

CALLED

EXPLORING GOD'S CALL ON YOUR LIFE

A RESOURCE OF CLAMP DIVINITY SCHOOL

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Greg Allgood
Kristopher Barnett
Bryan Cribb
Michael Duduit
Chuck Fuller
Tim McKnight
Dante Wright



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Called | Understanding the Call to Ministry

Greg Allgood, Kristopher Barnett, Bryan Cribb, Michael Duduit, Chuck Fuller, Tim McKnight, Dante Wright

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Anderson University

College of Christian Studies

316 Boulevard

Anderson, SC 29621

ministry@auministry.com

864.328.1809

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About the Contributors

Greg Allgood is Instructor of Christian Studies and Internship Coordinator for the College of Christian Studies at Anderson University.

Kristopher Barnett is Associate Dean of Clamp Divinity School and Assistant Professor of Christian Ministry at Anderson University. He is also the chair over the Master of Ministry and Doctor of Ministry in Biblical Preaching. He holds a Ph.D. in Preaching from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Bryan Cribb is Associate Dean of the College of Christian Studies and Associate Professor of Christian Studies at Anderson University. He holds the Ph.D. in Old Testament from Southern Baptist Seminary.

Michael Duduit is founding Dean of the College of Christian Studies and Clamp Divinity School and Professor of Christian Studies at Anderson University. He is founder and Executive Editor of *Preaching* magazine, and writes a weekly email newsletter (*Preaching Now*) with more than 10,000 subscribers. He holds a Ph.D. from Florida State University.

Charles Fuller is Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at Anderson University. He came to AU from a pastorate in Louisville, KY, where he earned a Ph.D. in Preaching from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Tim McKnight is the Director of the Global Center for Youth Ministry and Associate Professor of Youth Ministry & Missions. He holds a Ph.D. in Evangelism with additional studies in missions and church planting.

Dante Wright is Assistant Professor of Christian Studies. He holds a D.Min in Homiletics from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies with an emphasis in Homiletics from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Introduction

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service. . . ." (1 Timothy 1:12, ESV)

What does it mean to be called into ministry? In an article by Dave Stone, he writes: "To keep Christ at the center, we must remember why we do what we do. In the midst of the pressure of sermon prep, sometimes I have to pause and reflect on my calling. I often think back to a summer camp during my sophomore year of college. I was lying atop a smelly bunk bed in the early morning hours when I scribbled this entry in my journal:

"I preached at campfire tonight—I didn't get to run through it beforehand. I had notes in my Bible and a flashlight, but I didn't end up using either. The Holy Spirit was in me, and I could feel Him. I preached with more power than I ever had before. In the background on a hill were three illuminated crosses that everyone could see. Five people came forward and made decisions. There is no doubt in my mind that I will preach the gospel until the day I die."

I wrote that over 25 years ago, but nothing has changed. I still desire to preach the gospel until the day I die. It is a sense of calling that I can't entirely explain. As Bob Shank says, "Career is what you're paid for, but a calling is what you're made for.' Remembering God's call helps us persevere in the pulpit, and it keeps Christ at the center."

In these brief pages, the faculty of the College of Christian Studies and Clamp Divinity School at Anderson University will help you think through the concept of a call to ministry, and how to explore the implications of that call in your life. We pray it will be a useful tool as God leads you toward the place where He would have you invest your life.

If we can help you further consider these questions, or assist in some other way, please call on us. You can email us at ministry@aumministry.com, or write to us at:

College of Christian Studies
Anderson University
316 Boulevard
Anderson, SC 29621

You can also visit our website aumministry.com. You'll find a downloadable pdf copy of this book, in case you'd like to get a copy for yourself or share one with a friend.

Michael Duduit
Dean, College of Christian Studies
Anderson University

The Joy of Ministry

Dante Wright

There is a famous quote, attributed to Howard Thurman by Gil Bailie that says, “Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”¹ This quote about the nature of vocation is a beautiful quote that speaks to the call of God on your life to do whatever it is that God is calling you to do. While this quote is beautiful and adds wonder to the journey of discovering what God has for you to do, there is another quote by Howard Thurman that gives a better reminder about the nature of vocation.

Thurman, when speaking about being surrounded by the love of God, shares the timely truth that we know that God loves us because of the glimmers of joy and hope and forgiveness and perseverance that shows up in the life of every person. This is essential to understanding what our vocation is because it does not center our vocation in what makes us happy, but it centers our vocation on understanding that even in despair and even during the vicissitudes of life, that the moments of hope and peace and joy shows us that God loves us. Howard Thurman says,

“Whatever may be the tensions of the stresses of a particular day. There is always lurking close at hand, the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace... The edge of hope that constantly invades the seasoned grounds of despair. The faith that keeps watch at the doors through which pass all the labors of my life and heart for what is right and true. The impulse to forgive and to seek forgiveness. Even when the injury is sharp and clear, these

and countless other things make me know that by day and by night, my life is surrounded by the love of God.”²²

Thurman adds complexity to an often-oversimplified conversation on vocation. He shows us that we must look deeper than superficial happiness and overwhelming despair that we find in life. In other words, Thurman is telling us that happiness is not at the center of our calling. In fact, if you are looking for happiness to be the gauge as to whether you are called or doing God’s will, you will find yourself wanting to give up at a moment’s notice. It is not happiness, but it is joy, the idea that no matter the troubles of life, you are content and determined to be surrounded by the love of God and to do God’s will.

In fact, Frederick Buechner tells us in his book, *The Hungering Dark* that, “Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most uncompromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes. Even nailed to a tree”²³ Joy is not predicated on a happy life. Joy is centered around knowing that God is in control and that at any moment’s notice God’s joy will be made known, especially during trials and tribulations.

Buechner brings to us the picture of what we must do when there are no other words to be said, when the complexities of life and ministry have us tongue tied. This is an interesting statement. Because as one called into the ministry, you are called to speak. You are called to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. You are called to proclaim Christ and him crucified. Yet there are moments in your life where the words you are called to proclaim leads you to periods of sadness, moments of loneliness, and times of trepidation. Buechner challenges us to look beyond the pulpit and proclamation as the center of our vocation.

Often in the arrogance of proclamation and after years of pulpit ministry, there are times where we see ourselves as larger than what we ought to be. We look at God and we tell God, “Look how important I am to your kingdom.” Both Thurman and Buechner make it clear to us that while joy is not elusive, joy is ever shifting. That joy is not always found in the positions, in the pulpits, in the churches or in the degrees that we think would bring us notoriety. But joy is found in the mysterious moments of life. So as you shape your vocation, as you work in word and deed toward who God has called you to be, as you begin to understand scripture and doctrine more, as well as the professional skills needed to be an effective preacher and pastor,

remember that joy shows up in unimaginable and impossible places.

While I do not want to discourage you from the ministry that God has called you to, I want to make sure that you understand ministry is not a crystal stair. As Langston Hughes would say,

*Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.⁴*

Hughes is telling us that life is not easy. Ministry is not easy. The reality is ministry was never intended to be easy. To tell someone about a Jesus who saves them from sins makes your ministry hard. To turn away from your own sins that give you pleasure makes ministry hard. To speak to a world that is bent on dying, makes ministry hard. To walk against the grain makes ministry hard, but it does not mean that joy will not be there. Hughes is right. Life; ministry is not a crystal stair, but notice what Hughes says,

*But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.⁵*

While life ain't no crystal stair, it's still a chair that needs climbing. Life and ministry must be met with a joy-filled perseverance. There must be a sense of wonder in knowing that at anytime, anywhere, in unpromising circumstances, in the midst of suffering, with tear-filled eyes, and even nailed

to a tree, that joy mysteriously and miraculously appears. In fact, joy will always invade despair, it will always keep watch, it will always impulsively push you to forgive and to seek forgiveness. Joy will constantly remind you of God's love.

Jesus, in John 15:11, reminds us that we are to abide in God's love. That our perseverance in God's loving truth is the remembrance and completion of joy. A stick-to-it-ness that continues on despite the circumstances of life is where you will find joy. Whether that be in the den of Daniel, the furnace of the three Hebrew boys, the caves of David, the stocks of Jeremiah, the depression of Elijah, the execution of Stephen, the incarceration of Paul, the exile of John, trials of any kind, or the crucifixion of Christ, joy will find you there--lurking in the shadows of despair. There are times were life with convince us to forget or at best distract us. There will be seasons of ministerial drought, excruciating days deafening silence, bouts of self-deprecating depression, many moments at the edge of giving up, but there is a beauty that trails joy--forgotten when our lives overwhelm us. It lingers when all else fails. Joy.

Endnotes

1. Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2011), xv.
2. Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 211.
3. Frederick Buechner, *The Hungering Dark* (New York: The Seabury, 1969), 102.

Thought Questions

- 1. When you think about a potential call to ministry, what about that calling brings you the most joy?**
- 2. Why do you think some believers lose their joy in ministry?**
- 3. What defenses might you establish to prevent others or circumstances from robbing you of your joy?**

What is a Call to Ministry?

Kristopher Barnett

The mascot for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta was Izzy. Being the first computer generated mascot, Izzy didn't look like any animal, person or place. The mascot didn't convey the image of any existing object, so people, many in their Southern drawls, asked, "What iz it?" Eventually, the question was shortened and the mascot was appropriately nicknamed Izzy.

That amorphous blue mascot is like the call to ministry in that the call is difficult to describe. Dividing the call into two distinct categories, general and specific, can illuminate our understanding.

General and Specific Call

All believers are under the general call of God. They are called to follow and obey. This call demands humility and holiness. In addition, each and every believer is invited to join God in His redemptive activity in the world. They are called to make disciples and be witnesses. This is a broad call that applies to any who claim the name of Christ.

God also calls individuals to specific tasks within His redemptive activity in the world. Surrendering to God's general call places a believer on God's team; surrendering to God's specific call places a believer in a specific role on that team. For example, in the early church God called Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles while Peter primarily proclaimed Jesus to the Jews. Both fulfilled the general call of God by carrying out God's specific call in their lives.

This chapter will focus on the specific call of God while attempting to answer, "What is the call?" One way to address that question is to consider the call of an unlikely warrior named Gideon. His story will provide perspective on God's call.

Brave and Mighty Warrior

Gideon raised his eyes from the wheat in the winepress to mop the perspiration from his brow. For the first time, he noticed the mysterious stranger sitting quietly under the oak. The sight of a stranger initially frightened Gideon, but the farmer relaxed when he realized that the man was not a Midianite. The marauding Midianites had ravaged the land of Israel for years. Gideon's people hid from their oppressors. Some even abandoned their homes and retreated to mountain caves.

Gideon had not taken to the hills but he had retreated to a winepress. Typically threshing occurred on the threshing floor, out in the open so that the wind could carry away the chaff. The fear of Midianite raiders had driven Gideon to the winepress. Too many times the Midianites had descended on unsuspecting Israelites, robbing Israel of crops and dignity. "Would God ever send someone to rescue His people?" Gideon dropped his eyes in shame as he considered the plight of his people.

It is unlikely you have felt the oppression of Midianite raiders, but it is probable that you have felt the shame of God's people. Sin saturates the church just as it saturates the world. The people of God still resemble the crowds that Jesus encountered, "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Have you ever wondered if God will send someone to rescue his people? Have you ever wondered if God is sending you?

Interrupting the Silence

The stranger's confident voice interrupted Gideon's silence. "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior" (Judges 6:12). Gideon stifled a laugh. He couldn't decide which part of the statement was more comical. Gideon was anything but a mighty warrior. He was a farmer so filled with fear that he wouldn't even thresh his wheat at the threshing floor. Instead of accepting the assistance of the wind on the spacious threshing floor, Gideon worked on his wheat in the enclosed winepress.

He wouldn't describe himself as a "brave and mighty warrior." He could think of a few other descriptions: a slinking provider, a conquered coward, or a frightened father. But as much as the label "brave and mighty warrior" humored Gideon, the assurance that God would be with him seemed even more preposterous. The preposterous assertion

prompted Gideon to question the stranger. Gideon peppered the pilgrim with questions. “If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13)

Gideon could not harmonize God’s presence with the presence of the Midianite marauders. Gideon recounted the stories of God’s activity in the past. He could affirm that God had been with Israel, but Gideon saw no evidence of God’s activity in the present. “Where is He now?” Gideon inquired. “Look around, do you see the Lord working among us? Look at the camels of the Midianites, resting on our land and destroying our crops! Look at the bloated bellies of the babies dying from dehydration. Look at the heavy yoke of oppression that constantly drags Israel down.”

Gideon couldn’t see the battlefield for the winepress. He couldn’t envision himself as a brave and mighty warrior because he could see the chaff stuck to his sweat-stained skin. He couldn’t taste victory because of the ever present after-taste of oppression. It is easy to bemoan the lack of God’s activity in the present but it is much more difficult to be a part of God’s activity in the present. If you want to see God’s activity today, then report for duty. If you want to see God work like He did in the lives of Moses, Gideon and Paul, then say, “Here am I, Lord, send me!”

“Am I Not Sending You?”

The stranger walked over to the winepress and spoke to Gideon: “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” (Judges 6:14). The mysterious stranger unnerved Gideon. How could this man commission Gideon? Was it possible that he was more than just a mysterious pilgrim? Was Gideon receiving a message that would change his story and the history of Israel? Was this a delusional stranger or a Godly messenger?

While Gideon considered the potential implications, he replied to the stranger’s command, lamenting with his own question: “How can I save Israel?” (Judges 6:15). Gideon pulled out the mental mirror and said, “You must be crazy. I know me and I am not up to this task. I know me and I’m not man enough for this job. There must be someone stronger, someone smarter, someone younger, or maybe even someone older.” Gideon knew his status, or lack of status. He was not a warrior and his

people were not warriors. Gideon said, “Let me introduce myself to you, God; my family is the weakest in the tribe (and it isn’t a very strong tribe at that), and I am the weakest of all in the family.”

Gideon is certain that God, or maybe this stranger, or perhaps both, have taken a wrong turn somewhere. Perhaps they were looking for Gideon’s cousin. He was a big guy, good with a sword. He could be a great and mighty warrior!

Faced with God’s vision of the future, excuses abound. Like Gideon, you can probably fill notebooks with reasons why God’s call must be wrong. Surely you aren’t equipped for this task. You stammer when you speak and your mind drifts when you try to study. Certainly you don’t have the financial resources to make this work. Education costs money which is in short supply around your house. Perhaps, like Gideon, your pedigree isn’t conducive to ministry. Maybe your family would disown you if you seriously pursued God’s vision for your life. Opposite your excuses, you can make a lengthy list of others more competent or more qualified than you. God should talk to them, right?

Gideon couldn’t see himself as a “brave and mighty warrior,” but God could. How does God see you? Has He provided a glimpse of your future that seems unrecognizable in the present? Sometimes we balk at God’s vision for our lives because our vision is skewed by sin. Our past prohibits our ability to see the future with any clarity. We can’t see ourselves as one sent by God to shepherd His people because past failures and current struggles impair our vision. Remember, God has future focused x-ray vision. He sees us for who we will be and His vision is always accurate. Trust His vision for your life!

“I Can’t, He Can”

The mysterious stranger interrupts Gideon’s excuses. With a note of authority this messenger of God reveals God’s reality, “I will be with you and you will strike down all the Midianites together” (Judges 6:16). The messenger promises God’s presence. He reveals to Gideon that God’s activity is not limited to past tense participation; it also includes present tense reality. In addition, the messenger promises victory. The key for Gideon is to recognize the relationship between the two promises.

Victory only comes in the power of God's presence.

Gideon said, "I can't do it." God agreed with Gideon's assessment. God recognized Gideon's limitations even more acutely than Gideon. So, God says to Gideon, "I will be with you and you will strike down the Midianites. Gideon, this isn't about you trying harder, this isn't about you doing better, and this isn't even about you in me. No, this is about Me in you. This is about what I can do through you!"

Gideon's excuses revealed a lack of faith. Ours do the same. False humility actually belies a fragile faith in God. When you pretend that your skills are insufficient or your abilities are incomplete, you imply that God has made a mistake. You imply that God doesn't know what He is doing. You act as if God does not possess the ability to equip and empower His servants. Playing up your inability actually questions God's ability. God knows that you can't accomplish the task on your own. It is arrogant for us to think that we can. God assures Gideon that he will win the victory. God's assurance is the same for you. If God has revealed His vision of your future, He will enable you to realize it.

What does God see in you? He sees Himself in You! He doesn't look at you as you are; He looks at you as you will be filled with His power. Maybe you are hearing the voice of God calling you to a task, but the task doesn't fit with your mental image of yourself. You are not really a student of the Word, but for some reason God calls you skilled teacher. You can't see through your own pain, but God calls you kind comforter. You don't have patience with church people, but God calls you a gentle shepherd. You don't have any extra time for teens, but God calls you student pastor. You've never traveled on foreign soil, but God calls you vocational missionary. You've only been a part of one church your entire life, but God calls you a church planter.

Remember that God's perspective is different. He isn't looking at what you are but rather at what you are becoming with His strength. God's call is not an affirmation of your abilities; it is an acknowledgement of His activity in your life. Gideon was a mighty warrior because God was with him. So as crazy as it might sound, God's greeting is appropriate:

The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.

The Lord is with you, skilled teacher.

The Lord is with you, kind comforter.

The Lord is with you, gentle shepherd.

The Lord is with you, student pastor.

The Lord is with you, vocational missionary.

The Lord is with you, church planter.

The Call of God

What is the call of God? The specific call of God acknowledges your place on the team and asserts your role in God's redemptive plan. God offers His vision of your future and invites you to participate. The call invites you to accept God's perspective on your potential. So, quit threshing wheat in the winepress and join God on the battlefield. There's a job just for you!

Thought Questions

- 1. In your own words, how would you describe a call to ministry?**
- 2. What stands out to you from Gideon's story?**
- 3. God saw something in Gideon that he did not see himself. What might God see in you that you once thought a weakness?**

How Do You Know if You Are Called to Ministry?

Chuck Fuller

Without hesitation he replied, “If you can do anything else and be happy, do it.” His sobering advice was not what I expected to hear upon sharing my call to ministry with my boyhood pastor. Brother Danny had moved from our church some years earlier, but returned for a revival service. He was the man who had baptized me, preached to me, and shepherded my soul during my most formative years. He was the man that, except for my own father, I admired more than anyone in the world. When I told him my big news, I thought he would respond with delight, encouragement, and affirmation.

What I received felt awkward, disheartening, and even harsh — causing my eager, youthful heart to sink. At first, his counsel caused me to question him — perhaps he had lost his passion for ministry or had become disgruntled with the work. Then, his counsel caused me to question, well, me. Maybe he thought I wasn’t qualified. Maybe I was lying to myself or putting too much trust in the encouragement received from others.

It took some years for me to understand, and appreciate, his intent. He did not mean to frighten or discourage me. He meant to refine me — to cause me to consider my calling carefully before embarking on the journey. Over time, I found his somber words to be a most helpful piece of wisdom. He knew that if I was not completely sure of my calling, then I would completely fail in ministry.

A clear call to ministry isn’t optional—it’s essential. Only a clear call from God kept Isaiah true to his task to render hearts dull, ears heavy, and eyes blind (Isaiah 6:10). Only a supernatural call drove the apostle Paul to remain faithful even as he suffered for the sake of Christ (Acts

9:16; 2 Corinthians 11:24-12:10). Indeed, gospel ministry is a grueling task that involves great personal sacrifices. Dealing firsthand with the realities of sin, wrestling with fallen souls, and pleading for salvation is not for the weak of heart. Only a sure calling will sustain a minister through it. Erwin Lutzer wisely claims,

I don't see how anyone could survive in the ministry if he felt it was just his own choice. Some ministers scarcely have two good days back to back. They are sustained by the knowledge that God has placed them where they are. Ministers without such conviction often lack courage and carry their resignation letter in their coat pocket. At the slightest hint of difficulty, they're gone.¹

If a sure calling is prerequisite to Christian ministry, how then does one know that he is called? Although other factors sometimes exist, it seems that a genuine call to ministry involves two necessary components: an internal compulsion for the task, and external confirmation by the church.

Internal Compulsion

Charles Spurgeon claimed that the “first sign” of the calling is “an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work.”² Indeed, a deep, irresistible urge for gospel ministry represents one component of a genuine call. In Jeremiah 20:9, the prophet says, “there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.” Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:16, claims, “For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

What the prophet and the apostle experienced finds repetition in every generation of Christian ministers. John Stott, the stalwart evangelical pastor and theologian in the Church of England, surrendered to a call to ministry during his college days. His parents were seemingly unhappy with his decision and, in reply to them, he wrote,

Whatever you may think of it, I have had a definite and irresistible call from God to serve Him in the Church. During the last three years I have become increasingly

conscious of this call, and my life now could be summed up in the words “separated unto the gospel of God.” There is no higher service; I ask no other.³

A genuine call to Christian ministry can withstand the challenge of my boyhood pastor (“if you can do anything else and be happy, do it”) because one called to ministry simply cannot do anything else. A holy constraint binds him. In his famous *Lectures to My Students*, Charles Spurgeon asserts,

If any student . . . could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way; he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fullness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants.⁴

This internal compulsion to enter ministry, though, must not be merely impulsive or reactionary. A fleeting thought, a single pondering, a convicting encounter, or a “what if” moment does not constitute a call to gospel work. Compulsion has roots. In most cases (though not all), a sense of call rises from intense personal Bible study, exposure to biblical preaching, and connection to a faithful, local church. Kevin Smith was the 2009-2010 president of the Kentucky Baptist Pastor’s Conference, and is pastor of Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He describes his call to ministry in terms of internal compulsion rooted in Scripture and church ministry. He says,

I knew I was called to “preach the Gospel” as I began to be disciplined under the expository ministry of my local church in my mid-twenties. . . . After having a season of Isaiah 6 exposures to God (from His word), I sensed the burden to share His word (and subsequently His glory) with others as my purpose in life. I knew I could pursue nothing else and have the peace and joy of the Lord.⁵

In other words, Pastor Kevin knew that he could do nothing else and be happy. The gospel constrained him. He had an irresistible, internal

compulsion toward Christian ministry, rooted in Bible study, prayer, preaching, and local church discipleship.

External Confirmation

All of us are prone to misinterpret our feelings and experiences, so none one of us can infallibly distinguish our own call to ministry. “It is not enough to feel that we may possibly have a call to the ministry,” according to Derek Prime and Alistair Begg. “Such uncertainty leads to tragic mistakes.”⁶ Others must help one to confirm God’s call.

In Acts, the church plays a crucial role in affirming gospel ministers, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13:1-3, the Spirit calls upon the Antioch church to “set apart” Barnabas and Saul for gospel work. After praying and fasting, the church lays hands on them and sends them off. Acts 16 provides another example. Paul enters Derbe and Lystra, and finds a man named Timothy. The Christian brothers there spoke highly of Timothy, so Paul “wanted Timothy to accompany him” (Acts 16:3). We know little of Timothy’s personal experience of a call, but we do know that the church’s confirmation was a major factor in his ministry.

In my early days as a pastor, a young man in his twenties came to Christ and quickly expressed a call to ministry. The church supported him with prayer and financial assistance, but many had honest, if unexpressed, reservations — including me. It wasn’t a flaw in his character. Rather, we perceived an utter lack of giftedness and a few personality issues that might stifle his effectiveness. Personally, I feared that the joyful emotion of coming to Christ might have led him to a premature sense of calling to ministry. Not wanting to hinder or discourage, though, we kept our doubts private. Unwittingly, we left the poor fellow to suffer alone in frustration, despair, and failure. Less than a year into Bible college, he dropped out and returned home — without work and with mounting personal debt. Our church failed him. In truth, he was the only person that believed that he was called to ministry, but we lacked the courage to test him, refine him, and even correct him.

One who feels an internal call to ministry should seek the external confirmation of the local church, and every local church should test and refine such a person. The church is the body of Christ, and through the

Spirit of Christ it expresses the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 1-2). Its collective wisdom must be engaged when one believes that he is called to ministry. “The will of the Lord concerning pastors is made known through the prayerful judgment of his church,” Spurgeon claims. “It is needful as a proof of your vocation that your preaching should be acceptable to the people of God.”⁷ The accountability, discernment, and encouragement of a local church (Hebrews 10:24-25) are essential for confirming a genuine call.

Many times, when a person begins to consider ministry, he or she will submit to the church’s leadership for counsel. It could be that the person has exhibited signs of a call for some time, and the church can quickly affirm the calling. It could be that more time is needed. For example, if a man desires to be a pastor, but has little evidence of giftedness, then his pastor should begin to mentor him. The candidate should demonstrate growth in biblical knowledge, teaching and preaching ability, leadership skills, spiritual maturity, and desire for the work. At some point, and upon the pastor’s recommendation, the person should be affirmed by the church and, perhaps, ordained.

The membership and leadership of a local church should help a person discern and refine a call to ministry in each of the following ways:

- Identifying specific flaws in character that, if not purged, would subvert ministry.
- Detecting spiritual maturity and overall readiness for service.
- Discerning what gifts for ministry a person possesses, and what types of ministries those particular gifts would best serve.
- Refining skills in leadership and working with people.
- Developing skills in preaching and public communication.
- Gaining experience in teaching and pastoral ministries.

What comes first, the compulsion or the confirmation?

In many cases, the internal compulsion precedes the external confirmation. As a called person sits under the sound teaching of the Word, prays, and becomes involved in ministry, the call becomes radically clear and that person cannot help but share it. Then, after sharing it, the church agrees and affirms. Often, though, the process is deeply intertwined. Because of the spiritually intimate nature of the local church, by the time a person acknowledges an internal compulsion toward ministry, many others have already sensed it coming and have been praying in anticipation.

A few years ago, I led a teenager to Christ at our church's annual Fall Festival event. He had visited for a few weeks, and I had noticed his attentiveness. After trusting Christ for salvation, he blossomed in spiritual maturity. He absorbed the Bible and preaching like a sponge. He began spending enormous amounts of time with our youth minister, receiving counsel and building friendship. Soon, he was volunteering in various ministries, assisting in the church office, and mentoring his siblings and friends for Christ. At a Valentine's banquet one year, he stood to give his testimony. As he shared his love for Christ and love for the church, I sensed the Spirit of the Lord on him, as did others. Unknown to him, we began to pray for him concerning his future.

After some time passed, he began contemplating a call to ministry, and sought help and prayer from me and the youth minister. When, after even more time passed, he came forward at the end of a worship service to announce his call to ministry and ask for the church's affirmation, it was a moment of great celebration. The internal call and external confirmation were woven together in a beautiful, worshipful way.

Sometimes, however, a church will recognize a person's call to ministry before he does. Feelings of inadequacy, worldly distractions, and discouragement from detractors can hinder a person from considering a call, and it takes the prodding of a church to kindle the inner compulsion. Derek Prime's call to ministry happened in such a way. He writes,

It surfaced when it was my turn to give the talk at the young people's meeting of the church through whose witness I had been brought to Christ. The pastor was

present, and afterward he turned to me and asked, “Derek, have you ever thought of the ministry?” At age sixteen I had thought that to have such a desire so early was rather presumptuous, and yet it was wonderful to me that it was not I who raised the subject but my pastor. . . .

Coming from a non-Christian background, my parents opposed my going into the ministry, even though they consented to my switching to theology in my third year at university. And so I taught first history and then religious knowledge for three and a half years in a boys’ grammar school. During this time opportunities for preaching multiplied, and I became an elder of the church where I had been converted. To my surprise, during a pastoral vacancy, one of the elders intimated to me after a church prayer meeting that he and the other elders had come to the conclusion that it was God’s will that I should become the pastor of the church, and that they would share that conviction with the church if I felt an answering conviction. . . .

I have gained immeasurable strength from remembering that my decision to obey God’s call was confirmed initially by the elders as I submitted myself to their direction, and then underlined the clear call of God’s people in a situation in which I had no hand.⁸

Whether the internal compulsion or the external confirmation comes first—or whether the two are deeply intertwined — the matter of timing has no final consequence. What remains critically important, though, is that both components do exist and, at some point, come together. When that happens, the one sensing a call to ministry is ready to move forward with intense preparation — preparation through academic study and ministry experience.

Are you contemplating a call to ministry? Then, heed the advice I so reluctantly received. If you can do anything else and be happy, then do it. If, however, you cannot — if ministry is your all-consuming passion

in life, then seek the counsel of other believers in the context of a local church. Be patient and submissive as your call is tested and your gifts are refined. Seek to prepare as thoroughly as possible. Then, serve “by the strength that God supplies” (1 Peter 4:11), and “fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5).

Endnotes

1. Erwin W. Lutzer, “Still Called to the Ministry,” *Moody Monthly* 83, no 7 (March 1983): 133.
2. C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: Complete & Unabridged* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 26.
3. Timothy Dudley Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 87, 165.
4. Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 27.
5. Kevin Smith, personal interview, September 24, 2010.
6. Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 24.
7. Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 29.
8. Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 26-27.

Thought Questions

1. **How and when did the call to ministry become radically clear to you?**
2. **Does your church affirm your calling to ministry?**
3. **What skills can you develop or refine that will contribute to a life of ministry to others?**

What the Bible Says About the Call to Ministry

Bryan H. Cribb

The synagogue in Antioch was in a state of pandemonium. A mob had formed. Lynching was on its mind. Raised fists, stomping feet and cries of “blasphemy” had kicked up a cloud of dust, fury and deadly intentions.

In the midst of the mob stood one man — now quiet, almost peaceful, yet determined. The first rock hit Stephen. Suddenly, a barrage of boulders flew from the angry rabble. Within minutes, one of the leaders of the early church breathed his last.

A young Pharisee in the back nodded his head “in hearty agreement” (Acts 8:1). He began to gather the garments of the mob — returning them to their rightful owners. Saul was happy. Joyous. Another heretic had been exterminated. Judaism was being purified. Indeed, as Paul would later write of himself, “He was advancing in his faith” (Gal. 1:14). He believed he was doing right by persecuting a church that he thought to be false, foolish and far from God’s will.

How can it be that one like this could receive the “call” to become God’s minister to the very church he once persecuted? How could Saul the persecutor become Paul the servant of God?

Those who receive God’s call into the ministry today rarely claim such radical “Damascus Road” experiences. Yet, we can learn something of how God works to summon to divine service today from the many examples of “callings” — like that of Paul and others — which fill the Scriptures.

This chapter will briefly consider biblical illustrations of God’s call to ministry. One could take two approaches to this task. In a comprehensive and inductive fashion, one could examine key “callings” one by one

throughout the Scriptures. But such an exhaustive study could prove scattered and, well, exhausting.

The tact I shall take is more synchronic and systematic. In other words, I will examine general and enduring principles gleaned from how God works in most “callings” throughout the Scriptures.

One caution is in order as I begin my survey. One should avoid making one-to-one correspondences between Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles with modern day God-called ministers and preachers. While overlap exists between the modern and ancient, there is also dissonance. So, for instance, while the prophets and apostles often received visionary and verbal calls from God the Father or Christ Himself, such is not the norm today. In addition, God chose the apostles and prophets to serve a specific function in salvation history. Today, we are at a different stage in salvation history and have different offices to serve the church.

Still, God does call in the Bible in a way that is consistent with today. And we can learn much from the general principles derived from these biblical illustrations. While there undoubtedly could be more, the following will present ten such principles.

First, the call of God to minister goes to all Christians, but God commissions some for special service.

The church in America has largely professionalized the ministry — misunderstanding servants and equippers as those we pay to do the work of the ministry for us. Tithes have become remuneration for services rendered, and sideline Christians have ignored the very clear teaching for all who have experienced salvation to obey the Great Commission. Every-member ministry needs recovery.

Still, Scripture clearly demonstrates that some receive a special calling to serve God in a more consuming fashion — as “workers in His harvest” (Matt. 9:38). This principle is evident from the beginning of God’s salvation history. For instance, though all Israelites were to participate in the national missional goal of being a “light to the nations” (Isaiah 42:6), God called the prophets, priests, and especially the Davidic kings to lead in this illuminative effort. And though Jesus called all His followers to “go therefore and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), Paul asserts that God “gave” specific roles to some in service of those disciples (Eph. 4:11).

The church's role in the process is to set persons apart "for the work which I [God] have called them" — as with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2).

Second, the call of God has no vocational or experiential prerequisites.

As the editor of my seminary's newspaper for several years, I had the opportunity to interview many fellow classmates about their testimonies. The array of past experiences was astonishing. I wrote stories about a former performer for World Championship Wrestling who gave into God's call after rasslin' with it for years. A power company worker was literally shocked into the ministry after grabbing a live cable. There were former firefighters and pharmacists, drug dealers and doctors, schoolteachers and soldiers, bikers and bankers, even a hippie and a harpist.

Scriptures attest to a similar variety among the called. Among the prophets, Amos was a farmer, Ezekiel a priest, Jonah, well, a runner! Of course, perhaps the greatest examples of this principle are the Twelve. A revolutionary Zealot, a reviled tax collector, regular-guy fishermen? These aren't necessarily search-committee material.

Why does God work this way? Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 gives an indication. God uses "the things that are not" to shame the things that are (1 Cor. 1:28). Such variety also demonstrates that you do not need remarkable gifts or extensive previous experience. If anything, the prerequisites seem to have more to do with your character — as shown in the qualifications lists of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Amazingly, many times, the Scriptures are completely silent about the past lives of the called. This is especially true of the prophets, like Joel and Obadiah, who appear as nothing more than voices for the Divine. The focus becomes the message and the subject of the message (God), not the messenger.

This does not mean that we are to put our past out of sight and out of mind. Indeed, God often uses these experiences providentially to communicate His message. For instance, Isaiah's status as a relative of the king gave him access to the throne at crucial moments in Judah's history — particularly when the mighty Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem in the late 700s BC. Ezekiel's past as a priest gave him significant insight into the corruption of Judah's religious leadership. Paul's experience as a

Pharisee gave him extensive knowledge of the Old Testament, on which he based much of his gospel proclamation.

Third, the call of God can come at any stage in life.

Graduate programs in ministry today are a melting pot of characters, coming from all stages of life. I can remember graduates walking across the stage to receive their divinity degrees who appeared too young to drive, much less lead a church; others had received an Abrahamic call at an advanced age. God's call is not restricted to the very young. Indeed, my Ph.D. supervisor — the man who made more of an impact on my life than anyone — did not receive his Ph.D. until age 40.

Scriptural examples validate this principle. Of course, there are the stalwarts of the senior circuit, Abraham and Moses. On the other hand, timid Timothy and junior Jeremiah seem to have entered God's service early in life. Again, the variety of life experiences are all part of God's providential equipping of individuals for their specific roles within the Kingdom.

Fourth, the call of God requires a commissioning from God Himself.

A former professor of mine used to say that you can no more send yourself into the ministry than you can send yourself to China as an official ambassador from the U.S. Every person must receive some kind of commissioning from God Himself.

Our experience will differ from that of the prophets and apostles who often received visionary experiences of God and His glory as part of their calling (like Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Paul). Still, what we do receive — such as the confirmation of church elders and the internal assurance of the Spirit that leads to a holy aspiration for the ministry — is clearly God-given. Like the prophets and apostles, such a commissioning gives confidence and authority and even definition to one's ministry.

Fifth, the call of God does not require immediate acceptance, but does require eventual certainty.

In my experience, I have encountered students who have known God's

calling seemingly from the moment of salvation, and they have never strayed in their pursuit of this purpose. Countless others, though, have wavered and wondered about the *whethers* and *whys* of God's calling. Some have even postponed ultimate commitment for many years.

This mirrors the initial reluctance of many biblical characters. At times, this reluctance stemmed from a perceived personal inadequacy — as with Moses (speech impairment) and Jeremiah and Timothy (both were young). Other times, knowledge of the difficulty of the mission and of future trials and persecutions caused some hesitation — as with Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

However, if the calling is true, fears and vacillation should soon give way to ardent and steadfast service. Indeed, ministers need such God-given certainty to persevere amid inevitable ministerial trials and tribulations. As with Jeremiah, we need a conviction of the calling that is like a fire in the bones (Jer. 20:9), which cannot be quenched. These prophetic flames helped him to endure the bitter shunning of his own people, the Babylonia demolition of Jerusalem, and his subsequent ejection to Egypt against his will.

Uncomfortable deacons' meetings and unkind gossip aren't quite to this level — though at times some church members may seem downright Mesopotamian in their behavior towards ministers. Regardless, a minister needs assurance of God's call to face whatever challenge comes his or her way. And this does not mean that doubts will not arise. Elijah is a clear example of this, as he experienced extreme depression after his Mount Carmel experience. But when doubts do surface, we may revisit our past experiences of grace and use them as an impetus to press on through these periods of uncertainty.

Sixth, the call of God requires a clear sense of God's character and mission.

Do you ever wonder why God revealed Himself in such visually shocking ways to the "called" in Scripture? Ezekiel's vision of God leaves him writing about the experience with choppy Hebrew in Ezekiel 1 — almost as if his hand is shaking. Isaiah believes he's going to die in Isaiah 6. Paul is blinded by his encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road.

Undoubtedly, such experiences gave validation to the ministry of

these individuals and led to a certainty of their calling. But the visions accomplished something else. They gave the individuals a clear and certain conviction regarding the character and nature of God Himself. The brightness of God's eminence made an imprint on their minds, such that the very messages of prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel center around God's character as revealed in their callings. For instance, Isaiah was so impressed by the Seraphims' cry of "Holy, Holy, Holy," that his prophecies include more references to God as the Holy One of Israel than all the other prophets put together.

We may not have such visionary experiences, but the revelation of God's character in the Scriptures to us is just as clear and powerful. There are many good reasons for God-called individuals to pursue biblical and theological training. But perhaps studying God's character as revealed in the Bible is the most important of these reasons. It is through this study that our ministries will be defined, validated, and strengthened.

Seventh, the call of God requires proper preparation.

Christians will often speak of having a "life-verse" — something that encapsulates their ministry and gives them focus and purpose in life. If I had to choose one, for me that verse would be Ezra 7:10 — "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel."

Ezra was a religious leader living in the era following the Babylonian exile of the Jews. During his early life, he lived in ancient Persia, before he led a group of Jews back to the Promised Land around 459 BC. He became the towering figure among all the post-exilic Jewish leaders, leading in a revival of the people based upon God's revealed Word.

How did God use him in such amazing ways? I believe it is because Ezra had devoted himself to preparation before he even left Persia. Each part of the verse above was crucial in this preparation, but of special significance is the sequence — study and practice, then teach.

So, how do you prepare to be an evangelist or a missionary or a pastor? You must first study the Bible you will proclaim and practice its principles, then you will be properly prepared. So, I am a huge proponent of ministerial training — as much as you can get.

I have a question that I ask my students, many of whom are young

and eager to get on the field as quickly as possible (particularly those called to the mission field). Let's say they have 60 years of ministry ahead of them. Would they rather have 50-55 years of substantive ministry or 60 years of ministry that may not be as fruitful as it could have been with proper study and practice first?

Eighth, the call of God requires an abandonment of self and self-interest.

Human nature and ministry sometimes make a volatile combination. Every generation spawns those who deem the ministry as a way to feed egos, line pockets, and gather acclaim.

The prophets of the Old Testament dealt with such self-called and self-interested individuals, and we have examples of false prophets going back all the way to Balaam. Like the so-called prophets of the ancient world surrounding them, they praised kings and ensured their own self-preservation through popular messages. Even in New Testament times, Paul talks of teachers who accumulate audiences of eager itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3).

However, the true ministers of the Bible always spoke out of a sense of compulsion and mission (1 Cor. 9:16; Jer. 5:14) and not out of a desire for personal gain (Micah 3:5) or acceptance. In fact, true ministry often results in the opposite of what human nature desires — rejection, poverty, and toiling in anonymity. A minister should be ready and willing to serve selflessly his or her entire life, even if no one ever notices or recognizes the efforts. The call of God is to serve God's people, not self.

Ninth, the call of God requires a resolve to base one's ministry on God's Word and a refusal to compromise on this revelatory truth.

Many denominations, including my own (the Southern Baptist Convention), have fought battles over the Bible in the last few decades. In the case of the SBC, the churches actually succeeded in reasserting and reestablishing the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy as foundational for seminary training, denominational work, and the life of the church.

However, while we have waved the banner hailing the Bible's truthfulness and trustworthiness, in many cases, we have failed to

recognize in practice Scripture's sufficiency and authority for our ministries. So we base our messages, ministries, and methodologies on what the world wants and on how the world wants it.

One of the great moments in the early church is when Peter and John stood before the Jewish leaders after boldly proclaiming salvation in Christ alone. Commanded to compromise by ceasing from such sermons, Peter and John answered, "We cannot but speak what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The Old Testament prophets, too, refused to compromise on God's Word when others wanted them to hedge on that commitment. For instance, when all the prophets "with one accord" were favorable to the king Ahab, Micaiah boldly proclaimed, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak" (1 Kgs. 22:13-14).

We, too, have sufficient revelation for all aspects of ministry in God's Word. And we must enter ministry with a resolve not to compromise it — even if it means death, as it did for so many in Scripture.

Tenth, the call of God requires a commitment to personal integrity.

Most seminary graduates can point to at least one and probably many more examples of people who have fallen in some area after entering the ministry — whether the sin is moral, sexual, financial, or some combination in nature.

Each one of these graduated from seminary with no inclination that he or she would err in such a serious manner in the future. Usually, the slide happened gradually and the sin became eventually unmanageable. In each case, the harm of ministerial lapses in integrity extends not just to the minister, but also to his or her family, the church and the name of God.

In the Bible, the persons used most powerfully in God's service also displayed consistent integrity. Perhaps the best example is Daniel. Far away from family, in a foreign country and culture, and faced with temptations that would trip most, Daniel steadfastly refused any compromise, even at the cost of possible death. My three-year-old sings a song that should be a rallying cry to all those entering the ministry — "Dare to be a Daniel."

A closing thought. As I close this brief survey of biblical examples of the call to ministry, let me make one last observation and challenge. A

friend of mine from seminary once told me his definition of a disciple — one who is willing to lay down his or her life for his Lord. I believe this characteristic should apply to those called to the ministry as well.

As we survey the Scriptures and even church history, we find many such disciples who become ministerial martyrs. Stephen and Paul, Isaiah and Zechariah, Polycarp and Wycliffe, and countless others willingly laid down their lives to serve God. If you are reading this today and considering God's call, one question may answer whether or not you are in fact called. Are you willing to die for your Lord?

Thought Questions

1. **Why do you think people, who have placed their trust in God, have fears or doubts about accepting a call to ministry?**
2. **In your own words, how would you describe God's character and mission?**
3. **What would it mean to you to abandon self in favor of God's call?**

The Great Commission and the Call to Vocational Missions

Tim McKnight

Jesus's last command to His disciples is commonly known as the Great Commission. In his account of this mandate from Christ, Matthew wrote:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20 ESV)

The first question that comes to mind when considering the call of the Great Commission is, "To who is the Great Commission given?" Matthew's account identifies Jesus's recipients of this command as "disciples." What is a disciple? At its basic level, a disciple is a follower. The Great Commission was given to Christ-followers. It applied to the eleven disciples who heard it first-hand. It also applies to every Christ-follower who has bowed their knee to King Jesus since then. If you are reading these words and have surrendered your life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the call of the Great Commission applies to you. It is a command that Christ calls every one of His followers to fulfill.

Now that we've established the recipients of this call, upon whose authority is this command given. The Great Commission is established

under the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (v18) Being God in the flesh, Jesus possesses supreme authority. His name is above every other name. He is the One through whom all things have been created, including us. In his Gospel, John wrote:

In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. John 1:1-3
ESV

Jesus is the all-powerful Creator upon whom the Great Commission’s authority is based.

What is the scope of Jesus’s call to make disciples? The Lord told his followers to make disciples of panta ta ethne. That is Greek for “every nation” or “every ethnic group.” It comprises all peoples from all nations. In the book of Revelation, John wrote:

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:8-10
ESV

Jesus came to redeem people from “every tribe, tongue, and nation.” Because that is His mission, He calls His followers to make disciples of people from every ethnic group around the world. No one is excluded from this command or its scope. While not every Christ-follower is called to vocational missions overseas, disciples of Jesus Christ are called to make disciples of people from every ethnic group.

We can understand the audience, authority, and scope of the Great Commission, but a failure to comprehend the actual command will hinder disciples from completing Christ’s mission. Translating directly from the Greek text, verses nineteen and twenty read:

As you are going, make disciples of all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I've commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age!

The command in the passage is to “make disciples.” It is not “go,” “baptize,” or “teach.” There is one imperative and three participles in the passage. We are to make disciples as we are going, baptizing, and teaching. Jesus calls us to carry the gospel with us as we are going about our everyday lives. We should make disciples while we are home, as we attend classes in school, when we’re hanging out with our friends, etc. Making disciples also involves baptizing them. We should lead new disciples to make their walk with Christ public through the waters of baptism. Baptism also unites them in fellowship with a local church. In addition, disciple-making includes teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded. Note that Jesus did not say to teach everything He commanded. We’re not just passing on a body of information. No, Christ calls believers to live as examples in discipling new Christ-followers. We should show them how Scripture applies to their lives. How do they observe what Christ commands by acting it out? So, making disciples is done as we are going, baptizing, and teaching. We share the gospel, the person comes to repentance and faith and is baptized, then we show them how to live out the Christian life as we model it in front of them.

If you feel intimidated by Christ’s command and wonder how you can accomplish it, Jesus’s last words in the Commission should give you hope. He promised His followers His presence with them as they strive to achieve this command looking forward to His return. Christ does not leave us to ourselves. He provides the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His work in and through us. The work of the Holy Spirit to help believers is evident in Luke’s words in Acts 1:8. Quoting the words of Christ, he wrote:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 ESV

We can take encouragement and hope in knowing that, just as He was present and empowered the early church, the Holy Spirit is with us and empowers us as we take the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation in

fulfilling God's call in the Great Commission.

The Call to Vocational Missions

Jesus's call to make disciples causes us to care about the plight of people in our nation and around the world who have never heard the gospel. At the time of the writing of this chapter, there are 4,510 unreached people groups comprised of 3.28 billion people.¹ An unreached people group consists of people living in an area in which there is no significant number of indigenous Christians or indigenous churches to evangelize them. These unreached people groups need missionaries from outside their area to come with the gospel, make disciples, and plant indigenous churches that will reach the rest of the people group with the gospel. Perhaps God is calling you to be one of those missionaries.

As you consider a call to vocational missions, be careful not to rely on a "feeling" or "experience" as the foundation for such a calling. Regarding the call to missions, missionary, and professor of missions, Zane Pratt notes that "many effective missionaries have been called overseas simply through the mundane processes of studying the Word of God and learning about the need for the gospel around the world."² Maintaining your spiritual disciplines of daily Bible reading and prayer are critical in discerning God's call to ministry in general and missions in particular.

Engaging in sharing the gospel and making disciples where you are currently can also help you see whether God is calling you to vocational missions. As you share the gospel, you might find that God is drawing you to people of different cultures and ethnic groups. You may notice that you are very effective in communicating the gospel cross-culturally. Languages might come easy to you. Seeing God work as you are faithful to His command to make disciples can help you discern a call to vocational missions.

Short-term mission trips are also helpful for discerning a call to vocational missions. Every physically able believer should participate in short-term missions. During such journeys, the Lord often reveals a burden for missions. You might develop a compelling desire to share the gospel with a particular people group or in a specific area of the world.

Such desires often point to a call to vocational missions. Talk with your church leaders about how you can participate in such short-term mission opportunities.

Affirmation from mature believers with whom you have relationships is another factor in confirming a call to missions. There are Christians in your life who have walked with Christ for years and know you well. Ask them whether they believe God might be calling you to vocational missions. They will give you invaluable insight regarding your personality, spiritual maturity, and gifting as they relate to discerning and defining your call. Such mature Christ-followers also ask questions that will help you think and pray through your decision.

Your local church is also pivotal in helping you through your call journey. You have pastors, youth pastors, adult leaders, and teachers who walked with you through your spiritual journey and know your spiritual gifts. As a member of the local church, you are part of that body of Christ. You have accountability with that body and should be asking leaders in the church to help you pray and walk through your call decision. Ultimately, missionaries are sent by local churches. So, your local congregation needs to affirm your call to missions. Such affirmation is critical to discerning and defining your call.

Finally, speaking with missionaries on the field is another helpful way to obtain answers regarding a call to missions. They can answer questions from first-hand experiences. Missionaries will also share common obstacles that they face regularly. They will share the highs and lows of being on the mission field with you. Folks serving on the field are also a great resource in obtaining information regarding how you can best prepare to serve as a vocational missionary.

Conclusion

The call to vocational missions is an exciting opportunity for the Christ-follower to be a part of God's Kingdom work in leading people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God can use you to make an eternal impact on people's lives around the world. He might be calling you to take the gospel where no one has ever heard it. Although every Christ-follower is called to make disciples of people from every ethnic group, God calls some disciples

to spend their lives overseas on the mission field. Are you one of those people? Is God calling you to vocational missions?

Endnotes

1. Joshua Project, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/statistics (accessed on January 17, 2022).
2. Zane Pratt, "Dear Christian, You've Been Called to Mission," International Mission Board, <https://www.imb.org/2016/10/18/christian-called-to-mission/> (accessed on January 17, 2022).

Thought Questions

1. **Reflect on past opportunities when you or someone you know has participated in short or long-term missions. What about these experiences is particularly memorable?**
2. **When you consider sharing your faith with others, does this prompt anxiety or excitement? What advice would give to someone who fears such an experience?**
3. **How can you do the work of missions as disciple-making in your personal context?**

Where Do I Go From Here?

Michael Duduit

I'll never forget that evening. I was Youth Pastor of a church in Tallahassee, Florida, and had taken a group of young people on a mission trip to lead Backyard Bible Clubs for a young church in Downingtown, Pennsylvania. One night we had arranged to take the whole group into Philadelphia for a Phillies baseball game.

It was daylight when we got to the ballpark, but well past dark when the game concluded and we piled onto the bus and lead van to head back to Downingtown.

Somehow – perhaps my keen sense of navigational skills had something to do with it – we got lost in inner city Philadelphia. We pulled off the highway, pulled out the map, and discovered an important truth: maps don't help much unless you already know where you are! (Needless to say, I was never so glad to see a flashing blue light behind me as I was that night – the nice officer helped us get back on the right road and out of our predicament.)

In this chapter, we want to talk a bit about a road map for your ministry call – where do I go from here? But the best map doesn't help if you don't know where you are now – so I am writing this with the assumption that you have a sense of God's call upon your life to serve in some kind of ministry. The reality is that there are many roads on which God might take you, and it's going to be an exciting adventure as you follow His direction for your life and ministry.

Getting Ready

On any journey, it's important to make preparations. If your family was heading out on a big trip, you'd make sure you had the items necessary for an

enjoyable journey – gas for the car, clothes, copies of your hotel reservations and other arrangements, and so on.

On your journey toward God's call for your life, it's vital that you prepare. That preparation takes many forms.

Have a Personal Devotional Life.

As you begin taking steps to prepare yourself for life in full-time ministry you're going to both want and need to take some time to ensure your continued growth on a personal level. The other two steps will take a significant toll on your time, your energy, and your resources. You will begin spending more of your time in service to others. Additionally, once you begin your academic training you will spend many hours, weeks, months, and years on meeting deadlines, reading and writing, and completing projects.

It is important, in the midst of these other two areas of preparation that you remain focused on what led to your call to begin with: your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and a desire to serve Him. It would be very unfortunate if you pursued with great zeal and passion practical experience in ministry and academic training, if in the end, the result is a wealth of experience a stronger mind, but a lack of spiritual devotion. Your goal should be to supplement your passion for God, his people, and ministry. To do this you need to actively and constantly aim to grow spiritually. Using Paul's admonition to Timothy as a guide, you should begin reading, memorizing, and knowing Scripture. You will rely on it more than you can imagine.

Reading and studying Scripture will help you stay focused on your preparation. Scripture study can point out areas where you need to work harder. It will be, as Paul said, beneficial in "rebuking" and "correcting" you. As you prepare for ministry your focus needs to stay on your personal devotion. I would even go so far as to recommend Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* as a good way of working through developing a stronger devotional life.

You're going to want to set aside time for prayer and Bible study on a regular basis, so you can keep your personal relationship growing. As you serve others and add academic training to your daily life, there will be a strong temptation to lose sight of this relationship. Be proactive now and maintain daily habits and skills to guard against losing your zeal and passion.

Be Involved in Your Own Local Church.

This goes under the heading: be faithful where you already are. There are at least two reasons why this is important. First, you need the fellowship and support of your own faith community. Your church is the place you worship, enjoy relationships with fellow believers, find encouragement from others in the joys and sorrows of life and ministry. Chances are, your church is the place God is using to help guide you in your own journey to spiritual maturity and the place from which He has called you to ministry.

Second, one day you will be calling on others to be active and faithful in their involvement in the local church. Now is your opportunity to set an example of such faithfulness, and to demonstrate that church involvement is not simply for those who are paid ministers, but for all believers.

Look for Ways to Serve.

Right now you have a wonderful opportunity to gain valuable ministry experience in various areas of service. Whatever your stage in life – still in school, or already working in some other field – you can begin preparing for a life of ministry by serving right where you are.

There is no shortage of places that need the help of talented, faithful believers. In your own church, there are Bible study classes that needs teachers and leaders, youth and children's ministries that can use help, outreach programs that can use committed workers and leaders. Your own church is a good place to gain useful experience in seeing how churches work as you assist with things like media and communications ministries, volunteer as a pastoral care associate, or even help as an usher or in some other place of service. Some day you may be encouraging others to take on such roles – why not do it yourself now?

The opportunity for service extends beyond your own church also. There are likely ministries in your community working with those who need a helping hand – rescue missions, shelters for abused women, children's homes, and many more. You'll be blessed by your faithful service in Christ's name, and the experience you gain will be of great value in your future ministry.

Begin Your Ministry Education.

An important part of your preparation is the formal part of your education, which can include your undergraduate degree in a college or university, plus graduate study in ministry. Such education will provide a foundation for your lifelong learning experience as a minister of the gospel.

If you have not yet started your college education, consider your options carefully when you begin to plan for college. As you prepare for years of vital ministry service, you will want the best foundation possible – one that will equip you to learn well, to think critically, and to communicate effectively.

As someone who will be serving and leading the body of Christ, you will wisely seek to gain knowledge, expertise, training, and an overall exposure to the academic elements of your Christian faith. Your academic training will include courses like:

- Biblical Studies & Languages
- Spiritual Formation
- Evangelism & Missions
- Preaching & Teaching
- Leadership
- Christian Ethics & Worldview
- Church History
- Theology & Philosophy

This education provides an important base of information and expertise in explaining God's kingdom, the Gospel message, the life and times of the Israelites, and the formation and teachings of the early church. In the 1st Century a major threat to the early church was false teaching. Paul's first letter to Timothy begins with instructions on countering false teachers (1 Timothy 1.3-7). And when Paul writes to Titus he demands that teachers "must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught ... give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1.9).

It is imperative that ministers in churches are adequately prepared academically in a variety of ways. You'll want to be informed about the information in the Bible so you can adequately teach and lead others in the value of the Bible and its importance and authority. You'll want to study

Scripture so you can be better equipped for your task in ministry.

Many students preparing for ministry will naturally choose to attend a Christian college or university. Be aware that just because a school has a church or denominational relationship does not mean that you will be receiving a Christ-centered higher education. At some schools, that church relationship means little more than weekly chapel services.

At an authentically Christ-centered college or university, that commitment will impact every element of life – from the residence hall to the classroom. You'll have Christian scholars in the classroom, integrating insights from a Christian worldview into your academic disciplines. The application of Christian thinking into varied fields will be a great model for you as you prepare for the same challenge in your own ministry.

And as a future pastor or church leader, one of the other benefits of a Christian college or university is the relationships you will establish that will stay with you for the rest of your life and ministry. The friend you make in New Testament class or in the ministerial association may become a trusted friend and colleague with whom your life will intersect for decades to come.

One question that many students ask is: if I am going on to seminary, do I need to major in religion or Christian studies in my bachelor's degree? While some students do opt for other majors – such as history or English, for example – there are real benefits to doing an undergraduate major in college as well. One benefit is that it provides a solid basis for later excellence in graduate or seminary programs – in fact, you can sometimes take advanced courses in seminary in place of more basic courses you did in a strong Christian Studies program as an undergraduate. A benefit for those who may delay graduate study is that their undergraduate program provides the majority of their preparation for ministry service as they graduate and move into church or other ministry roles.

Beyond college, many ministers will seek additional preparation through study at a seminary or graduate school of ministry. Your choice of schools will depend on many factors: your personal situation and location, the likely direction of your ministry, your academic interests, denominational relationships, faculty preferences and more. For example, I think professors who have actually served full-time in church ministry positions bring a valuable extra dimension to the classroom – as you prepare for ministry, it can be a great advantage to study with those who have “been there, done that.”

Unlike past years when the only option for those seeking seminary education was to move to a camp in another city, today students have choices about how and where to study. Many will continue to go to a residential seminary, but others – particularly those already serving in a local church – may take advantage of online educational options, allowing them to continue their theological education without relocating family and ministry.

Consider carefully the place where you study for ministry – it can make an enormous difference in your own future service.

Which Road Do I Take?

You have been called and you are seeking to prepare. But then what? What options are available for persons in ministry in the 21st century?

Of course, the most important factor is the call of God on your life and the direction He leads you. But part of that direction can come from an understanding of the many different types of ministry service in which people serve today. The reality is that there are multiplied ways in which you may be called to serve, based on your gifts, training and experience.

A **Senior Pastor** or **Lead Pastor** serve as the shepherd, preacher, and leader of a local congregation of believers. The pastor may be paid, unpaid, or even bi-vocational in which the primary income may come from another job or vocation. The senior pastor may be the leader among multiple paid staff positions, and has a primary focus on things like preaching and leadership, with many other ministry duties delegated to various other pastors and staff members.

A **Church Planter** is a pastor who “plants” or starts a new church, sometimes as a solo staff member and other times as part of a team. With the importance of starting new church work today, the church planter has become an extremely critical position. Some church planters work under the sponsorship of another congregation, or even a denominational agency; others plant new work independently of other churches or groups. The work of the church planter is challenging – many new churches do not survive, while others thrive and become great bases for ministry outreach. If God calls you to be a church planter, you’ll work hard but find many rewards.

The **Executive Pastor** takes a variety of administrative responsibilities off the senior pastor. For example, the executive pastor will probably serve

as the primary administrative officer of the church, coordinator of the staff, and liaison to many of the committees and other church leaders. Sometimes churches will have a similar position known as the church business administrator; often such a position is filled by a lay leader who has worked in business and has now shifted to a church-related role.

A **Youth Pastor** or **Minister of Youth**, primarily focuses on spiritual development of adolescents. Like the senior pastor, youth ministers seek to lead, shepherd and disciple their specific group of students.

A **Children's Pastor** or **Minister of Children** seeks to establish a safe environment in which children experience nurturing care and biblical instruction.

A **Minister of Education** or **Minister of Discipleship** coordinates the work of Sunday School, small groups, and other ministries relating to growing mature disciples within the church. Larger churches often have pastoral staff positions directing work with various adult groups, such as single adults, young families, median adults, and senior adults.

The **Minister of Music** or **Worship Leader** not only leads congregational worship through music, but also coordinates the work of accompanists, ensembles, age-graded choirs and other music-related ministries.

In smaller churches the worship leader often helps with coordination of media tools used in worship; in larger churches, the **Media Minister** position is beginning to emerge as an important role, given the increasing presence of video and other media resources in worship.

There are many ministries that are not located within a single congregation, but work in roles that partner with local churches. For example, **Missionaries** are called to carry the gospel to specific areas. International missionaries are sent to evangelize, plant churches, or minister to other needs in locations outside the United States. There are also home missionaries who serve in a variety of roles within the U.S., such as seaport ministries, resort ministries, urban ministries and many more.

Pastoral Counselors sometimes work within a specific church, but often serve in counseling centers or ministry settings apart from a specific congregation.

Chaplains minister to people in settings like the military or in hospitals; military chaplains are typically commissioned officers in one of the armed services, and they receive their ministerial training prior to enlistment. There is also an increasing demand for chaplains to work in industrial or corporate

settings, ministering to the needs of employees of that organization.

Evangelists are typically independent of a specific congregation, but find themselves preaching and leading programs in many churches each year. Although fewer churches today hold traditional revivals – which was the primary emphasis of vocational evangelists a generation ago – now many evangelists have developed a ministry dealing with specific needs within churches (such as families, youth, or other issues) and they carry out their evangelistic ministries through these new approaches.

Some ministers ultimately fulfill their calling by working with many churches through service as **Denominational Staff** at the local, state or national level. Within Southern Baptist life, for example, there are ministers who

- lead local associations of churches
- provide consulting help with churches through state conventions
- offer help and training for church planters
- lead institutions like children's homes or homes for the aging
- offer administrative support for missions agencies
- minister to church leaders through publishing and media

and many more possibilities. The 21st century will bring with it new roles and possibilities as the church and culture experience continuous change.

Finally, I would be remiss in not including **Faculty** and **Teachers** in Christian colleges, universities, seminaries and other schools. Those of us who have written this booklet have each sensed God's call to minister to students through the classroom, equipping new generations of Christian ministers and leaders. Many of us came to the classroom following years of service in local churches as pastors, Christian educators and other roles. We believe that the church and the Christian college should be partners in the Kingdom task of equipping those whom God has called.

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people

for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13, NIV)

Wherever God leads you in ministry, hold firm to the assurance of His call. Where He calls you, He will go with you. And, ultimately, that is all that matters.

Thought Questions

- 1. Why is your personal devotion time so crucial to your call to ministry? What does a your personal devotion time look like? How can you strengthen this time?**
- 2. In what ways are you serving in your community? How might you have a more effective ministry in your context?**
- 3. Upon what road is God calling you? How might you prepare for this calling?**

Learn Leadership and Apply Biblical Foundations to Practical and Effective Ministry

Michael Duduit

Solidly biblical. Intensely practical.

The College of Christian Studies at Anderson University offers academic excellence in programs that emphasize practical ministry training for a new generation of Kingdom leaders.

Preparing for ministry? You will find an exceptional level of preparation at Anderson University, with committed faculty who link classroom and real-life experience. Whether you plan to go on to seminary or to seek a ministry position right after college, you'll find AU offers a solid foundation and an outstanding opportunity for practical training.

Even if you're not entering vocational ministry but you'd still like to gain a better grasp of Biblical truth and theological understanding, you will find the College of Christian Studies to be a comfortable home while exploring God's truth.

Undergraduate majors in Christian Studies and graduate programs including the Master of Ministry, Master of Divinity, and doctoral programs enable students to pursue just the right type of practical training to achieve their goals.

Preparing You to Lead and Serve

Anderson University alumni are serving the Kingdom of God in a variety of ministry and missionary settings — as pastors and church planters, worship

leaders and church educators, missionaries and denominational leaders, professors and campus ministers, and many other roles.

Study in the College of Christian Studies at AU will equip you to take the next step in your calling, whether that is planting a church, leading a local church, or going on for additional preparation in seminary or graduate school. AU grads carry with them a solid foundation of biblical and theological knowledge combined with practical training in hands-on ministry.

What is the College of Christian Studies?

Whether you are beginning your work or already in ministry and enhancing your training, you will find a program that meets your needs at the College of Christian Studies at Anderson University.

The dean of the College is Dr. Michael Duduit, Professor of Christian Ministry, who is founding editor of *Preaching* magazine and has spent more than three decades equipping pastors and church leaders for more effective service. His weekly newsletter, *Preaching Now*, goes to more than 10,000 pastors in the U.S. and around the world, and he regularly leads conferences and courses for church leaders across the U.S. Duduit is author or editor of more than a dozen books, including *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* and *Preaching With Power*.

Anderson University is an accredited university affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention. AU is ranked in the top tier of private comprehensive universities in the Southeast by US News & World Report. The University is located in the city of Anderson in the Upstate region of South Carolina, thirty minutes from Greenville and approximately two hours from Atlanta or Charlotte.

Start Your Training at Anderson

Traditional undergraduate students seeking the Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies degree share in a core of foundational courses, including:

- Old Testament
- New Testament

- Hermeneutics (Biblical Interpretation)
- Systematic Theology
- History of Christianity
- Foundations for Ministry
- Introduction to Ministry
- Leadership for Ministry
- Evangelism and Church Health
- Ministry Internship

Concentrations Available:

- Apologetics
- Biblical Studies
- Preaching
- Pastoral Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Women's Ministry
- Missions
- Theology and Philosophy

Study completely online with our accredited Bachelor of Christian Studies degree

The BCS is designed to assist adult learners in completing their undergraduate education. The 120-hour degree can be done completely online, or you can transfer previous college course work and complete your degree through Anderson's BCS degree program. The convenience of the program makes it a great choice for church ministry leaders already serving on a church staff who don't want to pick up and move away to attend school or the Christian lay person.

The Fast Track BA + M.Div.

The Fast Track BA + M.Div. allows a strong student to apply up to 30 hours of his or her undergraduate biblical, theological and ministry courses toward the Master of Divinity degree. This will leave just 45 hours to complete the M.Div., saving students time and money in preparing for ministry. In this program, students can earn their B.A. and M.Div. in as little as 5 years.

Clamp Divinity School Degree Programs

The Master of Divinity

The M.Div. is the traditional graduate theological degree for ministers. The Clamp Master of Divinity is a 75-hour degree program that offers great flexibility, combined with academic excellence and equipping for effective Kingdom service. Students prepare for effective ministry through courses in biblical studies, theology, and practical ministry (preaching, leadership, etc.). Whether you are seeking a more traditional classroom experience or a more flexible online program – or some of each – our degree helps you craft the program that fits your needs and schedule.

The Master of Ministry

This accelerated program is designed primarily for non-traditional students who have completed their bachelor's degree, and enables them to pursue additional training through our practical, leadership-based master's program on campus or online. The 36-hour Master of Ministry starts with a biblical-theological foundation: a study of the Old and New Testament, plus learning how to use the best tools to work with scripture and the skills needed for preaching and teaching God's Word. There's study in theology and church history, as well as courses that deal with Christian worldview and apologetics, pastoral ministry, and more.

The Master of Ministry Management

This 30-hour degree is designed to equip men and women to serve as executive pastors and church administrators. The program includes Divinity School courses in Bible, theology and ministry leadership, combined with

courses from the Master of Organizational Leadership degree in AU's College of Business.

The Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

This degree program is primarily for laypeople who wish to strengthen their own biblical and theological knowledge. The 30-hour curriculum includes courses in Old and New Testament, hermeneutics, and theology.

The Doctor of Ministry

The D.Min. program is designed to enhance the practice of ministry among Christian leaders, with a particular focus on helping pastors enhance their knowledge and skills in areas such as preaching, leadership, and other practical ministry areas. The goal is to equip Christian ministers for faithful service at a level of excellence.

The Doctor of Philosophy in Preaching

The PhD is a research degree with a focus on adding to the knowledge in a particular field. The PhD in Preaching is designed to help recipients develop significant scholarship in the field, become more effective preachers, and prepare them to teach and mentor others.

Contact Us

We would love to talk with you more about any of our programs. Visit us at auministry.com or email us at ministry@auministry.com, or contact us at 864.328.1809.

Calling Out The Called

Greg Allgood

Luke, chapter ten, recounts how Jesus appointed seventy-two of his disciples and sent them out ahead of him to prepare the way for his future ministry. He sent these followers, two by two, into every town as advance teams to proclaim the coming of the kingdom and to heal the sick. Prior to sending them out, Jesus told them “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Luke 10:2 ESV).” This appendix is intended for those who are praying earnestly for the Lord of the harvest to speak a word of calling to those who are willing to step forward and allow God to send them out into the harvest. I am asking Pastors, youth ministers, Sunday School teachers, missionaries, ministers of every kind, and church members; basically, anyone reading these words, to look around and consider who you might pray for and encourage to respond to a call to join with other laborers in our Lord’s harvest. Will you commit to pray now for the next generation of Pastors, missionaries, church planters, and ministers who will rise up and meet the needs of the Body of Christ and we spread the gospel message to a lost and dying world in the future?

As you have made your way through this little book, you might have been remembering your own specific call to ministry, or perhaps you were considering making your own personal response to ministry, right now. Maybe, you were thinking about someone else, in your church, or your family, or perhaps a friend in your neighborhood, who might need to read this book. I believe that God has brought that person into your mind for a purpose as someone you should pray for and encourage to answer a call. I am so very thankful for the members of my childhood church, (Sunday School teachers and volunteer Youth Workers), who prayed specifically for me, who shared a word of encouragement and

placed me in areas that nurtured my gifts and confirmed my calling. As you think about young adults around you who God may be preparing for future ministry, consider the following list of characteristics. What are some ways that you can recognize a call to ministry in someone else's life?

- **Look for someone who is eager to serve others.** Who is the first person to arrive and last to leave a gathering? Who takes the trash out and cleans up after others move on to the “fun times?” A heart that is willing to serve others is a critical characteristic of someone who might be sensitive to God's calling.
- **Look for someone who is following a leader and seeking to imitate and be mentored by another minister.** This person will also be eager to sign up for ministry events and service projects. If you are currently serving as a minister, or a leader in your church, consider inviting others along with you on hospital or shut-in visits, or even ministry errands. Don't miss opportunities to serve as a role model in the work of ministry.
- **Look for someone who is compassionate for those hurting and broken.** Someone who identifies and gravitates toward the isolated and left out is demonstrating the heart of Christ. This person will energetically greet others, welcoming them to events and seeking to genuinely build relationships with members and visitors alike. They will also want to see everyone join in the fun and get involved in the activities. Having a heart that draws them to engage in someone else's story or pain, along with a willingness to pray for and guide others to find help, means that this person values others over themselves.
- **Look for someone who is eager to study the Bible.** Identify someone who wants to know the rest of the biblical story and hungers to fill in the gaps. This person will ask questions and seek out the answers. A seeker of biblical knowledge is someone who doesn't have all the answers, but someone with a teachable spirit and an

awe for the things of God. This person will be focused when the Bible is being taught. They make eye contact, ask and answers questions and seek to connect with the truth of scripture.

- **Look for someone who may be quiet but ponders deeply and listens intently.** This person may be more of an introvert but they are supportive and faithful. They won't make a grand splash upon arrival, but you will definitely know when they aren't present.

There are many other important characteristics that can be evident in someone that God may be preparing for ministry, but the main characteristic is a passion for God and the service of the kingdom. If you are willing to pray for those whom God might be developing and seek out people in your sphere of influence, to encourage and offer ministry opportunities, I believe that you will witness those called out by God stepping up.

It is my privilege to teach Introduction to the Bible, as a part of Anderson University's core curriculum. I am grateful for the opportunity to teach this course each semester. Most of the students in my classes are first year freshmen, entering college with the anticipation for future careers and lives filled with purpose. Introduction to the Bible is the first of three biblical foundations classes that are required of every student at Anderson University. It is a blessing as I get to know these students and build relationships with them as we learn to apply biblical truths. From time to time, I will have a conversation with a student who strongly feels a call to ministry, but they have been advised to major in something other than Christian Studies. These students were advised by someone to "make sure that they have a backup plan," or "choose a major that will help you make money or guarantee a job when you graduate." These students clearly love God's word, and they are eager to serve, but they may not consider a Call to ministry as a viable, long-term, career. It is always a joy to work with students as they find their rightful place in the will of God.

Sometimes, students are advised to not major in Christian Studies during their undergraduate years but wait for biblical studies after graduation. They may be majoring in Business, Nursing, Education, or even the Arts, because they want to serve others and glorify God, but

they don't consider a career in ministry. Please, don't get me wrong, these are all wonderful majors and God, certainly calls nurses, teachers, engineers, artists and countless other careers. My point is perhaps, God is laying his hand directly upon someone for a ministry or missionary position that requires the unique training and academic rigor specifically designed and taught in the College of Christian Studies. It is critically important that students find the nurturing and training specifically available at the undergraduate, college level. If you are in a position to advise or encourage someone heading to college, it is always a joy to work with students through the process of discovering God's call for their future, whether in an area of ministry or not, when the lightbulb goes off and they realize that they have an opportunity to fulfill God's purpose.

Another word of encouragement is that students may be encouraged to double major in two areas of study that may complement a specific future in ministry. Some possible double majors that I know may pair well with a Christian Ministry major include Business, Marketing, Management, Graphic Design, Communication, Digital Media, Family Services and Human Development, Psychology, Music, and even Theatre. The fact is, God can and will sculpt his will and purpose into the unique giftings and personalities of any individual who is committed to responding to his call.

The twenty-first century is desperate for workers to answer the call from the Lord of the Harvest, just like those first century followers of Christ. Ministry is always challenging, in every culture and historic period, but the rewards of following our Savior into a career of service and ministry will produce eternal benefits. I hope that after you complete this book, God will lay several people on your heart who you can encourage and maybe share the book with, or perhaps follow up with and take a deeper look into what ministry preparation may look like for them. Above all else, commit to pray that God will continue to call out the Called.

CALLED

EXPLORING GOD'S CALL ON YOUR LIFE

What defining characteristic did Moses, Gideon, and even Paul have in common? They all had significant questions as God began to speak into their lives and call them into His Service. Moses questioned his ability to serve. Gideon questioned the validity of the call and Paul questioned the preconceived notions of what was possible for God's church. If you want to see God work in your life as He did in the lives of Moses, Gideon and Paul, then say with Isaiah, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

What is a call to ministry? How do you know when you've been called? What first steps should you take? Called is a valuable resource for anyone considering serving in ministry. In this brief book, the faculty of the College of Christian Studies at Anderson University will help you think through the concept of a call to ministry, and how to explore implications of that call in your life.

As you consider God's calling on your life and ministry, take a look at what Anderson University has to offer. Our ministry students find an exceptional level of preparation, with a committed faculty who link classroom and real-life experience. Whether you are planting a church, leading a ministry, or going on for additional education, you'll find AU offers a solid foundation and an outstanding opportunity for practical training.



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