

I. THE IMPORTANCE

Man is forever searching for purpose in his life here on earth. This drive for significance is felt by all, particularly for the Christian. Beginning in Genesis and sweeping through to Revelation, God has created us for a purpose. He asks each of us to look beyond our existence on earth and calls us to join Him in a relationship and in His work. God wants a relationship with us - one that is intimate growing, and obedient. A relationship where we minister to God. This relationship is initiated by God through His calling us to Himself. This relationship has been initiated through Creation, the Cross and the Second Coming. Once established in this relationship, God asks us to be about His purposes in whatever context we find ourselves. Our understanding of calling will affect our view of work, money, relationship and ministry.

Dr. Os Guinness believes the concept of calling, as it was imported by the Puritans, was the preeminent biblical truth that harnessed and shaped the restlessness and dynamic of our young, ambitious country. "It's at the very heart of the American existence," observes Guinness.

It is something more than spiritual, but rather that the expression of who, and what we do. This expression is in response to the Lord and is done as part of our calling to Him. "In scripture," Guinness notes, "calling is primarily to Someone (God). It is not to somewhere (a place); it is not to something (a task). Where we go and what we do is the secondary part of calling, merely the outworking of our primary calling, which is to God."

Os Guinness discusses the relevance of calling to our lives in "The Foundations of Spiritual Leadership". Why do we do what we do? Few things are more central to human beings than motivation. Similarly, the Christian understanding of motivation is one of the deepest, richest, and most distinctive parts of the faith. Partly expressed in such notions as serving God, pleasing God, and glorifying God, it is developed most fully in the biblical doctrine of "calling."

The Christian notion of calling is the conviction that human existence contains a life-purpose and a life-task, namely that all we are and all we do – our identities, gifts, and responsibilities – have a direction and dynamic because they are lived out as a response to a calling, or summons, from God."

What is calling? Calling is an invitation or summons from God to a relationship with Himself. We are called by God, to God, for God. What we do and where we do it is our secondary calling. These are the arenas where we live out this intimate relationship with God. For our discussion we will examine this secondary calling in two ways: 1. that which is "universal" to all Christians - chiefly participating in God's purposes of evangelism and discipleship 2. that which is "individual" to every Christian which includes our work, gifts, etc.

We will examine our calling from God's perspective investigating the relational call of God which is a love relationship. Next, we will look at this Universal Call of God - What should I be about? We will conclude with our Individual calling - Where should I work? We will then identify the practical process of understanding God's call. Since purpose is central to fulfilling God's call, an opportunity is given to write a life purpose statement. Finally, there are some case studies.