

Devotion

We are not called by God to do extraordinary things but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love

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'Have you heard God's call?' 'Are you following His calling for your life?' 'Do you want to discover your calling?' 'What has God called you to do?'

These are just some of the questions you can expect to be asked by fellow believers. But what does it mean to be called by God?

When MAF interviews potential recruits, the applicants are asked why they want to work for us. Many speak of feeling called by God.

This is shared as a positive indicator of suitability and almost a qualification based on the much-quoted phrase, 'God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.'

Unfortunately, it is possible to become so preoccupied with discovering God's call on our lives that we make it harder to hear His voice. We begin to question.

'What does He want me to do?' 'What if I missed the call?' 'How will I know if it is God calling, rather than my own selfish desires dressed up as a call of God?'

Getting ourselves tied up in spiritual knots only leads to confusion and anxiety. However, as we rest and trust in God, we gain perspective — both in terms of God's expectations and His grace.

Does feeling 'called' mean that we have God's stamp of approval? Would the result be failure and humiliation if we move forward without being convinced that we are called into something? What if we have never felt called? Does this mean that we are in some way inferior to others who appear so sure of God speaking direction into their lives?

There is a history of people responding to God calling, both in the Bible and throughout the life of the Church. Some have been called to follow a certain lifestyle (Jesus' disciples, Paul), others to go to a particular place (Abraham), and a number to serve in a specific way (Joseph, David, Nehemiah).

We know that God calls people. But is God's call for a select few, to provide an example for others? Is it only for an elite who can handle the weight of such divine direction? Or are we *all* called?

It has been suggested that there are two categories of calling — a 'primary call' and 'secondary callings'.

The primary call is to *someone* (God) rather than to something or somewhere. Biblical references to being called all refer to God's people being called to sanctification — to becoming like Christ. They include **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**, **2 Timothy 1:9** and **Romans 8:28-30**.

This call is clearly for all Christians. In **Luke 5.32 (KJV)**, Jesus says: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' We have *all* fallen short of the glory of God.

His primary call is for us to follow Him — to *be* rather than to *do*. It concerns attitude rather than action, and character rather than career.

Once we've responded to God's call, the *natural* response to the love and grace we have received is to share it with others. This forms a secondary 'call' or 'callings'.

I would suggest that these promptings by God's Spirit are what we mean when we describe feeling 'called' to something, someone or somewhere. It is the outworking of a life lived in the Spirit of Jesus, *for* Jesus.

The challenge comes in holding 'the call' and 'callings' together while ensuring they are kept in the right order. Our primary call is to obey the Word and will of God, and love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, mind and strength' (**John 14:23, Mark 12:30**).

Our secondary call or 'callings' is to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to make disciples of all nations (**Mark 12:31, Matthew 28:19**).

Some receive specific, clear, secondary callings. Others do not. It doesn't matter! Neither is better than the other. All of us, wherever God has placed us, are able to respond to the dual calls of God.

This may involve serving overseas, giving financially or praying for an individual or organisation. It may be to live your life for Jesus right where you are among family and friends; in your street, in your job, in your hobbies.

Our God loves us and rejoices in us. He has created us to have the interests, abilities and desires that make us who we are. If we are 'seeking first His Kingdom' in all we do, we *will* fulfil His calling on our lives, whether it's a specific one or not.

Here are some discussion points you can include in your presentation/small group setting:

- If God's primary call is to 'be' rather than 'do', how does that challenge your walk with Him?
- Have you ever experienced a specific 'calling' to something, someone or somewhere? How did God reveal that to you? How did you respond?
- If you have never felt a specific calling, how does that make you feel? Does that change how God sees you or His plans for your life?
- God has created us to have the interests, abilities and desires that make us who we are. What interests, abilities and desires has He given you? How can you use these to live out the call to love God and love your neighbour?