

THE CALL OF GOD

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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.

II. RELATIONAL CALLING

The primary call of God is when He calls us into a relationship with Himself. God pursues us in order to have a love relationship with us. God always initiates this relationship with man, never the other way around. This relationship is man's most necessary requirement for life and should be characterized by intimacy and not casualness. It must become our highest priority.

This relationship is characterized in terms such as a child of God (John 1:12), a friend of Christ (John 15:14) and the bride of Christ, brother, etc. All these characteristics are relational and yet capture different elements of what a relationship with God might be. At the heart of each of these relationships is love. A 2-way love: an unconditional love of God toward us with a command to love God in return with all of our heart, soul, might and strength (Matthew 22:37). From our part, this kind of love must be our first priority and requires all that we have - it must be total. Our calling to love God needs to transcend all other relationships such that they appear as hate! (Luke 14:26). What a radical call.

God desires a kind of love relationship that could be described as an affectionate, exclusive, intimate love. It is an intimacy that we can enjoy now and will prepare us for eternity. It will be forever. Yet we don't instantly attain intimacy - it is a growth process.

Our love for God can be expressed in many ways: worship, praise, thanksgiving, etc. These all could be summed up as our ministry to God (Acts 13:2, Exodus 28:1,4,43). This must be our first ministry - a ministry to God that glorifies Him. Out of this ministry to God flows our universal calling ministry to the lost and saved and our individual calling.

This relationship with God can be strengthened through the spiritual discipline of prayer, silence, solitude, death to self, study of God's word, etc. Yet the fundamental mark of a love for God is obedience (John 14:21). Obedience is at the heart of calling. We are invited to be with God and obedience is our first step. This relational calling is not just an emotional response but one of obedience.

SCRIPTURE

Relational Calling

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2 Thessalonians 2: 13-14

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul indicate about calling in these verses?
2. Reflect on what God has called us to. Why does God desire this? How do we enter into this relationship?
3. How are you doing in your relationship with God?
4. How does obedience play a role in our relational calling?

Philippians 3:8-14

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

QUESTIONS

1. In Phil.3:14 Paul talks about an upward call of God, what is this call of God and how much did Paul risk in order to gain it?
2. Reflect on Phil. 3:10 what does it mean to know Him?
3. Why does God call man to Himself?
4. Why can we do nothing without Christ?

OSWALD CHAMBERS

My Utmost For His Highest

Oswald Chambers was a man of remarkable spiritual wisdom and maturity. As a Bible teacher, he was renowned throughout the world and his writing has inspired millions of Christians. In November 1917, Oswald Chamber entered into God's presence. Since then many of his talks have been published in book form. The most famous and world renowned is "My Utmost for His Highest". A large proportion of the readings were chosen from the talks given during the Devotional Hour at the College - an hour which for many of the students marked an epoch in their life with God.

January 18

"Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." John 20:28

"Give Me to drink." How many of us are set upon Jesus Christ slaking our thirst when we ought to be satisfying Him? We should be pouring out now, spending to the last limit, not drawing on Him to satisfy us. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" - That means a life of unsullied, uncompromising and unbribed devotion to the Lord Jesus, a satisfaction to Him wherever He places us.

Beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for Him. It is easier to serve than to be drunk to the dregs. The one aim of the call of God is the satisfaction of God, not a call to do something for Him. We are not sent to battle for God, but to be used by God in His battlings. Are we being more devoted to service than to Jesus Christ?

QUESTIONS

1. What is this devotion to Christ?
2. What in your life competes with this devotion?
3. What is the passion of your life? What gets you thrilled and motivated every morning when you get out of bed?

OSWALD CHAMBERS

So Send I You

The Call

The voice of the nature of God – “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

When we speak of a call we nearly always leave out one essential feature: the nature of the one who calls. We speak of the call of the sea, the call of the mountains, the call of the great ice barriers. These calls are heard by a few only because the call is the expression of the nature from which the call comes, and can only be heard by those who are attuned to that nature.

The call of God is essentially expressive of the nature of God; it is His own voice. Paul says that “God demonstrates His own love toward us” (Romans 5:8), the love that is exactly expressive of His nature. Get that thought with regard to the call of God. Very few of us hear the call of God because we are not in the place to answer; the call does not communicate because we have not the nature of the One who is calling. In the case of Isaiah, his soul was so attuned because of the tremendous crisis he had passed through, that the call of God was recorded to his amazed soul. God did not lay a strong compulsion on Isaiah. Isaiah was in the presence of God and he overheard, as it were, the soliloquy of God: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” and in conscious freedom he replied, “Here am I! Send me.”

The call of God is not the echo of my nature, but expresses God’s nature. The call of God does not consider my affinities or personality. It is a call that I cannot hear as long as I consider my personality or temperament. But as soon as I am brought into the condition Isaiah was in, I am in a relationship to God whereby I can hear His call.

The call to service is the result of my obedience to the realized call of God. Profoundly speaking, there is no call to service for God; it is my own actual “bit,” the overflow of super abounding devotion to God. God does not have to come and tell me what I must do for Him; He brings me into a relationship with Himself where in I hear His call and understand what He wants me to do, and I do it out of sheer love to Him. To serve God is the deliberate love gift of a nature that has heard the call of God. When people say they have had a call to foreign service, or to any particular sphere work, they mean that their relationship to God has enabled them to realize what they can do for God. Their natural fitting for service and the call of God is identified as one in them.

The most, seemingly, untoward circumstances will be used by God for the men and women He has called. How ever much of wrong or of the devil there may seem to be at work, if an individual is called of God, every force will be made to tell for God’s purpose in the end. God watches all these things when once we agree with His purpose for us, and He will bring out only the conscious life, but all the deeper regions of life which we cannot reach, into harmony with His purpose. If the call of God is there, it is not within the power of untoward things to turn you. Your heart remains, not untouched by them, but unbroken, and you are surprised at yourself – Why didn’t I go under here, and there? “I called you.”

We try to make calls out of our own spiritual consecration, but when we are put right with God, He blights all our sentimental convictions and devotional calls. He brushes them all aside, and rivets us with a passion that is terrific to one thing we had never dreamed of, and in the condition of real communion with God, we overhear Him saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" And for one radiant, flashing moment we see what God wants, and say in conscious freedom, "Here am I! Send me."

QUESTIONS

1. How do we hear the call of God?
2. Why is intimacy with God critical to hearing God?
3. Why does God call us?
4. How can our service get in the way of our calling?
5. What is God saying to you?

REVIEW

Relational Calling

- God calls us into a relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ. This relational calling is our primary calling.
- This relationship should be one of growing intimacy that governs our world view, values and behavior. This intimacy should be passionate, affectionate, and exclusive.
- This love or devotion to God could also be referred to as our “ministry to God”.
- God first loved us and we respond to God in love. Without this love relationship with God our life has no meaning or value.
- Our relational calling (devotion to God) should never be replaced by what we do and where we do it. This service can be our chief competitor for our love for God.
- This devotion to Christ/God (intimacy with Him) can only be through the means of humility.
- Our relational calling should be developed through the exercise of spiritual disciplines of prayer, God’s Word, fellowship and solitude reflection.
- In our relationship with God intimacy and obedience are two side of the same coin. My intimacy will enhance my obedience and likewise my obedience will me grow in intimacy with God.

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

Jim Peterson is an International Vice President for the Navigators. Since pioneering The Navigators ministry in Brazil, he has been involved in The Navigators Ministries in other Latin American countries, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Jim is also the author of "Living Proof" and "A Church Without Walls".

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).

IV. INDIVIDUAL CALLING

God has first called us into a love relationship with Himself. This is an intimate relationship which we will enjoy for eternity. God then calls us to join Him in His purposes - that of the gospel. Every believer is called to share Christ and to help other believers in the growth process. It is not an option.

Our individual calling or life-mission becomes the context where we live out the relational and universal calls of God. Everyone has a different individual calling, yet we all have one. No individual calling is higher or more spiritual. They are all equal in God's eyes.

Romans 1:1

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

Acts 13:1-4

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

1 Corinthians 7: 20-24

Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each man remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called.

QUESTIONS

1. How is calling used in these verses?

2. How is this different than the universal calling which we just discussed?

Oswald Chambers

Not knowing Where

The Call of God

When God says “Follow Me,” He never says to where; the itinerary must be left entirely to Him. We come in with our “but” and “supposing” and “what will happen if I do?” (see Luke 9:57-62). We have nothing to do with what will happen if we obey; we have to abandon to God’s call in unconditional surrender, leaving behind all our shivering wisdom, and smilingly wash our hands of the consequences. However, this does not mean that a life of faith is a life of fate. Fate is stoical resignation to an unknown force. Faith is commitment to One whose character we know because it has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. And as we live in contact with our heavenly Father, His order comes to us in the haphazard, and we recognize that every detail of our lives is engineered by Him.

The call of God only becomes clear as we obey, never as we weigh the pros and cons and try to reason it out. The call is God’s idea, not our idea; and only on looking back over the path of obedience do we realize what God’s idea has been all along, for God sanctifies memory. When we hear the call of God it is not for us to dispute with Him and arrange to obey Him if He will expound the meaning of His call to us. As long as we insist on having the call explained, we will never obey. But when we obey, it all becomes clear, so that looking back we can say with a chuckle of confidence, “He doeth all things well.” Before us there is nothing, but overhead there is God, and we have to trust Him.

The Calling of Abraham

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8).

One of the hardest lessons to learn is the one which describes Abraham in the New Testament roll call of faith. “He went out not knowing where he was going” could be said of a faithful soul or a fool – or perhaps both. For as we, like Abraham, obey the call of God, we often become fools in the eyes of the world.

In the beginning faith is always uncertain, because at that point we have only the broad view, uncertain of particulars. We hear the call of God while we listen to a sermon or during a time of prayer, and we say, “Yes, I will give myself to God unreservedly.” Then something happens in our immediate circumstances that does not seem to fit into the vision we have had, and the danger is that we might compromise and say we must have been mistaken in the vision. Our natural tendency is to want to be always on the mountain where the view is clear. When we come down into the Devil-possessed valley we get annoyed or exhausted, thinking we cannot go on with God there. We have perfect faith in God as long as He keeps us on the mount, but not the slightest atom of faith when He takes us into the valley. Yet it is the trial of our faith that lies in these particulars, and it is in passing through that trial that we become spiritually enriched.

Personal acquaintance with God shows itself in separation, symbolized by Abraham's physical separation from his country and his kindred. Jesus Himself emphasized this need for separation (see Luke 14:26). Nowadays, such separation often involves a moral rather than a physical severance as we detach ourselves from the way those nearest and dearest to us think and look at things, if they do not have a personal relationship with God. Those who would argue against obeying the call of God frequently take the shape of country and kindred, and if we listen to them, our ears will soon become dull to God's call. Their sympathy competes with God for the throne of our life, and we dissolve into the most commonplace Christians imaginable because we have no courage to strike out in faith. We have seen and heard but have not gone on. If we accept sympathy from those who have not heard the call of God, it will so blunt our own sense of His call that we become useless to Him. Ultimately, every saint stands alone before God. And when He calls us to step out in faith, we begin the walk of faith alone, seeking no other comrade than the One who has called us for His purpose.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is understanding our calling not just an issue of reason?
2. What is the key to understanding the call of God?
3. How do we blunt the call of God?

EUSEBIUS

Eusebius (c. 260-c 340) was the Bishop of Caesarea and the “father of church history.” A prolific but rather unpolished writer, he is our principal source for the history for the Christian faith from the apostolic age down to his own day. He is a particularly valuable witness because he lived through such historic experiences as the Diocetian persecution (A.D. 303-310), the “conversion” of Constantine (A.D. 312) and the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), which gives us the Nicene Creed.

The passage illuminates the rise of a two level view of calling: the spiritual life versus the secular life of action. This idea is alive today and gives rise to the view of a “higher calling” of spiritual service.

That the Christian Life is of Two Characters

The one wrote on lifeless tables, the Other wrote the perfect commandments of the new covenant on living minds. And His disciples, accommodating their teaching to the minds of the people, according to the Master’s will, delivered on the one hand to those who were able to receive it, the teaching given by the perfect master to those who rose above human nature. While on the other the side of the teaching which they considered was suitable to men still in the world of passion and needing treatment, they accommodated to the weakness of the majority, and handed over to them to keep sometimes in writing, and sometimes by unwritten ordinances to be observed by them. Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, child-bearing, property nor the possession of wealth, but wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone in its wealth of heavenly love! And they who enter on this course, appear to die to the life of mortals, to bear with them nothing earthly but their body, and in mind and spirit to have passed to heaven. Like some celestial beings they gaze upon human life, performing the duty of a priesthood to Almighty God for the whole race, not the sacrifices of bulls and blood, nor with libations and unguents, nor with smoke and consuming fire and destruction of bodily things, but with right principles of true holiness, and of a soul purified in disposition, and above all with virtuous deeds and words; with such they propitiate the Divinity, and celebrate their priestly rites for themselves and their race. Such then is the perfect form of the Christian life.

And the other, more humble, more human, permits men to join in pure nuptials and to produce children, to undertake government, to give orders to soldiers fighting for right; it allows them to have minds for farming, for trade, and the other more secular interests as well as for religion: and it is for them that times of retreat and instruction, and days for hearing sacred things are set apart. And a kind of secondary grade of piety is attributed to them, giving just such help as such lives require, so that all men, whether Greeks or barbarians, have their part in the coming of salvation, and profit by the teaching of the Gospel.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two classes of people that Eusebius described?
2. How is this view still perpetuated today?
3. Why is this not biblical?
4. Is a businessman living in the marketplace more secular or more spiritual than a full-time Christian worker?
5. How does God view these two and what is of most importance to Him?

Pat Macmillan

Hiring Excellence

Mr Macmillan, management consultant, writer and speaker is President of Team Resources, Inc., an international consulting firm specializing in team and organizational development for churches, small businesses and Christian organizations, as well as a number of Fortune 500 corporations. Before founding Team Resources, Mr. Macmillan served as Executive Vice President of Leadership Dynamics, Inc., and Director of Management Services for Campus Crusade for Christ. A native of Seattle, he received his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and his Master of Business Administration degrees from the University of Washington. He and his wife, Jill, have three children and reside in Atlanta, Georgia.

The seeds of calling as it relates to our profession or work were planted in the New Testament. But the concept pushed into the spotlight during the Reformation when Luther challenged the division between the sacred and the secular, defining “good works” as those chosen by God and “comprehended within the bounds of a particular calling.” Later, Calvin would expand the concept and give it greater definition. He used the term “call” (vocation in French and vocation in Latin) in two senses: the “primary call” is from God to God; the “secondary calling” is to a particular work, occupation, or station in life. The purpose of work, in Calvin’s view, regardless of what kind of work it was, was to glorify God, to be a service to Him through service to men. Calvin exalted the common and refused to give preference to a particular religious vocation, which might be esteemed above others. All work, whether preaching a sermon or digging a ditch, was to be done as a service to God and not for personal gain or pleasure. It was a calling.

The Puritans really gave the concept of calling its momentum, turning the principles of Calvin and Luther into practice. William Perkins, a Puritan preacher and writer in Elizabethan England, refined the concept further by distinguishing between the general call and a particular call. The general call was common to all Christians as Christians (to be holy, to be peacemakers, to be salt and light, etc.) The particular call was to a specific person because of his or her character and gifts.

Let me clarify one important point. I believe that if Perkins were here today, he would distinguish between “work” and a “job”. Work would be defined as vocation or career, a life task or general direction. Within this “vocation,” even numerous “jobs” should form a pattern, a continuity that contributes to our broader vocation – or, as Perkins would say, our “particular” calling.

By calling, Guinness would agree with Perkins. It means much more than something exclusively spiritual, like guidance, but rather that “the expression of our personalities, the exercise of our gifts, all that we are, everywhere we go, and everything that we do is seen as a 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.”

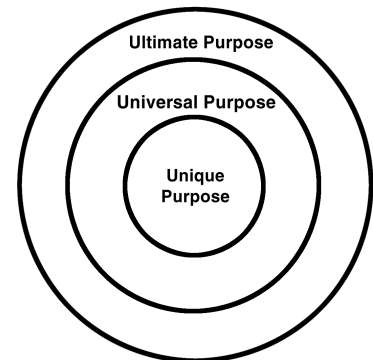
How Do We Find Our Calling?

In many respects a synonymous term for calling might be purpose. What is the purpose of your life? Purpose deals with the question “why?” Why do I exist? Or more accurately, “For whom do I exist?”)

Pat Morley, in his excellent book, *The Man in the Mirror*, notes that there are two aspects to finding significance: “The first answers the fundamental question, “Who am I?” The other answers life’s second big question, “Why do I exist?” We derive meaning and identity from understanding who we are in Christ. It’s a position we occupy. On the other hand, God has a purpose for our lives – a mission, a destiny – which is why we exist. It is the direction in which God wants us to be moving.”

As Christians, our primary purpose is to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7). The first statement in The Westminster Shorter Catechism sums it up in an eloquent, straightforward manner: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Actually, this really isn’t our purpose, but rather God’s overarching purpose for us. We can find the purposes of God for men on three levels. Picture these levels as three concentric circles. We’ll label the outermost circle God’s ultimate purpose - ultimate in that it encompasses the entire scope of history – past, present, and future (Isaiah 46:10). It’s played out from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, and every person, Christian and non-Christian alike, will play his or her part on the stage of God’s ultimate purpose.

The middle circle is God’s universal purpose – universal because it applies to all Christians. His Word makes it clear that all followers of Christ are to devote themselves to prayer, to love one another, to study and apply God’s Word to their lives, to share the gospel, to be salt and light, as well as the other spiritual disciplines the Lord admonishes us to pursue. They do this so that they might “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Universal purpose is equivalent to what the Puritans termed general calling.



In the innermost circle, we find God’s unique purpose for each individual Christian. Unique, in that each of us is hand-crafted by the Creator for some special purpose. In Galatians 1:15, the Apostle Paul notes that the story of the Gentile church didn’t start on the Damascus Road, but rather many years earlier when God set him apart in his mother’s womb to be the apostle to the Gentiles. God told Jeremiah that He knew and consecrated Jeremiah in the womb of his mother to be a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:5). David acknowledges as much in Psalm 139:

Thou didst form my inward parts;
Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb....
Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Thy book they were written,
The days that were ordained for me,
When as yet there was not one of them. (verses 13,16; NASB)

We could write the same message in our journals. One of the most fulfilling challenges for Christians is discovering God's unique purpose for our lives.

Finding our unique purpose is, to a great extent, a pilgrimage - a journey of exploration rather than an immediate "ah ha" experience. It comes in little bits as God, over time, reveals insights into why you (as a unique individual) are here. It comes as we pray asking God to reveal His purpose for us (Matthew 6:7-8), study His Word, and reflect on the influences and forces He has brought to bear in and on our lives. When it comes to a unique purpose, we must take into special account the way God crafted us, that is, the gifts, interests, aptitudes, and temperament He designed into our lives just as He did into the lives of David, Jeremiah, and Paul.

QUESTIONS

1. How does MacMillan's view of calling align with what we have read from Chambers, Eusebius, etc.?
2. MacMillan uses calling and purpose as almost synonymous. What are the three areas of calling and how do they differ?
3. Do you have a written purpose for your life? (At the end of this study, there is a section on how to write a purpose statement).
4. What value is there for having a clearly defined purpose statement?

REVIEW

Individual Calling

- All Christians are to work, yet they work is expressed differently for every individual. called some type of individual work. Most are called to remain in the context of the marketplace and neighborhood to be salt and light among the people God has placed them. In other words, our career is a platform in which we relate to God and to the world.
- There are no lone rangers as we live out our calling in the world.
- Our individual calling will be a unique expression of our spiritual gifts, talents, etc.
- There is no higher calling between doctor, lawyer, and ditchdigger vs. missionary, minister, and priest, only different.
- A few are called to full-time vocational Christian work, all are called to be full-time Christians.
- Passion, spiritual gifts and circumstances play a factor in our individual calling.
- God does not reveal His individual calling if we are not relationally aligned with Him. Yet, God does not play games with us in this area of work if we are aligned with Him.
- Our individual calling fits into God's purposes and His Kingdom.
- Our individual calling becomes the context or arena of influence where our intimacy with God and our living out God purpose's takes place.

V. WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF GOD'S CALLING

The process of hearing from God is at least two-fold: humility or emptiness and knowing the will of God. This is critical for understanding the three levels of calling as well the translation of these into a specific job or activity.

Another issue that is critical to functioning in our calling is that of spiritual gifts. God has given all of us gifts to be used for ministry. The use of our gifts will be realized when we are fulfilling our calling. "How can I know?" is a question that most of us ask. We will give you a list of practical thoughts to help guide you in the process.

Fenelon *Let Go*

The letters collected in this book were originally penned by François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, the Archbishop of Cambrai, France, during the seventeenth century. While in the office of Archbishop, Fénelon had the opportunity of becoming the spiritual advisor of a small number of earnest people at the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, who sought, under Fénelon's wise direction, to live a life of true spirituality in the midst of a court life which was shamelessly immoral. During his association with these people, he had many opportunities to write, encouraging them to press toward the goal of Christ likeness.

Absolute Trust Is the Shortest Road to God.

I have no doubt that God considers you to be one of His friends; otherwise He would not trust you with so many crosses, sufferings and humiliations. Crosses are God's means of drawing souls closer to Himself. And these crosses accomplish His purposes much more rapidly and effectually than all of our personal efforts put together. Crosses destroy self-love at its very root, down in the depths of the human spirit where we can hardly detect it. But God knows where it is lodged, and He attacks it in its greatest strongholds.

If we have strength and faith enough to trust ourselves completely into the hands of God, and follow Him wherever He leads us there will be no need of stretching and straining to reach perfection. But since we are so weak in faith, and always stopping along the way to ask questions, our journey is lengthened and we get behind in spiritual development. So you see how important it is for you to abandon yourself as completely as possible to God, and continue to do so until your last breath. And don't be afraid. He will never leave you.

George Mueller

Knowing the Will of God

Founder and maintainer for over half a century of the new orphan-houses of Asbely Down, Bristol, England, cared for over 10,000 orphans at a cost that exceeded eight million dollars. Mueller never once asked for anything from anyone - but God. Time after time, Mueller's faith was tested, but God honored that faith and met his needs. Prayer was the key to his strength, success and ministry.

George Mueller mentioned these things that helped him:

- He sincerely sought God's direction.
- He waited patiently on God until he had a word from God.
- He looked to the Holy Spirit (Ghost) to teach him through the word.

He knew the following things led to his making mistakes:

- Lacking honesty of heart
- Lacking uprightness before God
- Impatience to wait for God
- Preferred the counsel of men over the declarations of Scripture

Here is how he summed up the way he entered into a "heart" relationship with God and learned to discern God's voice:

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the knowledge of what His will is.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His Will to me aright.
6. Thus, (1) through prayer to God, (2) The study of the Word, and (3) reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so difficult to get to the point of surrender and humility?
2. Why does God seem to honor this?
3. Which of Mueller's directions is significant to you and why?
4. Have you ever seen this process work?
5. What issues are you currently facing where this process could be applied?

Arthur Miller

Spiritual Gifts

Thoughts on Christians and Careers

So the issue for meaningful Christianity is our work for God's Kingdom on earth built on such a passionate, demanding foundation of love?

God's answer is to endow each of us with gifts and a powerful desire to be of particular use and service. For it is only when these gifts are fully engaged that we pour our heart, soul, strength, and mind into a calling. God literally shapes our heart, soul, strength, and mind through His gifting of us, to be His co-creators to redeem the world.

We love and relate to God through the means He gives us. If we are gifted at performing, be it entertainment, athletics, recitation, trial, or preaching, our relationship with God revolves around our preparing for, performing, and coming down afterwards. If we are a gifted programmer, we relate to God through all the precision and complexity and logic required in our gift of love. If we are gifted at traffic management, appraising horses, mineral deposits or likely strategy of the competition; selling ties or telecommunications systems...our relationship to God is or should be worked out through those activities engaging His gifts to us.

QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on why spiritual gifts are necessary and critical to my fulfilling my calling?
2. What are your spiritual gifts?
3. How are you using them?

THE PRACTICAL PROCESS

In the individual calling arena of our life there are a number of factors that need to be considered to determine God's call. These principles are like lights on a runway as they begin to line up, it gives you a sense of God. A practical perspective that will help one determine God's call. Here are some thoughts that have been developed from the input of Godly leaders that function in the marketplace daily with who people are making business and vocational decisions. They have stood the test of time and experience.

General Perspectives

1. *God doesn't rush the process (Psalms 46:10).*

It is often said God guides and Satan rushes. Watch out when organizations or people put pressure on you to move too fast. Most of the time, speed is not of God. Allow time to pray and get counsel.

2. *The need is not the call.*

Just because there is a need, it doesn't mean you are called to it. This often is given as the justification of my going. It must not be my only reason or confirmation. Yes, when God calls, there is a need, but I can't respond to every need.

3. *Stay put until God has clearly called (1 Cor. 7:17,21).*

God calls us to a vocation (including a specific job, location, etc.). We are to stay where He has placed us. Just because the "grass is greener" or an opportunity arises, it does not mean a change is God's will or His call. This is the world's approach. If God desires a change for you, it will become very clear as we spend time with Him and these principles begin to line up.

4. *Our calling is generally an expansion of the ministry or direction we are about.*

The calling is compatible with our giftedness. Most of the time God doesn't radically take you out of one environment or ministry and place you in another. Although, there are exceptions, our calling often is an extension of the work/ministry where you are functioning. This calling will be compatible to our gifts and giftedness. God will put the desire in our hearts. God does not send us to Africa unless He places a desire/burden to go there.

5. *If God is calling you, He will provide (Phil. 4:19).*

Our calling should not be economically motivated, in fact, often when one is called from the business world to vocational Christian work, there is a lack of desire for making money. Over time, if there's a lack of provision, it could be one of 3 things: (1) God might be proving my character; (2) I may not be asking; (3) God is changing the call. God speaks through resources.

6. God's call will fulfill His purposes.

At the heart of God's call is people. We are not called to function as a lone-ranger, independent of people.

7. I hear the call of God only as I'm "Intimate with God"

Our vocational calling should flow out of an intimate relationship with God and His command to go make disciples. Intimacy with God is more important than a job. If I am not completely obedient to God, He will not disclose Himself to me (John 14:21).

8. All are called.

God calls every believer to a vocation which becomes the arena where we function as instruments of the gospel. There is no higher calling, i.e. pastor, etc. All are equal in God's eyes. God calls men and women to secular and spiritual functions alike - there is no difference to Him. What does make a difference to God is our motives and how we carry out the function.

Specific Steps in Hearing The Call of God

1. Total Surrender

The clarity of God's calling is heard and understood only after we have died to our vision of the calling. If we are not neutral before God (died to self), it is easy to manipulate or rationalize our own desires and give God the credit for it. The call is never a matter of pride or ambition - that's a fast way to disaster.

2. Confirmation from God's word.

Careful attention needs to be given to God and His word for the confirmation. This will come naturally. This is not for me to look at specific verses and manipulate them to reinforce a previously held desire. God will speak if we will but listen. The call is never outside a biblical foundation.

3. Peace

I, my wife and family will be at peace. God does not bring confusion (a lack of peace) when calling someone. If there is confusion, lack of peace, in the message - you can conclude God is not moving yet (it is either not yet the time or not His direction).

This peace comes from God, in spite of sometimes our ability to logically explain the details. A calling of God is a supernatural word of the Father.

4. *Confirmation of the call by others. (Counsel is sought) (Proverbs 15:22)*

There is wisdom in many counselors. Make sure you have Godly counselors that know you, that don't have a vested interest in the outcome (objective 3rd party) and will not just say yes. Be careful not to try and implement all that the counselors say as you will have many opinions and possibly conflicting advice. After receiving counsel, you are ultimately and totally responsible for the decision before God. You must be totally honest as you get counsel - if you only give part of the picture - you manipulate the outcome.

5. *Pray, Pray, Pray*

Much prayer is fundamental to hearing the call of God. In fact, it would be hard to pray too much. Prayer is the real work. God is not playing games with us - He will make His will known.

6. *Circumstances*

Circumstances play a significant role in the direction and timing of God's call. For example, if I sense God's call and it involves a move, yet my reasonably priced house doesn't sell, the message may be one of three things - not the right time, don't make the move (a change of calling) or God didn't call. It is when we manipulate the circumstances, to force our desire of outcome, we are beyond God's call and most likely in the flesh.

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calling) or God didn't call. It is when we manipulate the circumstances, to force our desire of outcome, we are beyond God's call and most likely in the flesh.

V. IN REVIEW

Overall

- In principle, calling is three-fold: relational, universal and individual.
- When understood and embraced, our calling should be the driving motivation in our life.
- Our calling becomes an anchor in the midst of a storm, it clarifies our priorities and is the passion which energizes and sustains us daily.
- Calling comes from hearing and listening to God and requires two essential ingredients: emptiness of self (brokenness, humility, death to self, etc.) and the willingness to act by faith (obedience).

Relational Calling

- First and foremost, God calls us into a relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ.
- This relationship should be one of growing intimacy that governs our world-view, values and behavior.
- Our relational calling (devotion to God) should never be replaced by our universal calling or our individual calling.
- This devotion to Christ/God (intimacy with Him) can only be through the means of humility.
- Our relational calling should be developed through the exercise of spiritual disciplines of prayer, God's Word, fellowship, solitude reflection.

Universal Calling

- All Christians are called to give their life away to the lost (evangelism) and to fellow Christians (discipleship). The call to evangelism and discipleship is an absolute, mandatory command of the Lord Jesus.
- Our to evangelism and discipleship should flow out of an abundant, intimate relationship with Christ. It is never a substitute or a means to develop intimacy.
- This calling is an universal call for every Christian to live out God's purpose and His Kingdom (eternity with Him) our focus.

Individual Calling

- A few are called to full-time vocational Christian work, all are called to be full-time Christians.
- Passion, spiritual gifts and circumstances play a factor in our individual calling.
- God does not reveal His individual calling if we are not relationally and universally aligned with Him. Yet, God does not play games with us in this area of work if we are aligned with Him.
- Our calling in terms of individual work will fit into God's purposes and His Kingdom.
- Our individual calling becomes the context or arena of influence where our intimacy with God and our living out God purpose's takes place.

VII. A LIFE PURPOSE

When we have received and clearly defined our purpose as from God it will have a dramatic effect on how we live our life day to day. We will be able to rest and enjoy God working through us in a miraculous way. We will experience fruit and joy like we have never known. Our lives will be characterized by peace and contentment. Although having a purpose does not mean a pain free life, one without difficulty or struggle. Quite the contrary, we may experience more trial and difficulties when we walk with God, yet He never leaves us or forsakes us.

A.W. Tozer *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*

“A 20th century prophet” they called in him in his lifetime. As a Chicago and Toronto pastor, as a sought-after conference speaker, and as editor of The Alliance Witness, Dr. Tozer ministered to hundreds of thousands. Since his death in 1963, that ministry has been further multiplied through his writings. He has left a shelf of books that will be mined for their spiritual wealth until the Lord returns.

On Breeding Spotted Mice

The Associated Press lately carried an interesting if somewhat depressing story out of London about a certain British peer who had died just a few days short of his eighty-ninth birthday. Having been a man of means and position, it had presumably not been necessary for him to work for a living like the rest of us, so that at the time of his death he had had about seventy adult years in which he was free to do whatever he wanted to do, to pursue any calling he wished or to work at anything he felt worthy of his considerable abilities. And what had he chosen to do? Well, according to the story, he had “devoted his life to trying to breed the perfect spotted mouse.”

Now, I grant every man the right to breed spotted mice if he wants to and can get the cooperation of the mice, and I freely admit that it is his business and not mine. Not being a mouse lover (nor a mouse hater for that matter; I am just neutral about mice), I do not know but that a spotted mouse might be more useful and make a more affectionate pet than a common mouse-colored mouse. But still I am troubled. The mouse breeder in question was a lord, and I was born on a farm in the hill country of Pennsylvania, but since a cat can look at a king I suppose a farm boy can look at a lord, even look at him with disapproval if the circumstances warrant. Anyway, a man’s a man, and I feel a certain kinship for every man born of woman; so I cannot but grieve for my brother beyond the seas.

Made in the image of God, equipped with awesome powers of mind and soul, called to dream immortal dreams and to think the long thoughts of eternity, he chooses the breeding of a spotted mouse as his reason for existing. Invited to walk with God on earth and to dwell at last with the saints and angels in the world above; called to serve his generation by the will of God, to press with holy

vigor toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, he dedicates his life to the spotted mouse – not just evenings or holidays, mind you, but his entire life.

Surely this is tragedy worthy of the mind of an Aeschylus or a Shakespeare. Let us hope that the story is not true or that the news boys got it mixed up as they sometimes do; but even if the whole thing should prove to be a hoax, still it points up a stark human tragedy that is being enacted before our eyes daily, not by make-believe play actors, but by real men and women who are the characters they portray. These should be concerned with sin and righteousness and judgment; they should be getting ready to die and to live again; but instead they spend their days breeding spotted mice.

If the spiritual view of the world is the correct one, as Christianity boldly asserts that it is, then for every one of us heaven is more important than earth and eternity more important than time. If Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be; if He is what the glorious company of the apostles and the noble army of martyrs declared that He is; if the faith which the holy church throughout all the world does acknowledge is the true faith of God, then no man has any right to dedicate his life to anything that can burn or rust or rot or die. No man has any right to give himself completely to anyone but Christ nor to anything but prayer. The man who does not know where he is lost; the man who does not know why he was born is worse lost; the man who cannot find an object worthy of his true devotion is lost utterly; and by this description the human race is lost, and it is a part of our lostness that we do not know how lost we are. So we use up the few precious years allotted to us breeding spotted mice. Not the kind that scurry and squeak, maybe; but viewed in the light of eternity, are not most of our little human activities almost as meaningless? One of the glories of the Christian gospel is its ability not only to deliver a man from sin but to orient him, to place him on a peak from which he can see yesterday and today in their relation to tomorrow. The truth cleanses his mind so that he can recognize things that matter and see time and space and kings and cabbages in their true perspective. The Spirit-illuminated Christian cannot be cheated. He knows the values of things; he will not bid on a rainbow nor make a down payment on a mirage; he will not, in short, devote his life to spotted mice.

Back of every wasted life is a bad philosophy, an erroneous conception of life's worth and purpose. The man who believes that he was born to get all he can will spend his life trying to get it; and whatever he gets will be but a cage of spotted mice. The man who believes he was created to enjoy fleshly pleasures will devote himself to pleasure seeking; and if by a combination of favorable circumstance he manages to get a lot of fun out of life, his pleasures will all turn to ashes in his mouth at the last. He will find out too late that God made him too noble to be satisfied with those tawdry pleasures he had devoted his life to here under the sun.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the value and importance of having a purpose for our lives?
2. What strikes you as you read Tozer's story?
3. What action steps is God leading you to take?

CBMC

Operation Timothy - Book #4

The Christian Business Men's Committee is an international evangelical organization of Christian business and professional men whose primary purpose is to present Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to other business and professional men and to train these men to carry out the Great Commission.

Steps toward a Purpose Statement:

First you'll need to do some heavy thinking, praying, and writing. Use these questions as a worksheet.

1. **Start from our common purpose as Christians.** Based on our earlier study, what does God desire from us all? Nothing in the rest of your statement can be inconsistent with God's commands, and you won't be successful in other goals if you ignore His purposes.
2. **Who are you?** What is your marital status? Family plan? Occupational status? What special skills are you equipped with? These must all be taken into account?
3. **What are your dreams?** God gives us special vision and aspiration about things we desire to happen. When they are in accordance with His laws, they can be a clue to His will for us.
4. **What are your spiritual gifts, skills, temperament, etc.?**
5. **What impressions are you gaining through prayer?** Don't plan without praying.
6. **What do godly friends say?** Their perspective is essential.

7. Now take the common purpose and integrate with the other questions to begin to write a purpose statement. (Use a legal pad or notebook to begin your rough draft.)

Name

God's universal purpose

Your unique gifts, skills, temperament, etc.

Career goals

Family goals

Personal goals

What Scripture verses has God used in your life to give you direction and purpose? Choose one of these that best characterizes God's purpose for your life.

Be patient: this may take several times of rewriting over a period of time to refine and polish. Discuss this with some close personal friends. Talk to someone who has done this. Ask them to share their personal statement with you and share how they arrived at it. Sign your name at the bottom of your statement. (If married, this should be done together.)

“A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul...” Proverbs 13:19

The following are samples of purpose statements from two different couples to give you some idea of how yours might look. Try to write your own in light of the specific gifts and unique calling God has entrusted to you. Remember these were developed over a period of time, re-evaluated periodically, refined and updated. So, just start simply.

If you need more in-depth guidance, Gordon Adams' *Establishing Your Purpose* gives detailed instructions and help in preparing a life purpose statement. Write or call:

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Remember that these are the finished products of a process that took many tries and years to refine. Your first attempt may be a lot simpler than these, but you can continue to work on yours as you grow and learn more. So, don't get discouraged!

LIFE PURPOSE STATEMENT

Life Purpose Verses

I Thessalonians 2:8

"So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

II Corinthians 12:15

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved."

1. To devote my life, to and with my wife (as one), to see that every immediate member of our family becomes a godly Christian. This includes our sons-in-law, their wives (our daughters), grandchildren and grandchildren's children. We will spend time with them as a group and individually in the activities that promote godliness, spending our energy and resources as needed for the accomplishment of this.
2. Our home is given to us by God and shall always be available to Him for everything He wished to use it for.
3. All our earthly resources belong to God and are available to Him. We are stewards (managers) to utilize these resources as we are directed by God. We will give the tithe regularly as a minimum. The major purpose of the accumulation of our money and resources is to continue our goals after we have gone to Heaven.
4. As much as is possible, we will direct our everyday work and play activities toward the CBMC purpose which we have been called to, and which we feel is synonymous with the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19, 20.
5. We will seize every opportunity presented to us to share Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord and answer for the sin of individual man. We depend upon the Holy Spirit for our direction in these matters as we understand that this battle for people's souls is supernatural.
6. We are committed to the training of a few people personally as disciplemakers and leaders. Understanding that this takes a tremendous amount of energy and time, we plan 2-8 years with individual people that God entrusts to us.
7. We remain open to the Lord for every new learning experience. We desire to grow spiritually and realize that God keeps us in a training program. It is our desire to be in this learning program until we are promoted to Heaven and our eternal promises.
8. We are learning to establish goals for each category stated and want the Lord to hold us accountable for setting and maintaining this LIFE PURPOSE statement. Each of these statements should be broken into segments reflecting both short-range and long-range goals. These should be checked monthly, noted for progress quarterly and updated for accuracy and accomplishment year. We will schedule regular time on a calendar for planning and prayer.

VIII. CASE STUDIES

Case Study #1

John, an account executive with a high technology computer firm, is doing well with his company. He is well respected and a vital part of the company's future. Another high company, not a direct competitor, comes to John with an offer to double his salary, an increase in benefits, and more travel. John's company sensing that they may lose John asks, "What will it take to keep you?"

John struggles and debates the decision.

QUESTIONS

1. What counsel would you give John?
2. What questions would you ask John?
3. How would you help John determine the call of God in this situation?
4. Does God really care about the outcome of the decision?

Finally John opts for greener pastures and a greener wallet.

5. Is John in the will of God?

Case Study # 2

Pete is a hard working, diligent employee. He works for a manufacturing business, yet it is in an industry that has no growth or opportunity. Pete has tried to share about Christ in the office with no fruit that is evident. In his job, he faces many difficulties with his boss. He has been passed over for promotion, and faces stagnation or decline in salary. Pete loves to teach the Bible and often wonders “maybe God is calling me into full-time Christian work because my circumstances are so bad.”

QUESTIONS

1. What counsel would you give Pete?
2. How would you help him determine God’s call?
3. Should Pete simply stay put like in 1 Cor. 7?
4. How does God use circumstances to help determine the call of God?
5. Is Pete suffering from thinking that full-time ministry is a higher calling?

Case Study #3

Mike, an executive with a large ministry, is seeing God at work making an impact in the lives of many. He loves what he is doing, yet as a family they are struggling to make ends meet because of medical bills and relatively low ministry pay. Another ministry is doing a search for a young, bold executive who will help the ministry connect with the next generation. They offer Mike the position which includes a 50% salary increase and more responsibility. Mike's business friends encourage him to make the move - obviously, God is blessing him. Mike is concerned that his ministry relationships will figure he is going for the money.

QUESTIONS

1. What counsel would you give Mike?
2. How can Mike know where God Has called him?
3. Is there a double standard concerning money as it relates to changing a position in ministry versus business?
4. How much of a factor should the money be?
5. How does Mike sort through his own motives?

IX. Conclusion

God calls each of us to a living and vital relationship with Himself. One that is characterized by intimacy and passion between us and God. We, having been indwelt by Christ, now will enjoy an eternity with Him.

God then calls us, in fact, commands us to be about “making disciples of all nations”. This calling to be involved in the purpose of God is universal - all believers are to be engaged. There is no option. The activities and relationships of my life should all reflect Jesus Christ. We exist for such a cause - a cause bigger than ourselves.

Where would God have us live out this relational and universal calling. Our work becomes the context or arena in which we grow relationally to Christ and represent Him to a needy world. This context is unique for every believer as it encompasses - talents, spiritual gifts, experiences, and temperament, etc. Our life and in particular, our work can now be embarked upon with a purpose that far transcends the making of money and the providing for my family.

This threefold calling becomes a great motivating force or passion. It will change us for eternity and will also impact our eternity as well as the eternity of many others. This calling must be clear and compelling - God is not playing games with us - we need to pursue and know our calling.

We hope that this study, the people and interaction will help you fulfill your calling.