

Introduction: The Call to the Ministry

by Chuck Smith

The call to the ministry requires a sense of calling, commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and a commitment to the Word of God, all while maintaining the right attitude of service.

Scripture: Jeremiah 20:9, Mark 10:42-44, John 13:12-14, 1 Corinthians 9:16, Colossians 3:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 5:4, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Peter 4:12

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Commitment in Ministry"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the significance of a divine calling in ministry, asserting that true ministry is not a profession but a calling from God. He shares personal experiences of challenges faced in his own ministry journey, highlighting the necessity of commitment to both God and His Word. Smith encourages ministers to serve others selflessly, reflecting on Jesus' example of humility and service. He warns against seeking human approval and stresses the importance of maintaining a heart of service, doing all things as unto the Lord. Ultimately, he calls for a deep commitment to the Scriptures, as they are the foundation of effective ministry.

Transcript

"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God..."

Hebrews 5:4

Before we look at what we call the "Calvary Chapel Distinctives", let's first consider the vital subject of our calling and commitment to the ministry.

If there is one characteristic that is absolutely essential for effective ministry, it's that we must first have a sense of calling - the conviction in our hearts that God has chosen and called us to serve Him. The Bible tells us to make our calling and election sure. Are you convinced that God has called you into the ministry? This is very important because ministry is not a profession that we might choose. It's a calling of God. How do we know we are called? The ministry to the called is not an option, it's a necessity. As Paul expressed it, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Jeremiah decided that he wasn't going to speak anymore because it got him into so much trouble. He was thrown in jail and had his life threatened. So he decided, "Hey, I'm through. I'm out of here, man." And he 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." (Jeremiah 20:9). It takes that kind of calling

because the ministry is not all glamour. There are extremely difficult times. As Peter wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:" (I Peter 4:12). We need to understand that even if God has called you to the ministry, that calling is going to be subject to extreme testing. How certain are you that you have been called by God to serve Him?

When I first felt called to the ministry, I went to school to prepare. I had difficulty in school only because I felt I needed to get out and start the ministry. I thought, "There's the world out there dying without Jesus Christ, and here I am sitting in a classroom going through the textbook." I was sure that the world was waiting for me. So when I graduated from school and got my first assignment, you can imagine my shock when I discovered the world wasn't waiting for me. Then the testing came. It was difficult financially and it was difficult spiritually. I didn't see the fruit that I had anticipated I would see in the ministry - the immediate kinds of results and excitement.

And there were tremendous financial pressures which necessitated my taking a secular job in order to support the family and stay in the ministry. I found that I wasn't supported by the ministry. So for the first seventeen years I worked outside the church in order to support myself. Now, that was really hard because I was convinced I was called. There were times when I even questioned the call. And there were times when I asked God to change the calling. I said, "God, call me to be a businessman! I seem to do well and find ease in the business world. I find it easy to make money. And, Lord, I can be a good Christian businessman. I could support the church and support someone in the ministry." But God would not allow me to escape His call, even though there were times I endeavored to do so. The vision of serving the Lord kept burning in my heart. So it takes a sense of calling. It is so important that we each need to ask ourselves a simple question, "Has God really called me into the ministry?"

Hand in hand with a sense of calling comes the necessity of commitment. There are few more vital qualities a pastor can have than commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I am what I am not by my own ambitions, not by my own desires, not by my own will. I am what I am by His will. I've committed my life to Him. And if I am committed to the Lord, I will also be committed to His Word and His ministry, to serve others.

To have the right attitude in our service we need to remember the words of Jesus. He said, "...the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." (Mark 10:42-44). It is essential to recognize that the ministry is not a place of being served, of people waiting on you, honoring you, and respecting you because you're the minister. It's actually a place of serving people, even if that means going out of your way to do it.

Recently I attended a pastor's conference and was amazed at what slob the pastors were. They would take their coffee cups and cokes into the room where we had our meetings. Now, I had no problem with that, but when we were dismissed, they just left their coke cans and coffee cups on the floor. So I found myself going around picking up the coffee cups and coke cans, and cleaning the auditorium. I know what happens when someone comes and kicks over a coffee cup on the carpet. I didn't want to leave a bad witness of our Calvary Chapel ministers at that camp facility. So many people see the ministry as an opportunity to be served rather than to serve others. To think, "Well, someone should pick up after me because I am the minister," is not only a contradiction in terms, it's also an unbiblical attitude.

There was a time when I used to leave clothes around the house. Finally my wife said, "Look, I didn't agree to be your slave! Hang them up yourself! Why should I have to hang up your clothes?" Well, I thought about it, and she was right. I shouldn't expect her to hang up my clothes. That was an important lesson for me. I haven't been called to reign. I have been called to serve.

The night that Jesus was having the final supper with His disciples before His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion, He took a towel and girded Himself with it. Then He went around and washed the disciple's feet. After He asked them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." (John 13:12-14). As Peter said, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:" (I Peter 2:21). The word "ministry" actually means service. We have been called to be servants. We are to be servants, first of our Lord, but also of His children.

It's my personal opinion that people who smoke have one of the dirtiest habits in the world. They always smell and they leave a smell wherever they go. It's so easy to detect someone who smokes. All you have to do is walk by and you can smell it on their clothes. You go into a house where people smoke, you go over and take a whiff of the drapery and it will knock you out. It's just a dirty habit. But worse than that, they throw their cigarette butts down anywhere. Then they usually take their foot and wipe it across the cigarette butt to put out the glow, leaving a mess on the sidewalk. When people come to church, many times they will come up smoking and, as they get ready to go into the church, they just throw down the cigarette, and take their foot across it. Who is supposed to pick up the cigarette butt?

As I was growing up, I was taught by my mother never to touch a cigarette butt or a cigarette. I was so averse to cigarettes that even to the present day I can't touch one without somehow feeling defiled. Every time I reach down to pick up a cigarette butt, the minute I touch it, there's something from my early childhood that just revolts. I hate it! As I walk around the church grounds and see cigarette butts, I don't like how they look on the ground, so I pick them up. But, I found that as I was picking them up I was complaining against whoever put the thing down there. I would think, "Dirty, stinking inconsiderate, careless, thoughtless people."

Then the Lord spoke to my heart. He simply said, "Who are you serving?" I said, "I am serving You, Lord." And He replied, "Then quit your griping." So don't serve with a bitter heart. Don't serve with resentment. If I'm picking up cigarette butts and thinking of dirty people, then I resent it doing it. But, if I think, "Well, Lord, I'll keep Your grounds clean," then I find that I can pick them up and dispose of them without having that inner disgust because I'm doing it for Jesus - not for anyone else's approval, but just for You, Lord. As the Scriptures tell us: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Colossians 3:17).

There's no more important attitude to have in the ministry. We need to serve as unto the Lord because we're going to find people obnoxious. We're going to find them unthankful. We're going to find that they're demanding, and that many times they're quite miserable to be around. So, if you think, "I've got to serve them," it will get to you. But, if you think, "I'm serving the Lord," then you'll be able to handle it. Whatever our service, we must do it as unto the Lord, knowing that from the Lord, you will receive your reward.

Don't look for the applause of men. Don't look for people to say, "Oh, thank you. Oh, you mean so much to me." For so often it won't come. I've done and done and done for people, and then have had them kick me

in the teeth because I wouldn't do more. You need to keep the mental attitude of doing everything as unto the Lord, knowing that of the Lord, you will receive your reward. You've got to keep that in mind. I'm a servant of Jesus Christ. He's my Master. He's the One who will reward me for my service. I need to keep that perspective and keep the right attitude in my heart as I'm serving people. I am doing it for Him.

We must not only maintain a commitment to Jesus and to serving His people, but there must also be a commitment to the Word of God. I believe that anyone who doesn't believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God has no business being in the ministry. Sadly, that would probably eliminate 50% of the ministers in the United States today. Why teach from a book that you don't believe? And if you do believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that it's your duty to preach it, then, by all means, know it. Be committed to it. As Paul said to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15). You can be taught how to study the Bible, but the learning process is never ending. To the present day, I continue to commit myself to the Word of God and to studying the Word of God so as to show myself approved unto God.

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