



WHAT IS CALLING?



“Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.” – Os Guinness



In his book, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, Os Guinness presents four key elements of Biblical calling, a distinction between primary and secondary calling, and a reminder of the corporate calling of Christ's Church.

BIBLICAL CALLING:

1. The Hebrew word translated to “call” in the Old Testament usually has the same simple meaning as the everyday use of the English word “call.” There is a simplicity and relational context included in a Biblical sense of call.
2. In the Old Testament, “to call” can also mean “to name.” In this case, “to name” means more than simply categorizing but “to call into being or make.” This form of “name-calling... is the fusion of being and becoming.”
3. In the New Testament, “call” is used as a synonym for salvation, as in God calling people to himself in Christ.
4. In the New Testament and in the life of the early church, “calling” is also used as a metaphor for the ongoing life of faith.

PRIMARY CALLING AND SECONDARY CALLING:

"Our **primary calling** as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost, we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia)."

"Our **secondary calling**, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of **secondary calling** that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history."

"But these and other things are always the **secondary**, never the **primary calling**. They are 'callings' rather than the 'calling.' They are our personal answer to God's address, our response to God's summons. **Secondary callings** matter, but only because the **primary calling** matters most." – Os Guinness

CORPORATE CALLING:

"... the call of Jesus is personal but not purely individual; Jesus summons his followers not only to an individual calling but also to a corporate calling." – Os Guinness

SUMMARIZING CALLING

Commitment to the corporate calling of the church can look like:

- Resisting the temptation of hyper-individualism
- Honoring the purpose of the Church in our personal callings



DISCERNING GIFTING AND CALLING

Every member of the body of Christ has the same primary calling. But God gives us different gifts (Romans 12:4-8) and invites us into a diversity of second callings. We can think of second callings as personal response to the primary calling of Christ. Then, our God-given gifts, our passions, our experiences, our contexts, become elements that shape our second callings. The local church offers a Christ-centered, Spirit-led community. Within this community, we can discern what God is doing in our lives—his gifts, callings, invitations to us.

Here are some practices that can help us grow as church communities that discern gifting and calling together.

- Keep first things first: gifting and callings flow from primary calling. Our highest calling is to the person of Christ.
- The 4 Es: Engage! Spend time with people. Get to know one another's passions, gifts, life stories, and how God is working in one another's lives.
- Create space for ministry exploration. The opportunity to explore different areas of ministry can help a person discover gifts and callings they didn't know they had.
- Mentoring! A caring mentor is an invaluable partner in the journey of discernment.
- Team-based Ministry! Working in teams creates space for a diversity of gifts and callings to participate together in the ministry of Jesus.
- Let go of "scarcity mindset" or "need-based" invitations into ministry participation and leadership. Invite one another into areas of ministry participation that are good fits based on discernment of gifting and calling.
- Give ourselves and one another room for second callings to be seasonal.
- God has given us to one another, the path of discernment is not meant to be walked alone. Confirm gifting and calling in church community.



NEXT STEPS

In light of the truth that we are called into relationship with God, how should this influence our secondary callings to participate in ministry with Christ? As a fellowship, begin a few of the above practices to discern how the Spirit is working in and through your church community.