

The Philosophy of Ministry – Week 2

“Identifying the Call of God”

- Review chapter 2 – Pursuit of God – “The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing”.
- Review Edwards 70 Resolutions; review & turn in 7 personal resolutions.

“Identifying the Call of God”

1. God _____ people into the ministry

- ⇒ Does God expect all believers to serve and minister in the Church?
- ⇒ Is everyone called to the same ministry? Are all called to be full-time?

A. All believers are called and gifted to faithfully serve and minister in the Church (1 Peter 4:10; Matt. 25:14-15, 28:18-20, Rom. 12:3, 6-8, 1 Cor. 4:7, 12:4-11, Eph. 2:8-10, 4:7).

1) The Bible is very clear that _____ believer has been given a gift from God

- **I Peter 4:10** – “As *every* man hath received **the gift**, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
- The word “gift” (Gr. “charisma”) emphasizes that the gift is something that is freely given; it is not earned, or worked for, but rather is something that we merely “_____” by God’s grace (Eph. 4:7).
 - **Ephesians 4:7** — But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

2) The Bible is clear that God has given people different gifts and abilities (I Cor. 12:4-10, 28-30, Romans 12:6-8).

- a. **Romans 12:6-8 — 6**; Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; **7**; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; **8**; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.
- b. **The parable of the talents highlights the fact all receive gifts of God in different proportions.**

1) **Matthew 25:14-15 — 14**; For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants,

and delivered unto them his goods. 15; And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

- 3) It is the Holy Spirit that gives the different gifts (I Cor. 12:4-6, 11).
 - a. **1 Corinthians 12:4-6 — 4;** *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5; And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6; And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*
 - b. **1 Corinthians 12:11 —** *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*
- 4) These gifts are given for the building up of the Church, not the building up of self.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 12:7 —** *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man **to profit withal.***
- 5) The believer is a steward of their gift and will give an account to God for how they use that gift (1 Pet. 4:10).

B. God has called some to the full-time vocational ministry of leadership.

(Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1-5, I Tim. 3:1-7, Acts 6:1-2)

- 1) **Acts 20:28 — 28;** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
- 2) **Jeremiah 3:15 —** *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*
- 3) **Ephesians 4:11-12 —** *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*
- 4) **Qualifications of the Pastor are found in Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7.**

C. The Call of God is a _____ calling.

- 1) _____ was clearly called (Exodus 3)
- 2) Jeremiah was clearly called (Jeremiah 1:4-5)
- 3) _____ was clearly called (1 Samuel 16)
- 4) Isaiah was clearly called (Isaiah 6)
- 5) _____ was clearly called (Acts 9, Galatians 1:15-20)
- 6) The 12 disciples were clearly called (Matthew 4, John 1)
- 7) Paul and Silas were clearly called (1 Corinthians 13)
 - The point is these men didn't have to guess at whether God had called them; they knew it!
 - **W. A. Criswell**, former pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, felt called to preach in childhood. When he was ten years old, he became intrigued with Rev. John Hicks, who stayed in the Criswell home while preaching at a local revival meeting. ***"I told him I had been thinking about being a preacher for years, since I was six,"*** Criswell later recalled. ***"Yet I knew I wasn't even converted yet, hadn't been saved. But I knew God wanted me to be a preacher and had the***

same conviction then I have now. I cannot remember when I was not going to be a preacher.” Criswell received Christ as his Savior, and he was baptized the following Sunday. His sense of God’s calling on his life never wavered. (Adapted from Billy Keith, *W. A. Criswell* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973, 21.)

2. Why is it important to _____ if you are “called”?

A. Ministry is not a job it is a _____. Those who treat it as a job will fail in the ministry. **You can work a job, but you must _____ the ministry.** Ministry isn’t done for 40 hours a week; it is lived 168 hours a week.

- **Warren Wiersbe** - *“The work of the ministry is too demanding and difficult for a man to enter it without a sense of divine calling. Men enter and then leave the ministry usually because they lack a sense of divine urgency. Nothing less than a definite call from God could ever give a man success in the ministry.”* “When Pastors Wonder How” by Howard Sugden and Warren W. Wiersbe. (pg. 9-16) Moody Press.

B. You must know you are called for strength in the ministry

- 1) Ministry is not accomplished by personal fortitude; it is accomplished by divine enabling. Those in ministry do not succeed through talent, they succeed through the Spirit. They are called by God, gifted by God, and empowered by God to bring forth fruit unto God for the glory of God.
- 2) **Dr. Criswell speaks of this confidence:** *“The first and foremost of all the inward strengths of the pastor is the conviction, deep as life itself, that God has called him to the ministry. If this persuasion is unshakable, all other elements of the pastor’s life will fall into beautiful order and place.”* (John MacArthur, Jr. (quoting W.A. Criswell), *Pastoral Ministry*, p. 105.)

C. Irwin Lutzer in his book “Pastor to Pastor” speaks of the importance of being “called” in order to face the hardships of ministry:

- *“I don’t see how anyone could survive in the ministry if he felt it was just his own choice. Some ministers scarcely have two good days back-to-back. **They are sustained by the knowledge that God has placed them where they are.** Ministers without such a conviction often lack courage and carry their resignation letter in their coat pocket. At the slightest hint of difficulty, they’re gone.”*

D. Someone is not called to full-time pastoral ministry who can easily walk away from it.

- 1) **Why? Because the will of _____ is greater than the will of _____.** It is much easier to walk away from our own will than God’s will. When God calls someone to full-time ministry, you will be torn to leave it.
- 2) Who is someone in the Bible who would have walked away from the ministry, but God compelled them. God’s call would not let them go! _____
- 3) Would Jeremiah quit the ministry if he could have?
 - **Jeremiah 20:9** — *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.*

- 4) Would Moses have gone into the ministry if he had “his” way? God rebutted 5 excuses of Moses who seemed to have an endless list of reasons why he “wasn’t” the man for the job (Exodus 3-4).
- 5) Would Jonah have preached to Nineveh if not for God’s whale, or Peter if not for Christ’s rebuke on the shore? These men preached because they were called, and if not called their preaching would have ceased.

3. How Do I know if God has called me? 6 Marks of being called into full time ministry

A. Do you have a deep internal yearning for the ministry?

- 1) **1 Timothy 3:1** — *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*
 - a. The word “desire” (Gr. oregomai) means “to stretch oneself out in order to touch or to grasp something, to yearn after and desire.”
 - b. The word “desireth” (Gr. epithumeo) is a verb that means “to set one’s heart upon, desire, (can be in a negative sense to “lust after or covet”).
 - c. It is an inner longing that expresses itself in an outward desire.
 - d. Note: it is not the “position” that is meant here, but the work that accompanies such an office. The desire is the service of the position, not the fame of it.
- 2) Do you have a deep internal longing for the work of the ministry?
- 3) Can you see yourself not in full time ministry and be ok with that?
- 4) Is the ministry the only thing you could see yourself doing?
- 5) **Oswald Chambers** – *“The Call is the inner motive of having been gripped by God—spoilt for every aim in life save that of disciplining men to Jesus.”*
Oswald Chambers, *Disciples Indeed* (London: Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1955), 10.
- 6) **In his Lectures To My Students, Charles Spurgeon defines the call of ministry by listing several of its attributes:**
 - *“The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. In order to be a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling others what God has done for our own souls.”* (Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 26–32.)

B. Do you have a desire for God’s ministry above anything else

- 1) **John Newton in responding to a young man asking for guidance on determining God’s call said as his first point,**
 - *“A warm and earnest desire to be employed in this service. I apprehend [that] the man who is once moved by the Spirit of God to this work will prefer it, if attainable, to hoards of gold and silver, so that, though at times intimidated by a sense of its importance and difficulty compared with his own great insufficiencies, yet he cannot give up on it.* (Letter 1, March 7, 1765)
- 2) It is important to note that a man does not enter the ministry because he has failed at all other jobs in life, but rather because he cannot do anything else with his life but the ministry. As Warren Wiersbe said, *“If you can stay out of the ministry, then stay out; for it will evidence you were not truly called to begin with.*

3) In her book, *It's My Turn*, Ruth Bell Graham recalls growing up as a missionary kid in China. Among her stories is this one.

- An oil company, about to open a new operation in China, wanted to find a man to manage the new division. They wanted someone young, a university graduate, a proven leader, and someone fluent in the Chinese language. They located a man who perfectly met this qualification. He was a twenty-eight-year-old missionary already living in the city where the company was planning to establish its office. When someone asked how much salary this young man was getting, the committee learned it was very modest. They set out to hire him. **The oil company offered the young missionary over ten times his current salary.** He declined. They raised the offer. He declined again. They offered him even more, but yet again he turned them down. **Finally, the agent asked,** “What will you take?” “It’s not a question of salary,” replied the missionary. “The salary is tremendous. **The trouble is with the job. The job is too little. I feel that God has called me to preach the Gospel of Christ. I would be a fool to quit preaching in order to sell oil.**” “Such were the giants,” recalled Ruth Graham, “among whom we grew up.” Ruth Bell Graham, *It's My Turn* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1982), 20–21.

C. Do you have a burden to preach the Word and evangelize the sinner?

- 1) R. A. Torrey** – *“I would rather win souls than be the greatest king or emperor on earth; I would rather win souls than be the greatest general that ever commanded an army; I would rather win souls than be the greatest poet, or novelist, or literary man who ever walked the earth. My one ambition in life is to win as many as possible.”*
- 2) John Knox** – *“Lord, give me Scotland, or I die.”*
- 3) George Whitefield** – *“Lord, give me souls or take my soul.”* His last sermon, *Examine yourself whether ye be in the faith*, was preached in Exeter, New Hampshire. Exhausted, he said, *My body fails; my spirit expands. How willingly I would live forever to preach Christ, but I die to be with Him. Early the next morning, he was gone, dying in nearby Newburyport, MA at age 55.*
- 4) J. O. Fraser**, missionary to the Lisu people of China – *“Give me Lisu converts, and I can truly say I will be happy even in a pigsty.”*
- 5) Missionary Henry Martyn**, on the shores of India – *“Here let me burn out for God.”*
- 6) Hudson Taylor** – *“I feel as if I could not live if something is not done for China.”*
- 7) General William Booth** – *“I am very tired, but must go on ... A fire is in my bones ... Oh God, what can I say? Souls! Souls! Souls! My heart hungers for souls!”*
- 8) David Brainerd** – *“I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep, I dreamed of these things, and when I awoke, the first thing I thought of was this great work.”*

- 9) **John MacArthur** – “A believer who is not committed to winning the lost for Jesus Christ should reexamine his relationship to the Lord and certainly his divine reason for existence.” —John MacArthur

D. Do you have _____ from other believers in your life (the Church/spiritual leaders)?

- 1) Timothy was confirmed by those in his hometown (Acts 16:1-2)

a. **Acts 16:1-2** — *Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.*

- b. **Those in the Church should see and recognize your gifts and calling.**

▪ **Spurgeon** – “The will of the Lord concerning pastors is made known through the prayerful judgment of His church. It is needful as a proof of your vocation that your preaching should be acceptable to the people of God.” Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 26–32

- 2) **The early Church “ordained” men for the ministry** (Titus 1:5, Acts 6:1-6, 14:23); these men were ordained because they were called.

- **What does it mean to be ordained?**

○ A good definition of ordination is the public confirmation of an inner qualification and giftedness. It is a public testimony of a man’s gifts, his education, and his ministry experience. Even though the man being ordained is no different than other members of the congregation, public ordination provides a visible affirmation that God has called an individual to use his unique abilities and gifts for the whole church.

- 3) **Paul confirmed Timothy in the faith** - 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6

a. **1 Timothy 4:14** — *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*

b. **2 Timothy 1:6** — *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*

c. Are there “Pauls” in your life verbally affirming your call?

d. Seek confirmation from godly men in your life (Proverbs 11:14, 12:15, 13:10, 15:22 all speak of the importance of getting wise counsel.

1) **Proverbs 11:14** — *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

2) **Proverbs 15:22** — *Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*

- 4) Do others recognize your spiritual gifts?

- 5) Have you ever been asked to serve in some capacity so you can exercise those spiritual gifts?

- 6) Have you been asked to teach a class or preach?

- 7) Has anyone ever suggested that you consider the ministry?

- **Wiersbe** – *“This does not mean that we must “confer with flesh and blood,” but it does mean that God’s people will confirm what God has already said to the heart. Sometimes the church will sense God’s call on a man’s life even before the man senses it himself!”* “When Pastors Wonder How” by Howard Sugden and Warren W. Wiersbe. (pg. 9-16) Moody Press.

E. Do you have the _____ of teaching and preaching?

- 1) There is one skill that the pastor must have and that is to be able to proclaim the Word of God. No greater responsibility has been laid upon the man of God then that of “preaching”.
 - a. **1 Timothy 3:2** — *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, **apt to teach**;*
 - b. **“Apt to teach”** is the only qualification that relates to the gift of the pastor, the rest deal with his character and integrity. This gift separates him from that of a deacon. The primary work of a pastor is to preach and teach the Word of God (4:6, 11, 13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15, 24, 4:1-2; Titus 2:1; Acts 20:20).
 - c. Both Acts 20:18 and 1 Peter 5:2 have commands for Church leadership to feed the flock of God. Feeding the flock relates to the function of teaching.
- 2) **Charles Spurgeon** – *“When God means a creature to fly, he gives it wings, and when he intends men to preach he gives them abilities....combined with the earnest desire to become a pastor, there must be aptness to teach and some measure of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor.”*
- 3) **John Newton** – *“Besides this desire, there must, in due season, appear some competent sufficiency, gifts, knowledge, and utterance. Surely, if the Lord sends a man to teach others, he will furnish him with the means.”*
- 4) **Those whom God calls He will also equip**
 - a. **1 Timothy 1:12** — *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, **who hath enabled me**, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;*
 - b. **2 Corinthians 3:5-6** — *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; **Who also hath made us able ministers** of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*
 - c. **Hebrews 12:20-21, Eph. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:10**

F. Do you see _____ when you minister?

- 1) If God has given you a gift, it will produce fruit. It is true that some have ministered with little visible fruit, such as Jeremiah whose 40-year ministry produced no converts; or Adoniram Judson who labored 7 years in Burma before having his first convert. But in both cases, these men were both called and gifted but in a spiritually dark place.
- 2) **Spurgeon** – *“In order further to prove a man’s call, after a little exercise of his gifts, such as I have already spoken of, he must see a measure of conversion-work going on under his efforts.”*
- 3) **Fruitfulness is the product of _____.**

- 4) It is also helpful to observe others' reactions to you. Do people seem to naturally follow you, or do you often have to force your leadership? Are people naturally open with you and share their concerns?

4. Does God call a man permanently to the ministry?

- A. **Luke 9:62** — *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*
- B. When Elisha was called to follow Elijah, he was plowing a field with 12-yoke of oxen. After he was called, what does he do with the oxen and plow?
- **1 Kings 19:19-21 — 19;** *So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. 20;* *And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? 21;* *And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*

5. Can I be mistaken concerning my call? Identify False Reasons for ministry

- A. Going into ministry out of “_____”.
- B. Going into ministry out of “_____”.
- C. Going into ministry to _____ someone.
- D. Going into ministry because you see full time vocational ministry as the _____ way to truly surrender to God.

6. Keys to not missing God's call

A. Be _____ where you are

- 1) **1 Timothy 1:12** — *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;*
- 2) Stay busy, lazy people do not make it in the ministry....for long.
- 3) When God called Moses and David, they were tending sheep, Elisha was plowing a field, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishing or mending their nets, Levi was collecting taxes, even Saul was busy heading to Damascus to persecute Christians.

B. Be a _____ man of God (Eph. 1:4, 1 Peter 1:15-16, Matt. 5:48)

- 1) Would your spouse consider you to be a man of God?
- 2) Would your closest friends consider you to be a man of integrity?
- 3) Would those closest to you consider you to be living a holy life?

C. Be _____ before others (Eph. 4:1-2, 1 Peter 5:5-6, Phil. 2:4-11, Matt. 20:25-28, John 13)

- 1) **Ephesians 4:1-2** — *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*
- 2) Lead from the _____
- 3) Christianity is not a fight for the top, it is a fight for the bottom

- 4) If you cannot be a good follower, you will not be a good leader.
- *The 12 disciples could only lead as good as they could follow. From Joshua, to Elisha, to Timothy, humbly following a Moses, Elijah, or Paul is essential. Pride is the one thing that keeps a man from following.*

D. Be fully _____ to God – Romans 12:1-2, Isaiah 6:1-8

- 1) **Romans 12:1-2** — *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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
- 2) The key to the “perfect will of God” is the life that is presented to God as a “living sacrifice”; you fully give yourself to God.
- 3) Have you ever fully surrendered your will to God and asked Him to lead you into His will, whatever that may be? Is that a scary thing to do? Some fear to surrender to God because they believe that all but secures them a life-long one way tribe to be a missionary in the Congo’s of Africa! But the truth is, the dangerous life is not the one lived “in” the perfect will of God, it is living “outside” the will of God. The safest place we can ever be is right where God wants us to be! ***The fearful thing is not to fully surrender to God, the fearful thing is to not fully surrender to God.***

Week 3 Assignments:

- Read “Why God used D.L. Moody” by R.A. Torrey.
- Write a 1-page paper on what God taught you from Moody’s life about being fully surrendered.
- Write a ½ page response to this lesson – “What you believe God has called you to and why.”
- Extra Credit – Memorize Romans 12:1-2