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Mission and Ministry Consultant

WHAT IS A CALLING?

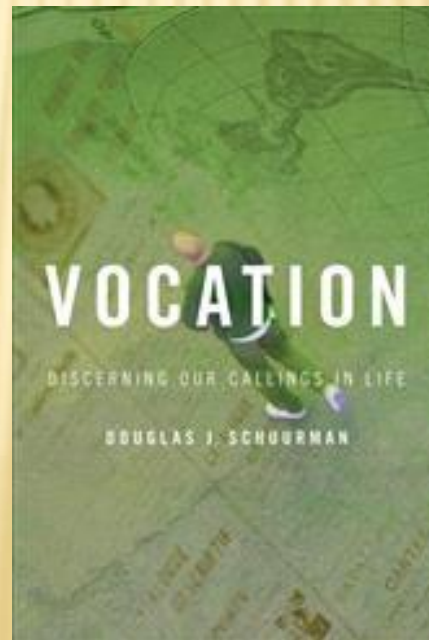
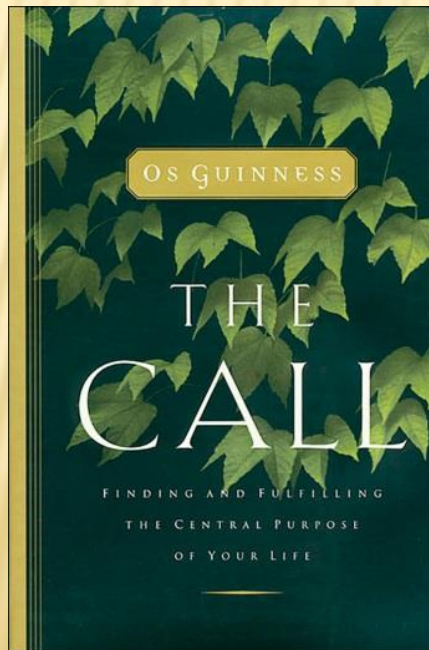
AIMS OF THIS SESSION

- ✘ To consider the nature of call in the Bible (and Christian history).
- ✘ To enable students to reflect on their own experience of call.
- ✘ To better equip students to work creatively in the area of a vocational calling with children.



RESOURCES

- ✘ Guinness, O., *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Thomas Nelson, 2003)
- ✘ Schuurman, D., *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004)



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CALLED?

Some examples of use:

- ✘ • To name someone or something (e.g. Matthew 1:21 Joseph told to call his son Jesus)
- ✘ • To invite someone to a meal or celebration (e.g. Matthew 22:3)
- ✘ • To summons a person (e.g. Romans 1:1; Matthew 20:8; Acts 4:18)



THE CALL: OPENING REFLECTIONS

- ✘ **The Call – Bible Giants and Saints?**
For others, and not for mere mortals!
- ✘ **The Call – Uncertainty?** The common experience of many Christians is to be uncertain **whether** God calls, **how** God calls and **why** God calls.
- ✘ **The Call – Out of fashion?** Even people in the church now speak of their “religious preferences” and “spiritual lifestyles” instead of their **God purposes, ordained duties, responsibilities, and privileges.**



THE CALL: PAUSE FOR DISCUSSION

Q: What experience do you have of being called (or not)?

What do you discover about:

- ✘ The nature of a Call
- ✘ The Caller
- ✘ The person who is Called?



CALLING IN THE BIBLE: INDIVIDUALS

- ✘ Abram (Genesis 17:1-7)
- ✘ Moses (Exodus 3:1-10)
- ✘ Gideon (Judges 6:11-40)
- ✘ Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-10)
- ✘ David (1 Samuel 16:1-13)
- ✘ Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-4)
- ✘ Esther (Esther 4:14)
- ✘ Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8)
- ✘ Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-10)
- ✘ Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1-3:15)
- ✘ Jonah (Jonah 1:1-2)
- ✘ Mary (Luke 1:26-38)
- ✘ Simon, Andrew, James & John (Matthew 4:18-22)
- ✘ Matthew (Matthew 9:9)
- ✘ Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ✘ Rich Ruler (Luke 18:22)
- ✘ Disciples (Matthew 16:24)
- ✘ Saul (Acts 9:1-18)



CALLING IN THE BIBLE: METHOD

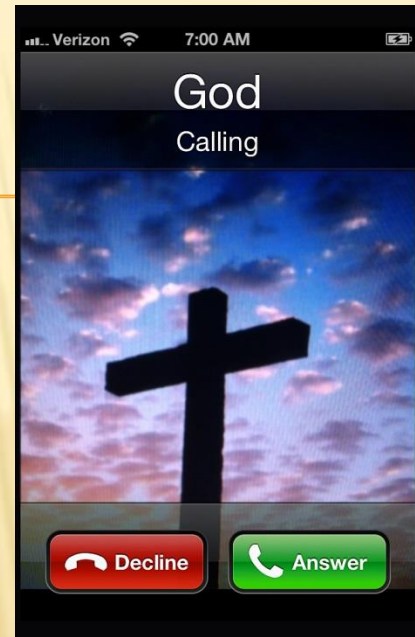
- ✘ Burning bush (Exodus 3)
- ✘ Angelic visit (Judges 6)
- ✘ Use of name (Genesis 17:5, Exodus 3:4)
- ✘ Inner voice (1 Samuel 3, Jonah 1:1-2)
- ✘ Audible voice (Ezekiel 2, Acts 9:7)
- ✘ Need (Nehemiah 1)
- ✘ Circumstance (Esther 4)
- ✘ Vision (Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1)
- ✘ Inner compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16)



For a call,
there is
always a
caller.

GOD & US

- ✘ Calls us by name and knows us
(Isaiah 43:1, 1 Corinthians 13:12)
- ✘ Creates us as 'living images' of himself
(Genesis 1:27)
- ✘ Gives each of us specific skills and abilities (Exodus 35:3-35, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28)
- ✘ Helps us to leave behind the things that distract us and separate us from him (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- ✘ Sends us out to live lives that reflect the love of God to others (Matthew 5:14-16)



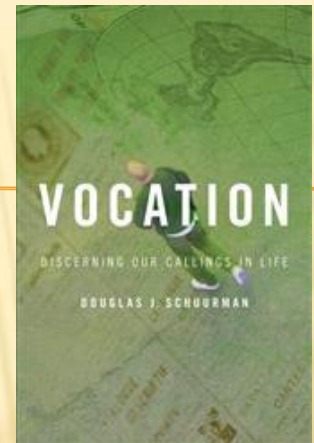
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CALLINGS (1)

- ✘ **Primary calling** for the individual is to know God (1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, Philippians 3:14)
- ✘ Hebrew '**qahal**' refers to people God has called together for service. (Genesis 48:4, Numbers 14:5, Deuteronomy 31:30, Psalm 22:22)
- ✘ The Septuagint (LXX) translates this term into the Greek '**ekklesia**', which in the New Testament means 'church'. **Ek** (from, out of) and **klesia**, (klesis, calling) together define the church as the assembly of "called out ones".
- ✘ Primary calling of the church expressed by **ekklesia**.



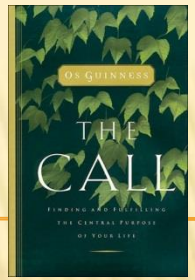
SCHUURMAN

Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life
(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004)



- ✘ Argues that ‘calling’ is the primary biblical category for understanding God’s purpose for Christians.
- ✘ Describes vocation as fundamental to the Christian purpose.
- ✘ *“to worship God, and to participate in God’s creative and redemptive purposes for the world, to enjoy, hope for, pray for, and work toward God’s shalom” (p18)*
- ✘ God initiates the call in two forms: a “**general call**” to live as a Christian and a “**particular calling**” to specific responsibilities both in the church and in secular settings.

OS GUINNESS



The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life (Thomas Nelson, 2003)

- ✘ Primary calling: to a relationship with God through Christ Jesus
- ✘ *“Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him and for him”*
- ✘ *“...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 and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.”*
- ✘ *“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)”*

CALLING IN THE BIBLE: GOD'S IMAGE

- ✘ Called to love
- ✘ Called to creativity
- ✘ Called to service
- ✘ Called to rest
- ✘ Called to reflect
- ✘ Called to rejoice



PAUSE FOR THINKING AND WRITING



BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: ROMANS 1: 1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, **called to be an apostle** and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

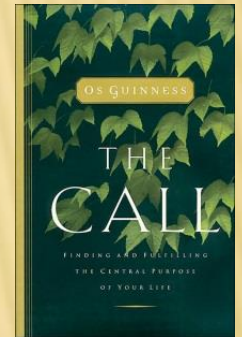
Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship **to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.**

And you also are among those who are **called to belong to Jesus Christ.**

To all in Rome who are loved by God and **called to be saints:**
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

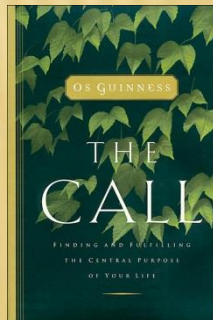
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CALLINGS (2)

- ✘ **Secondary calling** is about our personal vocation, our sense of purpose, sometimes (but not always) our career.
- ✘ Romans 1:1 ‘called to be an apostle’
- ✘ Ephesians 4:11 ‘some to be prophets...’
- ✘ *“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”*
- ✘ *“This vital distinction between primary and secondary callings carries with it two challenges—first, to keep both in view, while, second, ensuring that they are kept in the right order. The Church’s failure to meet these challenges has led to two serious distortions of the truth of calling”.*



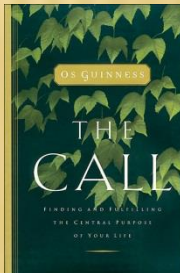
OS GUINNESS: SERIOUS DISTORTION 1

- ✘ **‘Catholic’ distortion of calling:** a form of dualism that elevates the spiritual at the expense of the secular. This distinction pits contemplation against action, the sacred against the secular, the “perfect” against the “permitted,” the “higher” against the “lower.”
- ✘ Eusebius: The “perfect” life is spiritual, dedicated to contemplation and reserved for priests and nuns.
- ✘ The “permitted” life is secular, dedicated to action and open to those engaged in soldiering, governing, farming, trading, raising families, and other such tasks.
- ✘ This “two-tier” view of calling perverts biblical teaching by narrowing the sphere of calling and excluding most Christians from its scope.



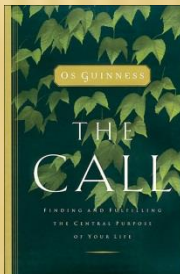
OS GUINNESS: SERIOUS DISTORTION 1

- ✘ Eusebius, Augustine, Aquinas – followed the distortion and allowed for a spiritual hierarchy
- ✘ Luther and Calvin did not agree and saw the need for everyone, everywhere, in everything to be included in an understanding of God’s calling. (p33 Guinness)
- ✘ But today...? “Full time Christian worker” – hierarchy?
- ✘ Guinness: *“If all that a believer does grows out of faith and is done for the glory of God, then all dualistic distinctions are demolished. There is no higher/lower, sacred/secular, perfect/permitted, contemplative/active, or first class/second class. ... Calling means that everyone, everywhere and in everything fulfils his or her (secondary) callings in response to God’s (primary) calling.”*



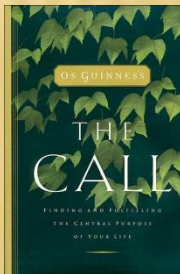
OS GUINNESS: SERIOUS DISTORTION 2

- ✘ ‘Protestant’ distortion of calling:
- ✘ *“Whereas the Catholic distortion is a spiritual form of dualism, elevating the spiritual at the expense of the secular, the Protestant distortion is a secular form of dualism, elevating the secular at the expense of the spiritual”*
- ✘ NB: ‘Protestant work ethic’
- ✘ *“The man who builds a factory, builds a temple. The man who works there, worships there”* (President Coolidge)



OS GUINNESS: SERIOUS DISTORTION 2

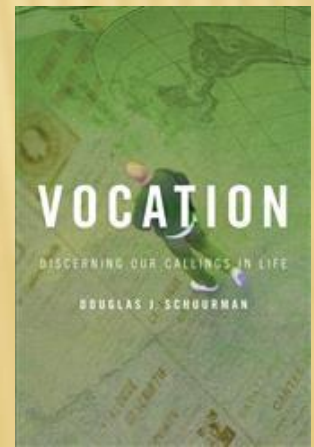
- ✘ Work became calling – and the need for a Caller became lessened.
- ✘ CS Lewis – those who talk of calling without a caller are as silly as *‘the woman in the first world war who said that if there were a bread shortage it would not bother her house because they always ate toast’* (Mere Christianity)
- ✘ If there is no Caller, there are no callings – only work.



SCHUURMAN: MISCONCEPTIONS

- ✘ ‘That God has a rigid, highly detailed blueprint for each life. Within this blueprint God calls individuals to a single, specific place of work and to no other’. (See Acts 15:28).
- ✘ ‘That God’s call comes as a miraculous and unmistakable word of direction.’
- ✘ ‘That only clergy and members of religious orders have callings. Those who believe this also assume that pastors have an extraordinary sense of God’s presence’
- ✘ ‘That God’s callings follow a predictable direction away from one’s current social locations’.

(pages 127-129)

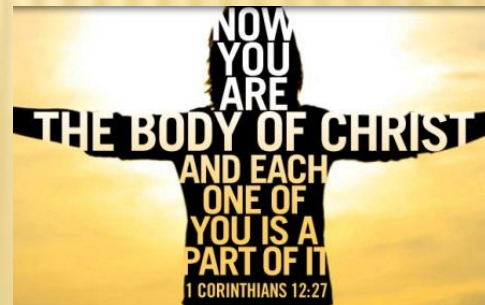


PAUSE FOR THINKING AND WRITING



CALLING: IMPLICATIONS

- ✘ We are made in God's image, therefore we must not spoil that image through **doing** gaining priority over **being**.
- ✘ Our primary calling to love God and know him through Christ, *must be* our Primary calling.
- ✘ This generally involves being as much (at least) as doing.
- ✘ We are called to do 'all things through Christ' (Php 4:13), yet that means doing what we are called to do in his strength, not trying to do *everything*.
- ✘ Omnicompetence is not honouring to God, or fruitful to the Church. And impossible!



CALLING: PAUSE FOR DISCUSSION

- ✘ What does this mean for you personally?
- ✘ What does this mean for how you view your personal work and service?
- ✘ What could it mean in terms of ministry among children?



COVENANTS & PROMISES

Herre, jeg er ikke mere min egen, men din.

Sæt mig til hvad du vil,
stil mig blandt hvem du vil;
sæt mig, hvor der handles; sæt mig hvor der lides.

Lad mig blive brugt for dig eller sat til side for dig,
lad mig være ophøjet for dig
eller fornedret for dig,
fyld mig, eller lad mig opleve tomhed,
lad mig eje alt, lad mig være fattig.

Frit og med glæde opgiver jeg alt,
så du kan gøre med det,
som du behager.
Og nu, herlige og velsignede Gud; Fader, Søn og Helligånd,
er du min og jeg er din.

Må det altid være således.
Amen.

COVENANTS & PROMISES

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

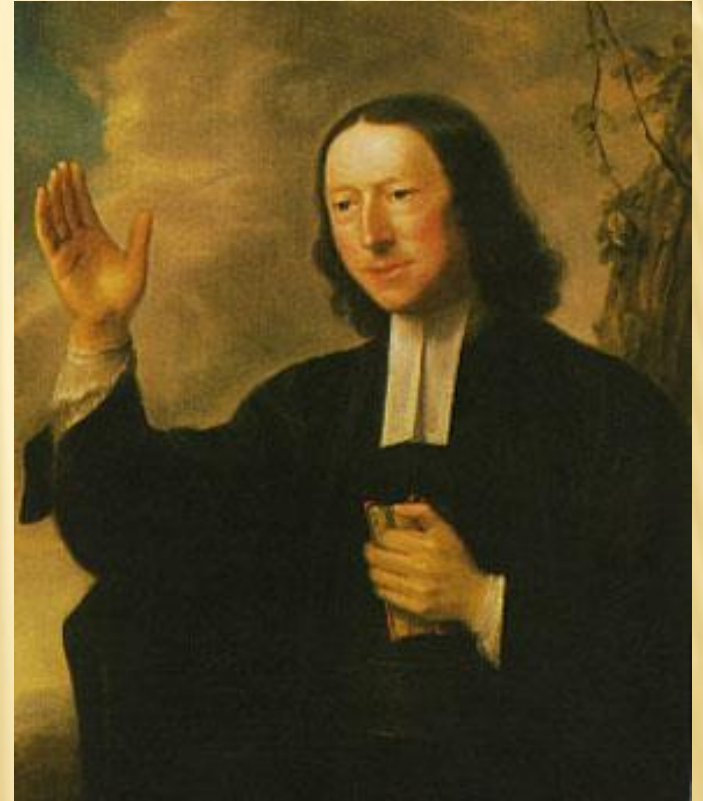
And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

From the Methodist Covenant Service

CALLING IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

John Wesley

Went ‘very reluctantly’ to a meeting in London, heard a reading, felt his heart to be ‘strangely warmed’.



CALLING IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

William Wilberforce

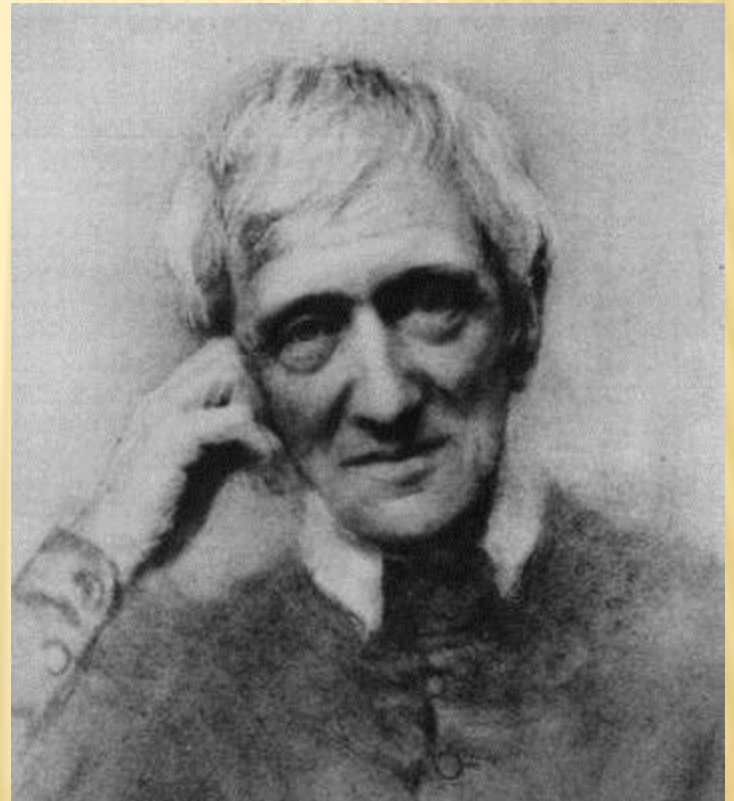
“My walk is a public one. My business is in the world; and I must mix in the assemblies of men, or quit the post which Providence seems to have assigned me”



CALLING IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

“God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I may never be told it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for nothing.”

Cardinal John Henry Newman



CALLING IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Mother Theresa



I was very young, no more than twelve years old, when, in the heart of my family, I first experienced the desire to belong completely to God. I thought and prayed about it for six years.

It was at the feet of our Lady of Letnice (in Skopje) where I first heard the divine call, convincing me to serve God and to devote myself to His service. I remember the afternoon of her feast of the Assumption. I was praying with a lighted candle in my hands and singing in my heart, full of joy inside, when I took the decision to wholly devote myself to God through religious life.

On September 10, 1946, while I was going by train to Darjeeling for my spiritual retreat, I experienced a call to renounce everything and to follow Christ into the slums, to serve the poorest of the poor. In a quiet, intimate prayer with our Lord, I heard distinctly, a call within a call. The message was quite clear: I was to leave the convent and help the poor whilst living among them. It was an order.