



Foundation Stone #2: Calling August 2005

“Characteristics of a Calling into Ministry”

Ministry should only be carried out because one is *called* into ministry. Without a legitimate invitation from God Himself, you will lack the distinguishing factor for sustained effectiveness in ministry – perseverance. *You must know without question you’ve been called. This “knowing” may be the only tangible anchor during the stormy seasons of ministry - and of those, there will be plenty.* Consider some common characteristics of a genuine calling:

*God’s call is **God-initiated**.* You weren’t called by God according to your own merit but rather by the grace and sovereign choice of the One who called you. You can’t call yourself; you *must* be called by God. Even so, many have found the hearing easier than the heeding. Like Jonah, you may have heard God’s call but responded by running *from* it. But God will do whatever necessary to bring you to the place of surrender – however long it takes.

*God’s call is **God-centric**.* The call isn’t about you, but about God and His desire to use you to minister to others. Though the call is personal in nature, it focuses on compassion for the condition of others. It isn’t self-centered but Christ-centered and people-focused. He calls you not to your agenda but to fulfill His greater plan.

*God’s call is **immense**.* You must depend completely on the One who called you, for the calling is always bigger than the one called. Moses felt inadequacy for the task, yet God chose him despite (or perhaps because of) his own weaknesses: “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (Exodus 4:11) *His weakness was designed to provide a greater display of God’s strength.* God invites you to live out your calling by *His* strength and not your own (II Corinthians 12:9).

*God’s call is **mysterious**.* It’s a deep sense of knowing, intangible yet so real it could almost be touched. He says, “I have a plan for you.” Though often inaudible, it’s easily perceptible to the heart in tune to the Father’s whisper.

*God’s call is **unique**.* God uses where you’ve walked to accomplish ministry that’s unique to you. His hand of preparation was on Moses despite growing up under Pharaoh’s shadow; yet, this allowed Moses a unique vantage point to be used by God as a catalyst for the Exodus. Interestingly, there has recently been a significant rise in those entering the ministry later in life with a passion for areas grounded in their unique life experiences. Many are starting para-church ministries (like ShepherdCare) rather than taking a traditional pastoring role.

*God’s call is **life-long**.* Although the geography of your calling may change (and often does with time) and though God may refine your calling based upon your unique experiences, His calling of you was for a lifetime of service to Him in a shepherding capacity. Some ministers try to “shelve” themselves when they encounter challenging circumstances, sensing God must be finished with them. But your call goes beyond any momentary circumstances.

Thoughts to Ponder:

- What evidence do you have God uniquely called you? Has the calling’s immensity ever caused you to doubt it?
- In what ways has your ministry lost its God-centric perspective? If so, what can you do *today* to change that?

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