

YOUR CALLING

The Call: What is a calling?

“A calling is a summons from God to a task that accomplishes His purposes.”

Throughout the Bible people receive clarity of purpose. Sometimes it's an epiphany; sometimes a puzzle. Bible scholars refer to these scenarios as “callings.” A calling is a summons from God to a task that accomplishes His purposes.

One day, while tending his father-in-law's sheep, Moses saw a bush on fire, but not burning up. When he investigated, God assigned Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Although Moses gave several excuses, he finally obeyed God's command.

Esther became Queen of Babylon through a beauty contest. Although Jewish, she followed her Uncle Mordecai's advice and didn't tell anyone. Later, a royal adviser manipulated King Xerxes into ordering the annihilation of all Jews. Esther remained quiet. Mordecai sent word to Esther that her silence wouldn't save her. He suggested that the crisis might be the very reason God allowed Esther to become Queen. In that moment, Esther recognized her calling and obeyed.

Luke was a physician who became a Christian. He never met Jesus, but was a traveling companion of Paul. Luke met many church leaders, including Peter, Barnabas, and Stephen.

With his medical background, Luke was an astute observer with an inquisitive mind and good writing skills. Luke intuitively obeyed and wrote two books of the New Testament – the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

God called Moses directly. Esther received her calling through another person. Luke's calling came through life circumstances. How has or will God's call come to you?

The Call: The Parts of a Calling

“A calling is a summons from God to a task that accomplishes His purposes.” There's a lot of information packed into that sentence. So let's “unpack” it.

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A calling is a summons from God ...”

When I was a boy I usually went outside to play after dinner. At dusk mom or dad would call out, “Time to come home.” They expected me to come right away. When I arrived they gave me a task like “Go take a bath.” In the same way, someday God will summon you. As a believer you know His voice. When you hear it, go to Him in prayer and listen.

“... to a task ...”

God has work for you to do - a mission just for you. He’s equipped you with everything you need to accomplish it. Your spiritual gifts play a big part in fulfilling your calling. Whatever the job is, don’t try to figure it out. God doesn’t work that way. He’ll reveal it in His appointed time. Wait for it. It’ll certainly come and will not be late. In the meantime, faithfully serve others.

“... that accomplishes His purposes.”

History is hurtling headlong to the Second Coming of Christ. You have between now and then to accomplish your work. Your assignment falls into one or both of these categories: evangelism and discipleship. In essence, your work is to tell people about salvation and to serve them in love.

The Call: Methods of Delivery

I don’t receive many letters any more. People contact me by phone, email or text messages. Similarly, a calling arrives by one of three delivery methods.

Sometimes a calling comes directly from God. It’s doubtful you’ll audibly hear His voice. People who “hear” God’s voice usually end up in mental institutions. It’s more likely that you, like Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13 KLV), will hear God’s “still small voice.” You may read a Bible verse and suddenly know God’s mission for your life. Or you may be praying and God reveals your calling through a thought, insight or awareness.

God may use another person to call you. You might be listening to a sermon and sense God’s assignment. Or be reading a book and unexpectedly know what God wants you to do. The call may

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come through a casual comment in conversation. Or it might be heard through a movie, TV show or song.

Many people connect with their calling through life circumstances. Sometimes it relates to your positive experiences. Perhaps you're involved in a wonderful activity and you want others to experience it, too. Or it may arrive through life's painful moments - times of hurt, loss, sorrow, brokenness or humiliation. When you're hurting, you just want the pain to end. But later, you recognize that you want to help others going through the same experience.

God will call you. When and how are up to Him.

The Call: The Pattern

There's a pattern to the call of God. It's not a step-by-step formula. You can't put God in a box. At best, the pattern below is an imperfect model to better understand the call of God.

Exodus 3:10 describes the call of Moses. "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." In that verse (and one other) five key elements form a pattern.

The first component is, "**Go.**" God told Moses, "So now, go. I am sending you" Since to go also means to leave, Moses' life was never the same again – and yours won't either.

After "go" comes "**To.**" God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh. A calling involves going to someone or somewhere. Your calling involves a group of people or a geographic place.

The next element is "**Do.**" God has work for Moses to do. He is "... to bring my people the Israelites" God calls you to use your gifts and abilities to take action.

After that comes "**So.**" The assigned work has an outcome aligned with God's plans. The "so" in Moses' call was for the Israelites to come out of Egypt. Your call advances God's plan.

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The final piece is “**Lo**” [I am with you always]. In Exodus 3:12 God promises Moses, “I will be with you.” You don’t undertake your call alone; rather you join God in His work.

The Call: Come

The message of the Bible can be summed up in two words: Come and Go. The first invites you to receive salvation; the second is a summons you to service.

Both the Old and New Testaments focus on God’s invitation to come. Isaiah 55:3 states, “Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.” Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Salvation is offered to everyone through Christ. But the first step is to come to God to receive it through Christ.

Once you accept God’s invitation to come, you are summoned by God to go. Your calling relates to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20): “... Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you ...” (Message).

Isaiah wrote about his call in Isaiah 6: 8. “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!’” In the next verse God gave Isaiah his unique assignment. “Go and tell this people ...” His call was to go and deliver a message on behalf of God.

- Abraham: “... Go to the land I will show you.”
- Moses: “... Go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people ... out of Egypt.”
- Joshua: “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land ...’”
- Gideon: “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand.”
- Jonah: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it ...”
- Paul: “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul”

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The Call: Go

Two words summarize the Bible: **COME** and **GO**. The first is God's invitation to receive salvation; the second is God's summons to service.

Throughout the Old Testament God summons people to "Go":

- Abraham: "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and **go** to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1)
- Moses: "So now, **go**. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10)
- Gideon: "**Go** in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (Judges 6:14).
- Jonah: "**Go** to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me" (Jonah 1:2).

In the New Testament "Go" relates to the Great Commission. "**Go** to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you." (Matthew 28:19-20a CEV).

The Great Commission involves evangelism and discipleship. Your calling may focus on bringing people to Christ. You reach them - either as an evangelist or one supporting the work.

On the other hand, your calling may focus on helping believers become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. You teach them - either as the teacher or one supporting the work.

Which part of the Great Commission relates to your calling?

The Call: To

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The song “Turn Around” was a hit in the early 1960s. It begins, “Where are you going, my little one, little one; Where are you going, my baby, my own?” The lyrics describe the love parents feel as their children grow up and leave home to an uncertain future.

God must share these feelings whenever He summons one of His children to “Go.” Although He already knows the outcome, that doesn’t make it any easier. For God also knows the dangers and difficulties, the setbacks and sacrifices, His child will face.

When God tells you to “Go,” he also tells you the “To.” He tells you to go **somewhere** or to **someone**. He sends you to a place or to a people.

There are many biblical characters God sent somewhere.

- Abraham was instructed to go to the place God would tell him.
- Jonah was told to go to Nineveh.
- Nehemiah was led to go to Jerusalem.
- Timothy was dispatched to Ephesus.

But there also are a number of biblical characters God sent to someone.

- Moses was assigned to go to Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites.
- Esther was chosen to go to her husband, King Xerxes, on behalf of her people, the Jews.
- Peter was to stay in Jerusalem with the Jewish Christians.
- Paul was sent out to reach the Gentiles.

Where or to whom will God send you? Ask Him.

The Call: Do [Spiritual Gifts]

Why are you here on earth? There really are simple answers.

Everyone is here for two reasons: 1) **to come** to *salvation* through Jesus Christ; and 2) **to go** in *service* to others for Jesus Christ. Believers are here for one reason: **to use** everything God has given them to serve others in a unique assignment.

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YOU are here to fulfill the work God created you to do. A major factor in your own unique calling is based on your spiritual gifts. If your primary gift is teaching – teach! If it's helps – help! If it's evangelism – evangelize! Whatever your gift may be, use it whenever and wherever you have opportunity.

A spiritual gift is not **something**; it is **Someone**. THE spiritual gift is the Holy Spirit Himself. The various spiritual gifts are different ways the Holy Spirit makes Himself evident in your ministry. YOUR “spiritual gift” is how the Holy Spirit tends to work through you in ministry.

There's only one way to identify your spiritual gifts. You must get involved in serving. Notice situations in which the Holy Spirit works through You to have a spiritual impact others. **Spiritual impact** is where the Holy Spirit works through you to draw others closer to Christ. Your gift is where the outcome of your ministry cannot be attributed to your own abilities.

Bottom line: You are here to use your spiritual gifts to serve others. Now **go** serve others in His Name.

The Call: Do [Natural Gifts]

God is a doer. In six days He created the world and everything in it. “... On the sixth day God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Like God, you're a doer.

God has work for you to do. He created you with everything you need to complete your work. Nothing about your makeup is haphazard or coincidental.

What's your work? The answer isn't complicated. It's to use your natural abilities and spiritual gifts to serve others. It's that simple. First we'll look at abilities; next time we'll examine gifts.

God hardwired into you certain natural abilities. These abilities come so naturally that you may not even be aware of them. You do certain things so well and so effortlessly that you tend to think everyone can do them. Not so. Ask your friends. They'll tell you what your strengths are.

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Listed below are some categories and related terms to help you identify and use your strengths.

- **Analytical:** Assess, Diagnose, Discover, Investigate, Solve
- **Communication:** Speak, Write, Listen, Explain, Respond
- **Creative:** Artistic, Design, Imagine, Musical, Perform
- **Entrepreneurial:** Compete, Negotiate, Risk, Sell, Start
- **Interpersonal:** Cooperate, Empathize, Encourage, Facilitate, Support
- **Leadership:** Achieve, Envision, Guide, Influence, Inspire
- **Organizational:** Arrange, Calculate, Compile, Manage, Plan
- **Practical:** Assemble, Build, Install, Operate, Repair

Which category is your strongest? Identify, use and develop it.

The Call: So

God calls; you GO. He sends you TO a people or place. He equips you to DO something on His behalf with your natural abilities and spiritual gifts. And then ... SO what?

In this context the phrase “So what?” doesn’t mean “What does it matter?” or “What difference will it make?” In fact, God’s calling matters very much and fulfilling it will make a huge difference.

Here “So what?” means “What will be the spiritual impact?” when you GO, TO, and DO what God has assigned you to do? In other words, what will be the outcome of your ministry on your audience?

- God called Abraham to go to the place He would show him to undertake an unspecified task. He obeyed the call and God set apart his descendants as a people unto Himself.
- God called Moses to go to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of captivity. Moses reluctantly obeyed his calling. God’s people left Egypt for the Promised Land.
- God used Mordecai to challenge his niece Esther to fulfill her calling. Esther accepted her calling and exposed a plot to annihilate the Jews. Consequently, Esther saved God’s people.

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- Luke recognized that his background and skill set qualified him to write a biography of Jesus. Moreover, Luke documented the history of the early Church. His writings still have impact today.

Who is your audience? What outcome do you desire for them?

The Call: LO

We don't use the word "lo" very often anymore. You'll hear it occasionally in phrases like "lo and behold" or "lo these many years." Otherwise, it's a term that only poets use.

The word originated in medieval England sometime before the 12th century. The dictionary defines it as "amazement, surprise or **wonder**."

A young boy told his mom, "I can't wait to get to heaven." The mother replied, "We'll see Grandma and Grandpa again." "And don't forget Lo" the boy added. The mother looked puzzled. "You know - *Lo* - the angel of the Lord!"

The King James Bible uses the word "lo" 159 times. Jesus warned that many false messiahs would claim, "... Lo, here is the Lord" (Matthew 24:23). When the Jews rejected the Gospel, the Apostle Paul announced, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

The most well-known use of the word "lo" is in Matthew 28:20 (KJV). Jesus promised, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

You're never alone in your calling. Jesus is right there with you. In His goodness He allows you to be part of His work. It's a good thing, too. Jesus told us that "apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The only way to complete your assignment is through His Power and His Presence.

"Lo" is a really wonderful word. Perhaps we should use it more often." ***I wonder***.

Types of Callings

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There are two main types of callings. There is a *universal calling* that applies to every person who has ever lived; there also is a *unique calling* that applies to each person individually.

Everyone has the same general calling. God calls us to establish a personal relationship with Him by acknowledging and asking for forgiveness for our sins by personally accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

The entire Bible can be summed up in three words. The first and most important term is: "*Come.*" The Bible's primary message is an invitation from God to you and everyone else to come to Him. It is a call to salvation by accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior. You acknowledge your sinfulness before God and ask that Christ's death on the Cross in payment for all sin apply to you personally.

The second word that sums up the Bible is: "*Follow.*" This is a call to surrender control of your life to Jesus Christ as not only your Savior, but your Lord. Philippians 3:9-10 says, "*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*"

These two verses summarize what it means to follow Christ. When you follow Christ, you *know* Him personally, and not just know facts about Him. Incredibly, the same *power* that raised Christ from the dead is available in your life. Imagine! However, there is a price to pay. Following Christ also means you are willing to experience the same kind of *sufferings* that He did, and even to be willing to go to your *death* for Him. Finally, in a way we don't understand, we experience eternal life, a *resurrection* life, here on earth and continuing on in heaven.

There is one final word that sums up the Bible: "*Go.*" This is a call to *service* to others as Christ's representative on earth. You have a special, unique calling to be a servant just as Jesus was a Servant. He said, "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45). This is a call to impact others spiritually by completing the unique work God gave you reflecting your distinctive design.

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Your calling is to *come* to Him for salvation, *follow* Him through *surrender*, and *go* to *serve* others on His behalf to serve them.