

Calling

Study #1 Definition

1. I Corinthians 7:17 (in context)

- A. How is “Call” defined here?
- B. In what way is “call” like a diamond with different facets?
- C. What are the facets, which make up your call?
- D. Divide these into FIXED (ones that are not easily changed with clear responsibilities from God and Non-FIXED (ones that we could change although it might take some work). A couple of illustrations are given to get you started:

FIXED (unchangeable):

- Walk with God
- Husband

Non-FIXED (not specifically commanded by God):

- Sunday School Teacher
- Employee of _____

2. Philippians 3:4-7

- A. What were the facets of Paul’s pre-conversion life, which impacted his call? (cf. Acts 7:57-8:3, I Cor. 7:8 Paul was perhaps divorced or widowed)
- B. Which of these may have been long-term limitations on his ministry?
- C. What things in you life may limit your ministry?
- D. What did these limitations cause Paul to do? Why? (Ph. 4:8-14)
- E. What things did Paul leave? What things did he retain?

3. As you look over your life, what has God sovereignty allowed to shape your call?

- A. What choices have you made which cannot be changed?
- B. What choices have you made which can be changed?

Have a time of prayer around Ps. 32:8, 9 trying to see where you are in light of God’s plan. Commit yourself to Ph. 3:12-14

Study #2 The Nature of Calling

1. Mark 3:13-15

- A. Who took the initiative in calling the disciples?

- B. Why did He call His disciples?
 - C. What was Jesus calling the disciples to?
 - D. What was the priority in the calling?
2. Does this agree with Paul's experience in Ph. 3:7-10?
- A. In what ways do you think Paul was transformed by his calling?
 - B. How did this happen?
 - C. How did Paul's experience of carrying out his calling lead him closer to Jesus?
3. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 As you evaluate what you have done for the Kingdom to date, how has this affected your life?
- A. How much has it stripped away your own self-reliance?
 - B. How much of it bears the supernatural touch of God?
 - C. How much of it has brought you into contact with the living God? (Isaiah 6:1-13)

Have a good season of prayer as you evaluate your ministry in light of the living God and I Cor. 3:13-15, 4:5

Study #3 Your Kingdom Call

We have seen that calling consists of a number of facets. This week we will focus on one facet: your call in the kingdom.

1. I Corinthians 3:10-15
- A. What is Paul concerned about those he led to the Lord?
 - B. Why was this a concern?
 - C. How does Mt. 6:33 fit into this? (vs. 34 might be crucial as well!)
 - D. How about Ephesians 2:10?
 - E. Does everyone have a call to build the kingdom?
 - F. What have you been doing in building the Kingdom?
2. Romans 1:1, 5, 14, 16
- A. What was Paul's call?
 - B. Where did it come from?
 - C. How thoroughly was he committed to fulfilling his call? (cf. Ph. 3:12)

3. What is your call? You might evaluate this from a couple of perspectives:

A. What is your chief burden? (What has Jesus laid on your heart? What keeps you awake nights? What do you find yourself weeping over? What are you drawn back to over and over in prayer?)

B. Who is your favorite Bible character? Why? What may this have to say about your calling?

C. What do you see as your gifting?

D. Where have you borne fruit?

E. What do others say is your gifting?

It is good to keep in mind going back to Study 1 that calling is dynamic, not static. Obviously, if one's wife dies or divorces him, then that facet of calling changes. Likewise, when children grow up and leave home this changes that facet of calling. Likewise a pastor could be called later to be a church planter and visa versa. Calling may change in the different seasons of life.

Study #4 Confirmation

1. Acts 9:10-19, 26:12-20

A. When did Paul receive his call?

B. How did he receive his call?

C. Do you think this is normative? (cf. Ps. 32:8, 9)?

D. Can you think of any reasons why Paul might have been called in such a spectacular way?

2. Acts 11:23-26; 13:1-4 Paul had received his call to go to the gentiles perhaps 12 years before Acts 13.

A. What did Paul do between his calling in Acts 11 and his confirmation by the church in Antioch in Acts 13?

B. How were other people involved in this?

C. How can this type of process of confirmation protect us from missing or corrupting our call?

D. Look at some of the warning in Proverbs for those who would disregard this counsel.

Although Paul's call was spectacular it was perhaps 12 years before this calling was confirmed and he entered into it. One way to distinguish between calling and confirmation is to think of calling as internal and subjective (personally experienced), but confirmation is external and objective (Others outside of us who can perhaps see more clearly are able to evaluate the call).

3. Acts 16:6-10 Gives us another example of the call of God to Paul confirmed by his team.

A. Where did Paul think his team was called (vs. 6, 7)?

B. Is it possible to be sincerely mistaken in our call?

- C. How did God redirect Paul?
 - D. How was this confirmed (vs. 10)?
4. Who has confirmed your calling? How? Do you have enough confirmation that even amidst severe trials you will stay the course? (2 Timothy 4:1-8) A good rule of thumb is that God will give confirmation to the degree that change must occur in the life.

Study #5 Reorienting Your Life Around Your Calling

When God issues a call, it is a forgone conclusion that carrying out the call will transform your life. We must reorient our life around our calling, not try to fit our calling as into our life with as little change as possible. Our calling (from the Latin *vocation*) needs to be paramount in our life (cf. Philippians 3:12, Ephesians 2:10). Certainly each of the disciple's lives were radically altered by Jesus calling them to himself. But any time God issues a call, the person's life will have to radically be adjusted. Just look at ones like Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or any of those in the list in Hebrews 11. We will take Moses as our example.

1. Exodus 2:15-22 These verses cover about 40 years in Moses' life from age 40 when he left Egypt to age 80 when he had the experience with the burning bush.

- A. What kind of life did Moses have in Median?
- B. Was he content?
- C. What parallels are there with your life?

2. Exodus 2:23-3:12

- A. What motivated God to call Moses?
- B. How did God approach Moses?
- C. What did He command Moses to do?
- D. What was Moses' response?
- E. Why do you suppose he responded in this way?

3. Skim the rest of the call of Moses. Exodus 3:13-31

- A. How did God provide for Moses' needs?
- B. What adjustments were necessary in Moses' life to carry out this call?
- C. Did he face any trials from his family?
- D. What was his response?
- E. What hardships did he have to endure?

4. Make a list of the areas of your life, which will be affected by you ruthlessly pursuing your call? (Hebrews 12:1)

- A. Who else will be affected by your single-minded pursuit of your call?
- B. How can you enlist them to support you in your (their) call?
- C. Work with someone to develop a step-by-step plan to enable you to fulfill your calling (cf. 2 Timothy 2:4; 4:1-7).