

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT A CALL TO MINISTRY?

Satan – Beware the False Call of Satan.

- *Adam & Eve* – “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” Genesis 3:1
- *False Prophets* - “Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 23:32
- *False Teachers* – “they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” 2 Timothy 4:3b,4
- *Anti-Christ* – “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.” 1 John 2:22

Abraham – Step Away from the Familiar when Called.

- “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.” Genesis 12:1

Moses – Don’t Make Excuses when God Calls.

- “Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” Exodus 4:12

Aaron – Don’t Call Yourself.

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

Isaiah – Be Willing to Answer God’s Call without Qualifications.

- “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” Isaiah 6:8

Jonah – Don’t Run Away from God’s Call.

- “But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish” Jonah 1:3

Jeremiah – Go to Whomever and Speak Whatever God Calls You To Do.

- “I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations....Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD...Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.” Jeremiah 1:5-9

Ezekiel – Follow even when God’s Call is Difficult

- “he said to me, ‘Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me” Ezekiel 2:3

Disciples Chosen – God’s Call Means He Chose You & Appoint You to Bear Fruit.

- “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.” John 15:16

Sending of the Twelve – Answer God’s Dangerous Call.

- “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town... I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” Matthew 10:14, 16

Peter – Do Not Doubt God’s Call.

- “Lord, if it's you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ²⁹‘Come,’ he said... Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’“ Matthew 14:28,29a,31

Jesus to the Cross – God’s Call is for God’s Will.

- “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” Luke 22:42
- “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” – Romans 12:1-2

Disciples Sent – God’s Call involves Great Power and Distance.

- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” Acts 1:8

Christ’s Ambassadors – God’s Call is for Us to be Messengers.

- “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20

Paul & Barnabas – Be Willing to Part Godly Company in Order to Follow God’s Will.

- “They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.” Acts 15:39,40

Paul – God’s Call Often Involves Unplanned Situations and Unfinished Work.

- “²³But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, ²⁴I plan to do so when I go to Spain.” Romans 15:23,24a

Elder/Shepherd/Pastor/Overseer/Bishop – God’s Call has Standards.

- “²Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.” 1 Timothy 3:2-7 (also Titus 1:6-9)

John Bisagno – *Letters to Timothy* - “Find God’s tailor-made will for you and do it...Don’t be deterred. If God has called you, God will use you...don’t drift from your call. Better to be on a side street in Calcutta in the will of God than in the White House in Washington, D.C., out of his will. If you’re called to be a servant of the king, don’t stoop to be president. The body of Christ has many parts and many different kinds of folks, and the toes are just as important as the hands.” (38)

John Bisagno – *Letters to Timothy* - Read Charles Spurgeon’s “How to Know the Call of the Ministry” in *Lectures to My Students*...summarizes the five main points that influenced him (p.34-36)

1. **Desire** – “There was a time when I was passionate about the music ministry, but simultaneously that passion began to fade and a new passion to preach begins to grow. I wanted it more than anything else, and I knew it to be the call of God. He will put the desire in the sincere heart to do what he wants done...if you can do anything else but preach, by all means, don’t preach. But if the passion burns, then you must preach. If it is your all-consuming, magnificent obsession, then do it.”
2. **Ability** – “This is not to say you will be the greatest orator....God gives us some natural abilities and gifts to do what he wants us to do...If you have the ability to organize your thoughts and express them, let alone some special skills in communication, and this is reinforced with a passion to sue them, then the call of God is indicated.”
3. **Opportunity** – “Where God leaves us to serve and gifts us to serve, he provides opportunity to serve. Open and closed doors are important in reading the hand of God in our lives...God will open the door for you to do what he wants you to do. A closed door is usually an indication of wrong timing or a detour.”
4. **Blessing** – “There should be some degree of visible affirmation of your ministry as you pursue it.”
5. **The Opinion of Others** – “Discuss your decision with those in whom you have great spiritual confidence. Ask their advice; seek their counsel. Let them hear your heart, and listen to them.”

Curtis C. Thomas – *Practical Wisdom for Pastors: Words of encouragement and counsel for a lifetime of ministry* (21)

Six Questions to Consider:

1. “Does the man reach out for the work?”
2. “Is he qualified biblically?”
3. “Does he possess the gifts necessary to fulfill the functions?”
4. “Do the elders and the church think he is gifted and morally qualified?”
5. “Are his life and doctrine sound?”
6. “Will he live as an example before the flock?”

Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, “The Call to Ministry”

1. “an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work...this desire must be a thoughtful one...the desire I have spoken of must be thoroughly disinterested...[no] other motive than the glory of God and the good of souls...[a desire] that continues with us, a passion which bears the test of trial” (27-28)
2. “aptness to teach and some measure of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor...mere ability to edify, and aptness to teach, is not enough; there must be other talents to complete the pastoral character. Sound judgment and solid experience must instruct you; gentle manners and loving affections must sway you; firmness and courage must be manifest; and tenderness and sympathy must not be lacking...Gifts administrative in ruling well...be fitted to lead, prepared to endure, and able to persevere...read carefully the qualifications of a bishop, given in 1 Tim. iii. 2-7 and in Titus i. 6-9” (28-31)
3. “must see a measure of conversion-work going on under his efforts...if the Lord gives you no zeal for souls...avoid the pulpit as your heart’s peace and your future salvation” (31-32)
4. “your preaching should be acceptable to the people of God...none of you can be pastors without the loving consent of the flock...the sheep will know the God-sent shepherd” (32-33)

John Newton’s letter to a friend on the call to ministry:

1. “A warm and earnest desire to be employed in this service...[not] from a selfish principle...[but] from the Spirit of God”
2. “some competent sufficiency as to gifts, knowledge, and utterance”
3. “a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work”