

The Call of God

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1A. Introduction:

- 1b. The lexical meaning of call:
“To call” means to speak to another either immediately or mediately, in order to bring him nearer, either physically or in a personal relationship.

- 2b. The biblical types of calls:
The Bible speaks of four human/divine relationships which are initiated by God’s sovereign call:

--Salvation
--Dedication/Discipleship
--Vocation
--Proclamation

2A. The Call to Salvation:

- 1b. The general call:
 - 1c. In the O.T.:
Isa. 1:18
Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isa. 55:1-3
Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
² Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.
³ Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

 - 2c. In the N.T.:
Mt. 20:16
So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Mt. 11:28-30
Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jn. 7:37-39

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

³⁸ He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

³⁹ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

2b. The efficacious call:

1c. In the O.T.:

1 Sam. 3:4-10

That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

⁵ And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

⁶ And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.

⁸ And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.

⁹ Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

2c. In the N. T.:

Rom. 8:30

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

3A. The Call to Dedication or Discipleship:

1b. The terms of discipleship:

1c. *Akoloutheo* (follow)

2c. *Mathetes* (disciple)

3c. *Mimeomai* (imitate)

2b. The time of discipleship:

A person normally dedicates his life sometime after salvation, although in the case of the Apostle Paul, when he confronted the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road, he immediately responded as a disciple with "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" (Acts 9:6).

3b. The truth of discipleship:

1c. The illustration:

- 1d. The invitation to the banquet: Luke 14:16-24
It costs **nothing** to be a Christian.
- 2d. The invitation to follow Christ: Luke 15:25-33
It costs **everything** to be a disciple.
- 2c. The importance:
 - 1d. For every person:
Rom. 12:1
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
 - 2d. For God's plan:
Mt. 28:19-20
Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

“The essence of discipleship lies in the disciple’s fulfillment of his duty to be a witness to his Lord in his entire life.”

3A. The Call to a Vocation:

- 1b. The scripture:
1 Cor. 7:20-24
Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.
²¹ Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.
²² For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.
²³ Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.
²⁴ Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.
- 2b. The significance:
While it is rarely considered that a person’s standing in life or position in life is a calling, the above passage makes that abundantly clear. Each person is led providentially into his vocation or position in life.
- 3b. The support:
 - 1c. The teaching of the N.T.:

Carl F. H. Henry has summarized the situation correctly:
The workaday world was now interpreted as a divinely appointed sphere where man as a worker is ordained to glorify God, and in His name to serve his fellow man. Upon the humblest carpenter shop Christianity bestowed something of the radiance of Nazareth; through the tired limbs of even the lowliest slave the Gospel sent a surge of glory (Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, 32).

2c. The Protestant position:

Henry aptly describes Luther's view:

The layman has a calling in Christ no less than the minister, and the daily labor of both, performed as a consecrated sacrifice, is equally acceptable as spiritual service. On this basis, Martin Luther is said to have liberated not only the monks in the monasteries but all men to fulfill their divine vocation. The Reformation did not eliminate the priesthood but rather did away with a non-priestly laity; every follower of Jesus Christ was reminded anew of his calling to full-time priestly service. This emphasis did not so much secularize the ministry as it sanctified the laity. The Christian workman becomes a priest among his fellowworkers; he serves both God and neighbor by offering God the labor of his hands as a daily sacrifice (*Ibid.*, 42).

3c. Calvin's position:

It is remarked that the Lord commands every one of us, in all actions of life, to regard His vocation. For He knows with what great inquietude the human mind is inflamed, with what desultory levity it is hurried hither and thither, and how insatiable is its universal confusion being produced by our folly and temerity. He has appointed to all their particular duties in different spheres of life. And that no one might rashly transgress the limits prescribed, He has styled such spheres of life *vocations*, or *callings*. Every individual's line of life, therefore, is, as it were, a post assigned him by the Lord, that he may not wander about in uncertainty all his days. . . He that is in obscurity will lead a private life without discontent, so as not to desert the station in which God has placed him (*Calvin's Institutes*, III, X, 6, emphasis in the original).

4A. The Call to Proclamation:

1b. The definition of the call:

The call is the inner conviction that one has received a divine commission for a full-time ministry of the Word.

2b. The description of the call:

1c. The particulars of the call:

1d. It is a sovereign call: Acts 13:2

2d. It is a specific call:

3d. It is a special call: lifetime

4d. It is a call to a work, not a field or geographic area.

1e. The ministry of shepherding

2e. The ministry of evangelism

3e. The ministry of teaching

- 2c. The promotion of the call:
 - 1d. Human instrumentality through the saints.
 - 2d. Divine imperatives through the scripture.
 - 3d. Vital information through studies.
- 3c. The proofs for the call:
 - 1d. A passion for the work of the ministry:
1 Cor. 9:16
For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!
 - 2d. Possession of the qualities of a minister.
 - 3d. Results in the pursuit of the ministry:
 - 4d. The response of the people of God:
- 3b. The distortions of the call:
 - 1c. The denial of spiritual gifts makes the ministry simply another vocation into which the believer is providentially led.
 - 2c. The dismissal of a prior call:
“Go first into missions and once you are there, not before, the Lord will call you.”
 - 3c. The de-emphasis on a special call:
“Every man is either a missionary or a mission field.” Confuses discipleship (witnessing) of every believer with the work of the ministry (special individuals uniquely called).
- 4d. The disregard for proper terminology:
 - “The Lord called me to FBBC.”
 - “The Lord called me into CBF.”
 - “The Lord called me to Africa.”

The Lord **calls** to a work (e.g. teaching) and then **leads** to specific areas (e.g. the deaf) and geographical localities (e.g. FBBC).