

CALLING:

CALLING is a clear sense of what I cannot, not do in serving Christ.

We cannot find God without God. We cannot reach God without God. We cannot satisfy God without God—another way of saying that our seeking will always fall short unless God's grace initiates the search and unless God's call draws us to him and completes the search. Os Guinness, The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life

It is a common assumption in Christian community that people in vocational ministry are *called*. Yet, too often, it is mistakenly assumed those not carrying the title of Pastor, Reverend, Preacher, Elder, or Bishop are possibly not called.

We know the term, call, but what does it mean? A call to ministry typically refers to a feeling of conviction or a sense of PURPOSE you experience, leading to putting God first in all you say, think, and do. It is a realization you want to up your game as you serve God. To be all in. God called you when he created you. When you answer, you acknowledge that CALLING.

**The call of God to ministry is universal,
MEANING it is for everyone.**

God calls, and we respond. The prefix *voc*, in Latin, means to call or call out. So, from invocation to advocacy, a provocation or a vocation, a sense of call or CALLING is widespread in our language and could be understood simply as a wake-up call.

Your CALLING can take different forms and may involve different levels of commitment and education. It is first about being in relationship *with* God before doing anything *for* God. The *being* of a CALLING is dedicating your life to being a fully devoted follower of Jesus. The *doing* of your CALLING will come with increasing clarity **after** you fully devote your time to practicing spiritual disciplines and expressing them through your MISSION.

Historically, that meant being in full-time ministry, which is a serious misnomer. CALLING includes full-time occupational ministry but is not limited to that role. It could be vocational, but for most Christians, it simply means, like the prophet Isaiah answering the call, “*Here am I, Lord. Send me.*”

But what does a call to ministry look like? Often, we conflate what we think is a CALLING with a MISSION. They are different. A CALLING is just that—a CALLING to MISSION. MISSION is an intentional expression of our CALLING.

When we look at the Apostle Paul's life, did he understand his CALLING? Certainly. First, being a Pharisee like his father was a hereditary call. Then, Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed his trajectory and was a powerful call from the Lord himself.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote, *"But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles."* (Galatians 1:15-16)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, *"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."* (Romans 1:1) And in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, *"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* (1 Corinthians 15:9-10)

In addressing this topic to the church in Corinth, Paul said, *"Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches."* (1 Corin. 7:17)

In all these examples, Paul acknowledged God called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and be an apostle. He recognized it was not his own merit leading to his CALLING, but rather, it was by the grace of God.

Building on what we see in Paul's words about CALLING, we see it first *happens inward*. Our CALLING, what I'm prepared to do, is our PURPOSE, why I was created (PURPOSE), and now in action (CALLING). In its simplest terms, like Paul, our CALLING is loving God, loving others, being holy by dying to self, and making disciples. In other words, every human being has a universal CALLING.

Another way to look at it is our CALLING is the expression, the consequence, of our salvation energized by the Holy Spirit. Salvation moves us *upward*. The work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, moves us **outward**. And then our MISSION is **to-ward**. For example, it may be by becoming the most intentional friend, parent, or grandparent you can be as you introduce Christ and your life in Christ to them. Or it could be as dramatic as uprooting family and occupation and moving to a new place for ministry.

It is interesting to note the prefix *voc*, as in vocation, means call. Our current job description, if we are employed, is not our vocation, but it is the framework to exercise our CALLING.

So, what is the life the Lord has assigned to us? What is our *voc*, our call? As you travel through the Road Map, you can now understand and define your PURPOSE. Consequently, your CALLING becomes clearer as you look backward on your Road Map. Gaining clarity is acknowledging and then believing EVERYONE has a CALLING from God. Everyone is called to ministry. CALLING is getting to a place in life where, no matter how many times we want to chuck it all out of discouragement and dead ends, the compelling call of ministry can't be put down. In our frustration, we realize once again we are dead to sin and alive in Christ.

When we understand our CALLING, our vocation, we experience motivation and dedication.

CALLING is also changing terminology and mindset. Perhaps you previously thought your vocation was what you did for income. Now you understand your vocation is serving Christ. Your occupation is how you enable your vocation to be viable by financially supporting yourself and those to whom you are responsible.

CALLING may come in an instant of revelation. Or, more commonly, a CALLING or revealing of ministry comes through a process of spiritual formation (discipleship) and growth followed by elders of the church praying and confirming (laying on of hands).

Perhaps another way to understand our CALLING is revealed by looking backward to PURPOSE, MEANING, IDENTITY, and STORY. Our MISSION becomes clear by looking forward to what you do with all you now understand about yourself and God's intention for your life.

CALLING, perhaps, can also be characterized as a significant increase in spiritual maturity. A confident CALLING most often comes by refining your spiritual hearing, telling your STORY, owning your IDENTITY, understanding MEANING, defining PURPOSE, and then clarifying your CALLING. When you can do that, you will know your MISSION.

Finding, confirming, and affirming your CALLING may be the most challenging place to be in your disciple journey. Why? It may be you don't feel worthy of having a CALLING. It is regrettable but understandable.

Just keep reminding yourself Jesus has called you to ministry. He's called EVERY created being into ministry. Salvation comes first, and the door opens to discovery—to a journey. *"All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

Answering and clarifying a spiritual "Call" to serve Jesus is a deeply personal and spiritual trek that involves discernment, self-examination, and alignment with biblical principles. Here's what it entails:

1. Understanding the Call. A "call" to serve Jesus can manifest in different ways:

- General Call – All believers are called to follow Christ, grow in faith, and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).
- Personal Call – A unique calling tailored to an individual's gifts, talents, and circumstances (Ephesians 2:10).
- Vocational Call – A call to ministry leadership, mission work, or pastoral service.
- Situational Call – A temporary or specific assignment God places in a believer's life.

2. Confirming the Call. Spiritual leadership and mentors are important sources for confirmation.

- Scriptural Alignment – Does the sense of calling align with biblical teaching? God's call never contradicts His Word.
- Prayer and Reflection – Seeking God through prayer to gain clarity and conviction.
- Community Affirmation – Other believers, mentors, and church leaders often recognize and affirm a person's call.
- Gifts and Passions – Identifying spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8) and passions that align with God's calling.

3. Clarifying the Call. Taking quiet time to hear from God is essential.

- Examining Personal Motivations – Is the call driven by love for God and others, or is it based on personal ambition?
- Recognizing God's Timing – Some calls require preparation, training, or waiting for the right season.
- Obedience in the Small Things – Often, God calls individuals to be faithful in smaller tasks before entrusting them with greater responsibilities (Luke 16:10).
- Confirmation through Experience – Serving in different ministries helps refine and clarify a call.

4. Responding to the Call. Call is not the same as MISSION. Call is making yourself unconditionally available for God to use you.

- Surrender and Trust – Embracing God's call requires trust, even when it involves uncertainty or sacrifice (Isaiah 6:8).
- Equipping and Training – Developing the necessary skills through study, mentorship, and practical ministry experience.
- Walking in Faith and Obedience – Taking steps forward even when the entire path is unclear.
- Ongoing Discernment – Continually seeking God's direction as the call evolves over time.

5. Living Out the Call. Living out the call needs to be done in community.

- Balancing Growth and Movement – As highlighted in the article, spiritual growth should be paired with movement—actively serving and applying what is learned.
- Serving with Humility and Love – A true calling is centered on Christ and others, not self-promotion.
- Making Disciples – Every believer's call ultimately leads back to discipling others and helping them grow in faith.
- Persevering through Challenges – The call to serve Jesus is not always easy, but faithfulness leads to spiritual fruit.

A spiritual call is not just a moment of inspiration but a lifelong journey of obedience and growth. If you're sensing a call, begin by seeking God, taking small faithful steps, and allowing Him to shape your path.

As you work through the questions, establish a daily practice of going to the **Lectio Divina**. Click on this QR code for reflection on your CALLING utilizing the practices of Silence, Read, Meditate, Pray, and Contemplate.



Notes from my Lectio Divina on my CALLING

Write down your response to this question without referring to your previous work under IDENTITY. If time and money were no limit, I now know I would be doing this in and for ministry. In other words, this is what I now know I know I can not not do. Start by writing general words and statements. Don't get specific because later, you will identify your MISSION. Instead, keep it more general. If you struggle with putting your CALLING into words, no worries. It may take months to gain clarity. Once you start putting it to paper, it will clarify over time. Share your thoughts with your discipling friend. You are revealing your dream ministry as your STORY, IDENTITY, MEANING, PURPOSE, and CALLING form into a holistic image of who and what God formed you to be.

Let's assemble all your work and see what it is saying. What have you identified as your strongest spiritual gifts and talents?

After you took the APEST test, what spiritual role or office appears to be the vehicle of your CALLING for your ministry? For example, if your role is predominately Apostle, it will be, in some way, to help strengthen ministries. Will it be to help strengthen individuals? If Prophet, it will be through the platform of a proclaimer, revealing God's heart for His people. If, as a Teacher, you are an explainer making the Truth about God consumable. As an Evangelist, it points people to their specific need for a Savior. If, as a Shepherd, it is caring for the tangible needs of all people around you.

Considering all that, my spiritual role is:

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