

# What is Your Calling

by David Guzik

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and responding to God's call in our lives. It highlights that God's calling goes beyond formal ministry and can manifest in various spheres of life. The speaker shares insights from the life of Paul, showcasing how God's grace, timing, and cooperation with others play a role in fulfilling one's calling. The ultimate goal is to bring glory to God through obediently following the unique path He has set for each individual.*

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**Scripture:** Jeremiah 1:5, Ephesians 2:10, Romans 12:6, Proverbs 3:5, 1 Corinthians 7:17, Galatians 1:15, Philippians 3:14, 1 Peter 2:9, Matthew 4:19, Acts 13:2

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## Description

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## Transcript

Getting a misconception from our emphasis on the Bible and the importance of the Bible from this. And maybe the misconception they might get is the idea that that's the only thing that's important in the Christian life. That Bible study is the beginning and end of what we do as Christians.

And if you're good at Bible study, you don't have to be good at anything else in the Christian life. Listen, that's not true at all. And let me tell you how I know that Bible study is not all there is to the Christian life.

Because the Bible tells me there's more to the Christian life than Bible study. It's actually understanding the Bible and its message that tells me prayer is important, worship is important, serving God, his people, and a needing world is important. That living out the Christian life in whatever sphere that he gives me, all of that is important.

So we never wanna either tell ourselves or give the impression to other people that the only thing that's important in the Christian life is Bible study, but proper study of the Bible will lead us into everything that's important in the Christian life. It's revealed to us in and through his word. And one of the most important

things and kind of the theme that we have here at the end is this whole idea of how we can impact our world, how we can make a difference in the world through understanding what the Bible says about that.

And what I bring it back to is a simple idea and what I'm gonna focus on in our time together in my last teaching session with you is the whole idea of calling. Now, I don't want anybody to raise a hand because I don't wanna make anybody feel self-conscious if you were to raise your hand or not raise your hand. But I just want you to consider for yourself, do you have a sense of calling and purpose in your life? Do you have an adequate sense of calling and purpose in your life? Or do you feel like, all right, I have zero sense of calling and purpose.

I have a little sense of calling and purpose and I wish I had more. Or do you feel like, hey, I'm good. I got a sense of calling and purpose and I'm pressing ahead with it.

If you guys are typical of people of your demographic or whatever you wanna say, then many of you are kind of aching for a greater sense of calling and purpose in life. It's not that you feel that there's not one out there for you. You just don't know what it is.

I think the Bible gives us real guidelines on how to uncover, to understand, to embrace whatever calling and purpose God has put on our life. Because I tell you, you are going to impact the world by understanding your calling and purpose in life. It's a very simple proposition.

God has created you for a purpose and for a reason in this world. For you to understand the purpose and reason and to pursue it the best that you can, that's the sweet spot of your life. Again, we're not trying to say, oh, everything's gonna be wonderful and easy and beautiful in your life.

But at the core of it all, it's gonna mean that you fulfill the purpose that God has given you on this earth. And to me, in so many ways and so many purposes, it comes back again and again to that simple idea of calling. Now, calling is a big and significant subject in the Bible.

You can think of the many different Bible characters who had an experience of calling. Here's the ones that come to my mind immediately. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Deborah, Elizabeth, Mary, Matthew, Paul.

All these, in some way or another, had some kind of definite experience of calling where in some way, somehow, God revealed to them not just a job to do, but something that would fulfill their purpose on this earth. I believe that in some way or another, God has that for you. We are not just thrown into this world.

You were sent into this world. There's a philosopher, Martin Heidegger. I always mispronounce his name.

Is that the right way to say Heidegger's name? Martin Heidegger, German philosopher. He came up with a philosophical term that comes from the German word to throw. It's actually a made up word.

But he, *Geworfenheit* is the name of the word. And what it means is thrownness. And that's how he described us in the world.

He said, listen, you gotta reckon with the fact as a human being, you are just thrown into the world. And if there's a God up there, maybe there is, maybe there isn't, but if there's a God, he just grabbed you like a paradise and threw you into the world, and however you land, that's how you land. *Geworfenheit* was his idea.

Listen, let me tell you, the biblical truth is 180 degrees opposite from that. You were not thrown randomly into this world. You were sent into this world with a calling and a purpose.

And God wants you to understand it to the best of your ability. Again, you may not be able to understand it completely, but you'll be able to understand it. And you're going to make a connection with something that the entire world is aching for.

One of the best books that I ever read on the subject of calling was by a guy named Oz Guinness. He's a pretty good Christian author. And Oz Guinness related an amazing story on the subject of calling that he experienced when he was teaching at a conference near Oxford in England.

So let me just read you a paragraph from Oz Guinness here. He says, he's recounting the words of another speaker. Okay, so this is another speaker.

Oz Guinness is telling us what he said. Quote, as you know, I've been very fortunate in my career and I've made a lot of money, far more than I've ever dreamed of, far more than I could ever spend, far more than my family needs. The speaker was a prominent businessman at a conference near Oxford University.

The strength of his character and determination showed in his face, but a moment's hesitation betrayed deeper emotions hidden behind the outward intensity. A single tear rolled down his well-tanned cheek. And this is what the guy said.

To be honest, one of my motives in making so much money was simple, to have money to hire people to do the things that I don't want to do. But there's one thing I've never been able to hire anyone to do for me. Find my own sense of purpose and fulfillment.

I'd give anything to discover that. That's remarkable. And I don't blame Oz Guinness for putting that in his book.

The idea that here's a successful man, again, that's kind of beyond my comprehension, someone who's made more money than he could or his family could ever spend. Because I don't know, I could spend some money. That man has made a lot of money.

He's been successful in these things that he's done, but he still aches inside because despite the success that he's had in life, he knows that there is a calling and a purpose for his life that he has not yet fulfilled and he would give anything to be able to grab onto. Now, God wants you to live with the blessing of something that that man could never purchase, with the blessing of having a sense of your own kingdom calling. Now, the idea of calling is very significant in general terms in the Christian life.

Our kingdom calling means that God calls you to have a new life in him and that God honoring life in him. Listen to these two verses I'm gonna read about calling. I'll get to Galatians chapter one in a minute.

Galatians chapter one is Paul describing his own calling and what we can learn from that. But let me step back a little bit and just give you some general understanding about calling. Here's Romans chapter eight, verse 30.

Moreover, whom he predestined, these he also called. Whom he called, these he also justified, and whom he justified, these he also glorified. The idea being what? Being simply this, that calling is an aspect of God's life in every single believer in a very general sense in that he calls you from darkness to life, but also

in a specific sense that he has a purpose for you.

You're not *geworfenheit*. You're not just thrown into the world. You are sent with purpose and calling.

Here's another one from 2 Timothy chapter one, verse nine, where he says this. Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. Again, a very general sense that God has called you.

But God has another aspect of calling for you to consider. I can say with great confidence, I know that God has called you to follow him, and I know that God has called you to be faithful in your present circumstances. Listen to these verses.

First Corinthians chapter seven, verse 17. As the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. That's another way of saying be faithful right where God has placed you.

First Corinthians chapter seven, verse 20. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Again, just another way of saying be faithful where you're at.

First Corinthians chapter seven, verse 24. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called. Calling begins for you right now.

Sometimes we think that calling, or whatever it is, this purpose, this destiny that God has for me, man, that's gonna begin at some later point on the calendar. Man, calling begins when I get married. Man, that's it, that's when calling begins.

No, no, no, calling begins when I have kids. Oh man, that's when calling begins. And then you'll find yourself saying, calling begins when the kids move out.

Man, that's when calling begins. And you'll always have a reason for thinking of calling as something that's in the future. And there's a true sense that God has a calling on your future, but I want you to understand, calling and faithfulness, it begins right here and right now.

Now, all of those are general. I can say that to be true about every one of us in this room, but don't you believe that there is a specific sense of calling that God has for your life? Paul talks about the concept of running your race. You have a race to run in your pursuit of God, and it's not the same as mine.

We have an individual calling, not that the rules apply for us differently. Sometimes I get really annoyed with Christians who act like that. Look, as a pastor, I've sat in my office and seen guys look at me in the eye and say that the rules God has in the word about adultery, well, it doesn't really apply to them.

They have like this special arrangement with God. No, listen, there's a sense in which in general we have a calling that's all the same, but individually, for purpose and function in God's kingdom, there's something very personal and individual that God has for you. We find this pattern in scripture.

The Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to a special work. That's in Acts chapter 13, verse two, and Paul was called to be an apostle. I'm not called to be an apostle.

You're not called to be an apostle, but Paul was called to be an apostle. And you gotta say that in basic terms, this matter of calling is very simple. You were created by someone.

That someone created you for something, and you have a purpose in life beyond enjoying the good things of this world. I'm gonna say that again, because it is such a counter-cultural statement to say that. You have a purpose in life beyond merely enjoying the good things of this world.

Now, I hope you understand the way I phrase that. There's nothing wrong with you enjoying the good things of this world. God has given us many legitimate comforts and pleasures to enjoy in this world.

We shouldn't feel guilty about enjoying what God has given us to enjoy, while at the same time recognizing that our purpose in life goes beyond the simple enjoyment of those things. That we can enjoy even the good things of this world and wake up very empty, very unfulfilled, because we've never pursued and grabbed ahold of and followed after God's real calling and purpose for our life. So, it comes down to really being that simple, but how do you really come to the place where you understand and perceive and walk in your kingdom's service? Well, really this gets back to some of the same themes that we've been talking about throughout our previous sessions.

I would say simply, it begins with you knowing God. You wanna know your place in the world? Begin with knowing God. And if that seems counter-factual to you, then just run with it anyway.

You're gonna know the most about yourself and your place in this world by first deciding to know God. Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount? Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you. You make a priority about seeking God and God will put other things into place.

But, I wouldn't say that it ends with seeking God. It also means not only knowing God, but then in a secondary sense, it also means knowing yourself. Knowing who you are can help you to understand why you're here.

Look, every one of you has a story. Every one of you is something unique by your birth, by your upbringing, by your culture, by your class, by other factors around you, by your education, by your lack of education, whatever it is. God has put all of those factors into you and in some way they have an influence, a contribution, a direction towards a calling that he's given you.

See, all of these things are important. Who you are by birth is important. Who you are by your upbringing environment is important.

Who you are by your training and experience is important because when God uses a man or a woman, he doesn't erase their personality. God's not looking for robots among his servants. If he wanted robots, he'd make them.

He'd make a clone army and just do it that way. But that's not what God is interested in. God is interested in using individuals who are made in his image, each one in some way individual, with their own mix that they bring to it all.

And I'll tell you, those things are not accidents in your life. Who you are by birth is not an accident. Who you are by upbringing and environment is not an accident.

Who you are by training and experience, it's not an accident. God has arranged these things and timed them and used them to make the person you are today. Now, how does this get to Paul's experience of calling? I'm glad you asked.

Turn to Galatians chapter one. Are you there? Okay, one more caveat. Before we talk about Galatians one, I need to give two important warnings.

Two important warnings. Number one, don't expect absolute certainty in advance regarding your calling. Now, I feel that I am as certain of my calling as a person can be.

I don't doubt my calling. But I've been walking in my calling for the last 40 years. You can't expect to have the certainty about your calling that I have about mine.

Don't expect absolute certainty about your calling in advance. It just doesn't work that way. And when you step out to fulfill certain aspects of your calling, it's going to require faith.

You know what faith sometimes is? Sometimes faith is stepping out without absolute certainty. If you could go out on a venture and be absolutely certain that it would succeed, would it really take much faith to do it? No, man, this is great. I gotta say, I'm sure that when Brian and the team here were getting ready and planning this event, they were not absolutely certain that this many people would show up.

They thought that we might be having this in a phone booth or something like that. It's funny I would say a phone booth because you don't have phone booths anymore, but you get what I mean. I mean, but it took some faith to put that on.

Now, faith is this important step in going out and fulfilling your calling. And the biggest impediment to faith is our fear, and especially our fear of failure. I gotta say that this is especially relevant when it comes to Christian service.

By the way, are you guys aware that when I'm talking about calling, I'm not talking necessarily about Christian service, what we would normally think of as ministry? Do you guys get that? I mean, your calling in life may be to be a godly Christian man, single or married, and to be a great, honest auto mechanic in your community. Listen, that's a calling. And may God give us more like that because we could use some honest auto mechanics.

Or whatever it is you wanna say, teacher, mother, this kind of worker, that kind of worker. When I talk about calling, please do not associate it only with Christian service or ministry. It may include Christian service or ministry.

Certainly it includes something that's beneficial in furthering God's kingdom. Absolutely it does that. But whether or not it means that you'll be in full-time Christian service or part-time Christian service or some formal role or recognition, that may or may not be the case at all.

What I simply mean is this, is that especially when it comes to Christian ministry, I see people crippled by a fear of failure. They don't wanna step out and do something because they're afraid it might fail. And I tell you, there was a point in my life where God really called me on that.

And this is what the Lord said to me. I mean, he didn't speak audibly, but this is really what I sensed God saying to me. God said to me something like this, David, do you know what your fear of failure is? It's pride.

Because God showed me, I didn't mind failing if nobody else saw it. I only minded failing if other people saw me fail. That showed me that it wasn't the actual failing that really bothered me, it was the idea that

other people might see me as a failure.

That is what really bummed me out. I didn't want anybody to think of me as a failure. And there's only one word for that, pride.

I mean, I don't know what else that is. So we have to put away the desire for certainty. Secondly, and again, this is right before we get in Galatians chapter one.

Your calling flows out of who you are, but your calling is not your most fundamental identity. In other words, me being a pastor and a Bible teacher, that flows out of who I am. But pastor and Bible teacher is not my most fundamental identity.

My most fundamental identity is as a son, as a servant of God. That's it, that's what I am at the core. I could take away those other things and still be a son and a servant of God.

So we need to remember, calling is tied to who we are, but it does not define who we are. Before any pastor is called as a shepherd, he's also a sheep. And this is who we are.

We relate to God on that most fundamental basis. All right, now let's get to Paul's sense of calling. Galatians chapter one, beginning at verse 15.

You ready for this? Galatians chapter one, verse 15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me.

But I went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him 15 days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed before God, I do not lie. Afterwards, I went to the region of Syria and Cilicia, and I was unknown by faith to the churches of Judea, which are in Christ. But they were hearing only, he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy, and they glorified God in me.

I think, and look, I'm getting a little nostalgic because this is the last list I'm gonna give to you in my teaching time with you. Here's 10 characteristics of calling from Galatians chapter one, verses 15 through 24. Now I tell you the number 10 right up front because whenever a preacher starts giving a list and he starts getting like into four and five, there's always an anxiety level among the listeners.

They're like, how long is this list gonna go? Come on, man, is it gonna go up to 30, 40? 10, and we're gonna move through them fairly quickly. But the first ones I think are very important. Paul's call was evident to himself.

We sense this. When he's writing about his calling here in Galatians chapter one, starting at verse 15, do you sense there's like any ambiguity? Oh, maybe I'm called to this, maybe I'm not. Maybe God chose me from my mother's womb, maybe not, no.

The whole tone, the whole tenor of this is confidence. Paul was confident in his evident sense of calling. Now again, this is 15 years after his conversion.

Maybe there was some period of years where Paul kind of struggled. Man, am I called, am I not? I don't know, I need to figure this out. What's my calling, I don't get it.

Don't feel weird if you're not confident in your calling right now. But I believe God wants to lead you into the place where eventually you are confident in your calling, that your calling is evident. And again, I have to say for me, I don't have any doubts about my own calling.

I feel like God has made it evident to me and through me what he's called me to be and do in Christian service and for his kingdom. So number one, calling should be evident to yourself. Number two, Paul's calling was both expected and unexpected.

There's this strange paradox, maybe even ironiness. In some ways, you could look at Paul's life and say, well, of course he was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. I mean, after all, Paul was trained as a religious scholar.

He was zealous, he was educated, he had this unique upbringing in two cultures. I mean, after all, his Jewish friends called him Saul, his Roman friends called him Paul. I mean, he was raised up in two cultures.

He was this strange Jewish rabbi and Pharisee who was also a Roman citizen. I mean, how often did that happen? So on the one hand, well, it's perfect, it's totally natural that God would call him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. But then you turn it around another way, you say, are you crazy? It's the weirdest thing in the world that God would call him, completely unexpected.

This guy hated Gentiles. He would have nothing to do with them. He hated Jesus, he hated Christians, he hated Gentiles, and he had a lot to give up for the cause of Jesus Christ.

It's like, no way God would call him to be the apostle to the Gentiles, but he did. Now, in the calling God places upon your life, don't be surprised if there's some things that make sense. Oh yeah, I could see that, how that would be the calling God's put on my life.

And don't be surprised if there's some other things that are like, why did God do that? That seems weird. Both of them can coexist. I'll tell you what, that's how it was for my life.

There was a sense in which my calling was expected in the sense that some of the character and I don't wanna say, just personality or who I was as a person was molded into me from childhood to what my calling is today. It's kind of hard to explain that. The best way I could explain it is to tell you that, I don't know how many years ago it was, my mom gave me a folder of all my old school records from when I was in school.

So I did what anybody would do with that, I grabbed it and I put it away somewhere and I never looked at it. Then a few years ago, I got it out, for some reason we were just kind of cleaning out things and consolidating things. And I looked, I go, hey, wow, what's this? Look at this, it's my elementary school records.

And so I started reading through my elementary school report cards. Let me read you some of those. Kindergarten, David is most observant and retains what he takes in.

David has a large vocabulary and enjoys using new words. He's quick to reason and likes problem solving. He loves being challenged and is quick to use new words in their proper context.

He's very much curious about the world and its people. And my kindergarten teacher also paid tribute to my playground skills, especially my ability to skip. Apparently that was important.

Now look, something about that curiosity, the interest in words, the interest in vocalization, those kind of things, that stuff was in me at kindergarten. First grade, David is exceptional at expressing his ideas well in writing. These things of my interest and whatever ability I have in writing, those were things that God put in me that could be noticed at first grade.

Fourth grade, David has a great enthusiasm for learning, especially in areas in which he takes a special interest. David is a real spark in the classroom with his marvelous ability to verbalize his insights. You know what she's saying, he won't shut up.

That's what she's saying. It's very kind teacher speak. Fifth grade, David could be a bit less talkative, but this is David's best way of helping others.

He's so eager, curious, and interested in everything around him that often I feel he's like a time bomb ready to explode. Now look, this interest in words, in vocalization, in learning, in being curious about things, that fits in exactly with the calling that God gave me to study, understand, and speak about his word. And that's not something that I earned.

I look back on those things in a way that I never understood until I read those records from years ago, I go, man, Lord, that's something you created. Just like Paul could say that there was some sense, and from his mother's womb he had called this. I'd say, Lord, from my mother's womb you put these things in calling.

It was expected in me. And I'm telling you, in the same way, through what God has made you by birth, what he's made you by your upbringing, what he's made you by your education, what he's made you by your lack of education, whatever it is, God has a purpose and a calling for all of those things. Now, that's the expected part of it.

The unexpected part of it, I'm like, this is crazy. I don't even get it completely. But look, for whatever reason, and I hope you understand, I mean, I'm not trying to make something of myself that I'm not, but I have written a commentary on the entire Bible that some people find helpful.

And that's kind of a big deal. I mean, it was a big deal to me. And the fact that people use it.

I mean, it's just not like some weirdo in a basement doing it, you know, like a Unabomber or something like that, and nobody cares. I mean, just people find it helpful. Now look, what's weird about that to me? I have no formal Bible or seminary education, none.

I don't say that to boast. I certainly don't say it to say that it's unnecessary. I believe in formal Bible education.

I believe in seminary education. I'm just saying that it's really weird for me that God used this guy to write commentary who didn't have those things. That's weird.

So part of my calling, I say, yeah, great, expect it. I get it. Another part of my calling, it's like, Lord, why did you do that? I don't get it.

I think it's gonna be the same way for you. Expect some things to be natural and flow out of who you are, but not everything. Some things will be a surprise.

Here's another point, a third point. Paul's call was not something he took to himself. Look at verse 15.

Verse 15, it says, but when it pleased God, God was the author of his calling. And you need to understand that real calling for God's kingdom, it isn't something that we take to ourself. It's not the same as our ambition.

It's not the same as our desires. Now, ambition and desire may have something to do with it. I don't think that God says, all right, whatever it is that's gonna make you most miserable in life, that's what I'm calling you to.

No, I don't think that's it at all. But what I'm just trying to say is, calling doesn't come from us. It may come through us in our life experiences, but it's not just something that we decide on.

Look, when it comes to the whole Bible commentary thing in me, I never set out to write Bible commentary. Never. Never.

Matter of fact, you could say still today I don't set out to write Bible commentary. I won't get into the whole story, because I don't think we have time. We definitely don't have time.

But let me just say this, is through some very strange circumstances, I found out that what I prepare for myself as teaching notes was helpful for other people as Bible commentary. I am as surprised as anybody that people use my teaching notes for Bible commentary, and it helps them. Now, I'm delighted by it, praise the Lord.

I'm thrilled by it. But I never set out to do it. And there's a sense in which calling is not just a matter of ambition or achievement.

It's something that God puts in the mix. Next point, number four, Paul's calling Paul's call was through God's grace. Look at it here in verse 15.

He says, but when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace. Do you know what grace is? Grace is the undeserved favor of God. You don't deserve it.

It's given completely apart from whether or not you deserve it. And what that means is no one should ever feel proud about their calling. God gave it to you as the undeserved gift of his grace.

To feel proud of your calling is to be blind. To think that somehow you deserved it or earned it, it's just not how it works. True calling is a gift of God's grace.

Number five, Paul's call was independent of other people. Look at verse 16. He says, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.

In other words, when Paul began to walk in his calling, he didn't go to the other apostles and say, do you think I'm called? Do you think I'm called? Approve my calling. Paul's call was not self-originated. We already talked about that.

But neither was it given to him by anybody else. It was bestowed upon him by God. And what a difference that makes.

Not self-generated, but neither is it bestowed from somebody else. Because let me tell you something. If somebody else bestows your calling on you, then they can take it away as well.

But if God grants it, then God is gonna do something with it. Now, let me give you the flip side to it and the flip side to it is right there as well. Verse 18 says, and this is point number six, Paul's call was in cooperation with men.

Verse 18, he says, I went to Jerusalem to see Peter. In other words, other people did see the calling of God on his life and they recognized it. Look, there's kind of two things that we have to hold in tension here.

The one thing is, the call God puts on your life, it's not self-generated, nor is it given from other people. But on the other side of the coin, other people will be able to see it in your life. Maybe not everybody, but at least some other people.

Look, if you think you got a call from God on something in your life, but nobody else can see it in your life, you probably need to reconsider. Look, I've known some people who really feel like they have the gift of teaching, it's just nobody else has the gift of listening to them. Maybe if you have the gift of teaching, somebody else is gonna be able to see it in you.

Again, maybe not everybody, there's always some naysayers out there, there's always some doubters, forget about those people. But does anybody see it in you? Does anybody recognize? For Paul, it was important that other people be able to say, listen, we're not giving you your calling, it comes from God alone, but we can recognize that God has put it in your life. Next, number seven, Paul's call was evident to other people.

Really, that's just the outworking of the next one, where he says, verse 23, he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith. That's what they said, he's now preaching the faith. But, point eight, Paul's call was not evident to everyone, look at verse 22.

He says, I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea. The churches of Judea didn't see Paul or his call, they didn't know anything about him. Yes, some people should be able to see the call of God in your life, but don't be upset if not everybody does.

That's how it was for Paul. There were others who could not see the call of God, and that's okay. You don't have to be mad at them, you don't have to be disappointed, you just go, okay, some will see it, maybe some won't.

Number eight, or maybe that was number eight. Okay, that was number eight. Number nine, Paul's call was long delayed in fulfillment.

Now, that's not from the text itself, it's just from the chronology of the scriptures. Most scholars say that it was between 12 and 13 years after Paul's conversion that he really started doing effective ministry in the calling that God gave him. God often, in a man or a woman's life, has a long season of preparation for the calling that they're gonna give them.

Sometimes this may be evident in the professional world. We get that in the medical profession, there's a long season of preparation. We get it in the legal profession.

We get it in certain other things that people do. Listen, oftentimes, for you to really function in the kingdom calling that God has given you, don't be impatient. It may be a long time.

As I said, for Paul, most scholars believe it was anywhere between 12 and 13 years. I got a simple question for you. Is 12 or 13 years a long time? Well, you know what's funny about that? I can say that at my age, looking back 12 or 13 years doesn't seem that long, but when you're in the midst of it, 12 or 13 years seems forever.

Like, it'll never come to pass. It feels like a long time. So don't be impatient with that.

And then finally, number 10, Paul's call was something that brought glory to God. Look at it here in verse 24. It says, and they glorified God in me.

Listen, that's the bottom line of whatever purpose or calling that God has given you in this world. He's given it to you ultimately to glorify him. To get back to our example of the auto mechanic before.

Are you telling me that being a godly man, godly husband, godly father, just a person who is a active supporter and participant in the ministries of the church, and you're an honest auto mechanic, are you telling me that's to God's glory? Absolutely, that's to God's glory. You better believe it. And it's a way of loving your neighbor in this world.

That's a wonderful calling. Not to be despised. But the end of it should be that it gives glory to God.

Brothers and sisters, we have to hear the call of God and we have to respond to the call of God. I am, I've heard it said, and there's no way to prove this, but I think it's an interesting thought. I've heard it said that in every generation, God calls enough missionaries to reach the whole world.

It's just how many of them answer that call. That's another story, isn't it? But in every generation, God calls enough missionaries to do it. And you wonder how many people just don't answer the call.

We have to hear the call of God. We have to respond to the call of God. And again, I want to remind you, we have to have it settled in our mind that God's call on your life may or not be any kind of formal or paid Christian ministry at all.

Sometimes we preachers and leaders sort of speak in that term because that's a world that we're familiar with, but it doesn't mean that way at all. You know, one of the greatest examples of that I find in Christian history is a guy named William Wilberforce. You know Wilberforce's story? William Wilberforce was the man who, the English politician, who was singularly most responsible for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.

Now, it was a decades-long struggle that he faced, and it was a remarkable story. He's been described as the least known great reformer of society in the last several hundred years. He worked over 50 years and almost single-handedly accomplished the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.

When he started, almost no one in the British Empire thought that slavery was wrong or evil. They thought even if it was evil, it was necessary, especially for the economic survival of the British Empire. And William Wilberforce fought over 50 years for the abolition of slavery, and he saw it accomplished in the British

Empire.

But did you know that he almost never entered the political career? William Wilberforce was dramatically converted to Christianity when he was 25 years old, and his first reaction was to give up politics for the ministry. He thought that spiritual matters like the ministry were more important than secular matters like politics. And so he says, forget about politics, I'm gonna go into the ministry.

The man who changed his mind was a man, some of you heard his name, John Newton, the guy who was the author of the great hymn Amazing Grace. He was his pastor, and Newton told Wilberforce this, quote, it is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of the nation. And so he continued as a member of parliament, and he changed the world for God's glory.

Because he didn't go into the ministry, but stayed where God had called him to be. So look, every one of you has a calling on your life, and your calling on your life is your race to run, and whether or not it involves some kind of full-time, part-time, formal, informal, Christian service just doesn't matter. It's whatever the calling is that God's placed upon your life.

But I will tell you this, whatever calling God has placed upon your life, there is a price to pay for answering God's call. Listen, whatever it is for your life, if your mentality is you will only pursue the call of God if it's easy or if it's comfortable, you're not gonna go very far in the pursuit of the call. If you think it's too difficult, if you are called, you can do it.

So there are people who say, I've had people come to me with tears in their eyes, and they say this, I can't bear to disappoint my family. They think I should do this, but I'm convinced the call of God in my life is this, listen, if you're called, you can bear to disappoint your family. I can't give up what I've worked for.

If you're called, you can give it up. I can't live in a new place. If you're called, you can do it.

I can't learn a new language. If you're called, you can do it. I can't look like a fool in front of my friends.

If you're called, you can do it. God will give you the ability you need to fulfill that call. If you have a sense of calling in your life already, praise the Lord.

Again, I'm not gonna ask you to raise your hands, but I would be convinced that in a group of this many people, there's many of you. Thank the Lord you already have some sense of calling and direction in your life. And you're like, yes, Lord, help me to keep pursuing it.

Praise the Lord, if that's you. Depend upon God and keep pursuing it. But for those of you, and I gotta believe there's a lot of people like you here, like this here today, if you don't have yet a sense of your calling, depend upon God to reveal it and find a way to be useful for God's kingdom right now until he gives you a better sense of your calling.

I think it is totally valid to say, Lord, I really don't know how you've gifted me and what you've called me to do, so I'm gonna serve your kingdom in this way and show me along the way. And you know what? God will do it. Once, one of the greatest pieces of advice somebody gave me regarding God's will and direction in my life is he said, David, it's hard to steer a parked car.

It's just get moving, doing something, serving the Lord. And even if it isn't really what you're called to do, don't worry about it. As you get active in doing something to further God's kingdom, God will guide you

along the way.

My earnest desire is that every one of you would have the same peace and rest in the sense of calling that Paul had that to some extent I have, and that, I'll tell you what, if we had an entire room of people aware of their calling, pursuing their calling, fulfilling their calling throughout their life, the world gets changed from the people in this room. Absolutely, positively. I mean, there's no doubt about that.

But you got a room full of people not sure, aimless, lost, searching it out, not really, well, that's not so much of an impact. Man, God could do a profound work in the room, in the people in and through this room, simply, simply by us figuring out how God has called us according to those principles that we saw in Galatians and living it out. We hope you enjoyed watching this session from our 2018 Philly Young Adults Conference.

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