support this?
 - What calling from Jesus might be specific to Peter? What other Scriptures support this?
 - Why might Jesus use repetition in this passage to communicate with Peter?

Read John 18: 15-26 (if time)

- How do you tend to act and feel in relationships after you have made a mistake?

- How does the concept of restoration relate to this passage? How might restoration relate to your calling and why is it needed in our lives to help us fulfill our calling?
- What distractions, challenges, or things might have been keeping Peter from his calling?
- What distractions, challenges, or things might keep you from your calling? Take some time to reflect. Use Psalm 139: 23-24 as a prayer guide and allow the Lord to search your heart on the threats and distractions in your life as it relates to calling.

Homework

4. Example of Moses

Read Exodus 3 and 4

- What can you learn about the concept of God calling people in this account?
- How did God call Moses?
- What was Moses called to do?
- How did Moses respond?
- How did God respond to Moses' objections?
- What is your takeaway from God's calling on Moses' life?
- Was Moses competent and skilled for the task and role that God was giving him? What might be some areas you feel incompetent, inadequate, and/or unsure of yourself? Where does that come from?

Lesson 2 - General Calling and Specific Calling (Part 1)

1. **Discuss** the “Example of Moses” from Lesson 1.
2. 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?

- Matthew 4:19

- John 13:34-35

- Matthew 28:18-20

- Romans 1:7

- 1 Corinthians 1:2

- 1 Corinthians 1:9

- 1 Thessalonian 2:12

- 1 Timothy 6:12

- 1 Peter 2:9

- What other passages can you think of that relate to calling?

3. What do you think of the following definition? Do you 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

4. **Study carefully 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:1** as it relates to the calling of believers.
- Does this passage apply to only some called people or to all believers? Why?

 - Would you consider this passage a description of a calling? If so what is it a calling to?

 - Why might you be a good ambassador for Christ?

 - What are some right and wrong motivations one may have for accepting this calling?

 - What is the job or role description?

 - What are the qualifications that are needed for this role?

 - What would it look like if a person received God's grace in vain 6:1?
5. **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?

Primary - to receive His love and be with Him
Secondary - Speak and take action for Him
Then - Something specific that God leads us to.

Lesson 3 - General Calling and Specific Calling (Part 2)

1. Two distortions of calling.

1. Catholic distortion – a form of dualism that elevates the spiritual at the expense of the secular
 - The perfect life (spiritual) vs the permitted (secular)
 - Two tier view of life. Higher and lower. Active vs contemplative – monasticism
 - Answering the call meant leaving one way of life for the other.

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.”

Calling means that everyone, everywhere, and in everything fulfills his or her (secondary) callings in response to God’s (primary) calling. - Guinness

How do you see this distortion playing out today? In your life?

2. Protestant distortion - 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.
 - Secondary callings replaced primary callings. Work was made sacred.
 - Protestant work ethic. “The man who builds a factory builds a temple” - President Coolidge.
 - “Work is the salvation of the human race, morally, physically, socially.” - Henry Ford

How does this help you understand the culture you are living in?

- 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

- What do you think about the above quote? Do you agree or disagree? Why? How do we keep from falling into either of the two distortions of calling in our own life?

2. 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.

- 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

3. Parable of the talents

Consider the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 in light of our calling.

- What does this parable teach regarding the calling of His servants?

4. Other quotes and thoughts...

- “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 align with 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 New Testament 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.”
- What are your thoughts on the above? What do you agree with? Disagree with? What principles from above do you hope to apply to your life and decisions?

Lesson 4 - Paul's Calling and Your Design

1. Paul's Calling

- Which aspects of Paul's calling are unique to him and/or which apply to every believer? Consider again General vs Particular/Special calling (OR primary vs secondary)

a. Acts 9:6,15,16, 26:15-18, 13:1-2, 13:46-47 (Isaiah 49:6), 20:24

b. Romans 1:5,14,15, and 15:19-21

c. 1 Corinthians 9:16

- What new insights our thoughts about calling did you learn from Paul's calling?

2. Your Design

- What do the following passages say in regards to your design and gifting? What relationship do you see between them and calling?

a. Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18

b. Jeremiah 1:1-10

c. Romans 12:3-8

d. 1 Corinthians 12

e. Ephesians 2:10 and Ephesians 4:7-15

f. 1 Peter 4:10-11

- What do you understand to be your gifts and abilities?

3. Qualified?

- Calling and the selection of elders and deacons.
 - Consider the following passages:
 - 1 Timothy 3: 1-7
 - Titus 1: 6-9
- What **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?

4. Reflections on your own character

- 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
- What are some possible competitors to calling in terms of what directs people’s lives?
 - a. 1 John 2:15-17
 - b. 1 Timothy 6:6-10
 - c. Matthew 6:24

Optional Resource: “The Darkside of Leadership”

- “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?

Lesson 5 - The Six P's of Discerning God's Will

For the following Six P's, please consider the following:

- a. Find 1-2 verses or passages (additional) that provide the biblical basis for this principle.
- b. What is your experience in considering this principle when making decisions? What makes this encouraging or challenging?
- c. What is an action step that you can take to implement this principle in your discernment of God's will?

1. Prayer — seek God's direction in prayer. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus says, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will opened to you."*

2. Promise (or Passage) — is there a verse of Scripture that God has laid on your heart for this decision? What is God saying to you through His Word?

3. People — discuss the decision with wise individuals who know you, have a history of walking with God, and can give good counsel.

4. Providence — the experiences, skills, and strengths that God has given you line up like mile markers in your life. Whatever is next will probably be on the same trajectory, not a 90-degree turn.

5. Passion — what puts wind in your sails? What lights a fire in your heart? These are valid considerations as you discern God's will for what's next.

6. Peace — following God's direction for your life can be scary, but even when following Him means heading down a daunting path, you can expect an overarching sense of peace that brings quietness and confidence and surrender to your heart.

Lesson 6 - The Navigators' Calling and Next Steps

1. Consider the following passages that are near and dear to the Navigators' calling.

- Matthew 28: 18-20
- Matthew 9: 35-38
- 2 Timothy 2:2
- 1 Thessalonians 2:8



- How is your reaction to these verses that are important to the Navigators? Do you passionately agree, just another Bible verse, doesn't connect at all, or another emotion? Do you say, "I want to live my life doing that!"? Please share honestly how you feel about these passages.

2. The Navigator calling statement

- Watch the following video on the Navigators calling statement.

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

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

3. 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?

4. Next Steps

What further questions do you have about the topic of calling?

What are your next steps in determining your specific calling and/or discerning God's will?

Write out your personal calling statement in 2-3 sentences.