

### III. UNIVERSAL CALLING

Once God calls us into a relationship we begin to grow and enjoy the fruit of it. There is a secondary calling which is both universal and individual. The Puritans described these callings as general and particular. The universal calling is when He calls us to join Him in His purposes. We are all called to participate in God's purposes. In other words we are all to evangelize and make disciples. This is Christ's command in Matthew 28:19-20. This is not an option for any Christian. These functions are not a matter of spiritual gifts. Christ simply asks all to participate in the Kingdom purposes of sharing Christ with the world and helping them grow spiritually. These purposes are clear in scripture and in the life of Christ. In fact, He commands us to participate.

#### REVIEW THE FOLLOWING VERSES:

##### **Matthew 28:19-20**

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

##### **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

##### **Luke 19:10**

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

##### **Romans 8:28-29**

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

## **Colossians 1:27-29**

To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

## **1 Peter 2:9**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the universal calling God has called every believer to be about?
2. According to 1 Cor. 9 to what extent are we to be flexible in order to win the lost?
3. How is this going in your life today?
4. In Luke 19 and Col. 1, Christ and Paul both express a clear purpose or calling for their lives, what was it?
5. How should our lives reflect these callings?
6. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter describes us as a royal priesthood. What does it mean to be a priest? Is this for everyone?

# JIM PETERSEN

## *Lifestyle Discipleship*

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There is a basic difference in strategy for God's People of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Rather than the come and see of the Old, it is now, go to and live among. It is critical now as it was in Old Testament times that we live holy lives. Ungodly living will destroy us and our credibility just as surely now as it did then. But we are to live our lives among the lost rather than separated from them. God's people today are a people sent; we are to go to and live among. So, a basic difference between the calling of God's people in the Old and New Testaments is that the arrows have been turned around. Where it was once come and see, it is now "go to and proclaim".

### **Called to Serve as Insiders**

When people first come to Christ, they are often encouraged to make immediate radical changes in their life situations in order to do God's will. There is a pervasive attitude among us that makes it the norm for new believers to deliberately withdraw from their old friends, their families, and all their old associations until eventually they are living in virtual isolation from everything but their new Christian community.

Paul addresses a similar problem in Corinthians 7:1. Apparently the Christians, because of the pressures on their faith, were making unwise decisions in major areas of life. Some found themselves married to unbelieving spouses and were contemplating divorce. Others were wondering about changing their religious-cultural identities and were thinking they should get circumcised. Some felt trapped in their jobs as slaves and had anxieties over how to serve both God and an earthly master at the same time.

Paul's instructions on these matters are surprising. On the matter of unequal marriage he says: "Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him." On the questions of religious-cultural identity he makes an almost identical statement: "Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him." On the bad job he said the same: "Each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to."

These repetitive statements make it clear that when people come to Christ, as a rule they are already positioned to serve God. They have already found their place. They just need to recognize that.

We live in a highly mobile society where job changes and relocations are the norm. Paul is not suggesting that it is wrong to move, change jobs, or in some cases to alter our marital status. He encourages the slave to take his freedom if he can get it. There are good reason for changing jobs or

getting married. However, finding a “real ministry” is not one of them. God does sometimes call people to leave the job and sell the house to go do a specific task, but that is the exception rather than the rule.

Where to serve is among the first issues in our call to discipleship. We are to serve Christ as insiders in an unbelieving world. Many of us have withdrawn from our old associations to where we have all but lost our insidership. In a sense we have abandoned a post that was uniquely ours, that cannot be filled by another in exactly the same way. So a part of discipleship is learning how to fulfill Christ’s purposes for us in our everyday situation.

## **Conclusions**

We are called by God to serve Him as insiders to our normal life situations. We fulfill that calling as we glorify Him. We glorify Him as we reflect the character of Christ among believers and unbelievers alike.

We are not of the world, but our designated position is in the world. Our safety from evil is not a matter of withdrawing, but of sanctifying our minds through Christ and His Word.

If we are to move beyond just being present as insiders to the placed where we become involved in people’s lives to help them become followers of Christ, we’re going to need help. We will need to team up with others who can fill in the gaps for us.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Has God called everyone to function as an insider? Why or Why not?
2. Do you see yourself called to be an insider? How is it going?
3. How does having a clear calling to function as an insider help us set our priorities?
4. What other reflections do you have on being an insider?

# REVIEW

## Universal Calling

- All Christians are called to give their life away to the lost (evangelism) and to the fellow Christians (discipleship). The call to evangelism and discipleship is an absolute, mandatory, universal command of the Lord Jesus.
- Our universal calling to evangelism and discipleship should flow out of an abundant, intimate relationship with Christ. It is never a substitute in developing intimacy.
- Universal calling is for every Christian to live out God's purpose & His Kingdom (eternity with Him) our focus. We are called to take it to the whole world.
- Our love for God is only equal and proportionate to our love for the lost.
- This calling will cost us our life. We are called to invest our life into people. It is not easy or clean.
- If there is no spiritual fruit in this calling, you must examine the health of your relational calling.
- When we are living out this calling will be having a greater understanding of all the things we have in Christ (Philemon 6).