

# What Is Your Calling

by Denis Lyle

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of discovering and following one's calling from God, which involves a process of gracious discipline, a deep inward conviction, and a willingness to pay the cost.*

**Scripture:** Acts 16:10

**Topics:** "Gods Calling", "Spiritual Vocation"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the importance of understanding and fulfilling our calling from God, using the life of Elisha as an example. Elisha was called to move powerfully, minister effectively, act fearlessly, serve mercifully, and die gloriously, showcasing a life dedicated to God's work. The sermon emphasizes the need for individuals to discern God's specific calling for their lives, whether it be in professions like teaching, nursing, or other roles, and to ensure they are acting in alignment with God's will.

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## Transcript

Reading: 1 Kings 19:9-21

### WHAT IS YOUR CALLING

What is your calling What is it that God wants you to do In broad terms it is to live like Elisha. He was called to move powerfully: to minister effectively: to act fearlessly: to serve mercifully: and then to die gloriously. And even that was not the end of his ministry. My, you are one of God's hidden servants. Like those seven thousand you may feel as if you've hidden in a cave for a long time up to now, or like Elisha you may have spent your whole life-helping Dad. Whatever your life is now God has more for you to do.

God calls us to be teachers: nurses: secretaries: refuse collectors... the options are endless. However the most important questions are these: are you sure you are God's man or God's woman in that situation Are you acting as though you are Only the knowledge of God's call can help you answer these questions in the affirmative. Some people have found it helpful to answer four simple questions as they've sought to discover their calling from God. (1) WHAT DO YOU FEEL PROMPTED TO DO This may well be a pressure of the Holy Spirit upon your spirit. (Acts 16:10) Sometimes it is no more than an idea or an interest: at other times it becomes an overwhelming burden you cannot escape.

Some of us who have a call to preach know what this feels like. A constraint came upon us, confirmed by the Word of God and built up to great intensity. It overcame our excuses and arguments until we could do

nothing else but take active steps in order to answer that call. (1) (2) WHAT DO YOU FEEL POWER IN DOING The element of enablement comes at this point. You see your ability is evident in those ministries to which you have been called. Paul says: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us". (ROM 12:6) My, the Holy Spirit will enable you to perform the task God has called you to do. (3) WHAT DO YOU RECEIVE PRAISE IN DOING You see people who know you well and who benefit from your gifts will repeatedly affirm you in them.

This will confirm objectively the subjective leadings which you have already experienced, and your gifts will receive some kind of formal or informal recognition. (Prov 11:14) Now these factors were all present in Elisha's call. His unhesitating response to Elijah's actions indicates that he aspired to the prophetic role long before his encounter with Elijah. There was no hesitation: this was something he wanted to do. The subsequent story clearly demonstrates both his anointing of God and his approval by men.

What is your CALLING What is it that God wants you to do As we look at this narrative we're struck by three simple things. (1) THE CALL There can be no doubt that Elisha was a man of God before this time. He lived in the village of Abel-meholah (19:16) which lay in the upper region of the Jordan valley. Young Elisha knew that village had been associated with the great commander Gideon (Judges 7:22) and no doubt his story would have captivated his life. But things were different now.

Politically the nation was unstable: morally the nation was unclean: religiously the nation was unsound. The Glory had departed from Israel and the land was overwhelmed with a floodtide of idolatry. (19:10) No doubt his heart had burned with him as he heard of the persecution of the prophets of the Lord. (19:10) No doubt he had cried to God for deliverance, and had longed to devote his energies to the service of his country and God. You see there was a process of gracious discipline that lay behind this unhesitating response which he gave to the Divine Call.

The seed fell on prepared ground. (a) ELISHA RECEIVED A CALL: And who was he The son of Shaphat which means "judge". It is amazing that out of seven thousand still faithful in Israel, God should have picked Elisha a plain farmer to be Elijah's successor. Ills: An old Puritan put it like this: "God seeth not as man seeth, neither doth He choose men because they are fit, but He fits men because He hath chosen them". There is the element of surprise in God's sovereign choice. Paul pricked the inflated baloon of Corinthian pride with these pointed words, "For ye see your calling brethren..."

"(1 Cor 26-29) God has bypassed the wise: articulate and sophisticated. He has skipped over the noble, the well bred with their distinguished ancestry. Instead God hand-picks the lost, the least, the last, and the lowest! Moses at the backside of the desert tending sheep heard God's call. (Exod 3:1) Gideon was threshing wheat when the angel said, "The Lord is with thee..." (Judges 7:12) Amos was a herdsman when God said, "Go and prophesy". (Amos 7:15) Ills: Mary Slessor was working in the looms in a Dundee mill when she heard Gods call to go to Africa!

What about you Has God been prompting you to step out for Him Ills: John Calvin said, "I gave up all for Christ and what have I found I have found everything in Christ". (a) (b) ELISHA RECEIVED A DEFINITE CALL: Neither Elijah or Elisha initiated this... God did. Look at (19:15-16) and then look (19:19) The casting of the mantle was a formal charge to the prophetic office. A token of fellowship that Elijah would take Elisha under his care and tuition. So here was a summons from God directing Elisha to the prophetic office.

My, Elisha did not appoint himself, he was not self-appointed: nor was he appointed by a body of men. He was a man appointed by God. Elisha didn't say, "I fancy a go at that". He did not embark upon God's work without a consciousness of the Divine Call and the Divine Constraint. Do we need to learn this lesson Of course we do. You see some tell us today that THE NEED constitutes the call, but the need is everywhere. Others tell us that THE OPPORTUNITY constitutes the call, but there are plenty of opportunities for service.

My, there must be a deep inward conviction, confirmed by God's Word that God would have us do a certain work in a certain place. (Ps 119:105 Rom 8:6 Acts 16:7) My, is God stirring you about missionary work: pastoral ministry: evangelistic activity Do you have a definite call Do you sense that you're being "set apart", by the Holy Spirit (a) (b) (c) ELISHA RECEIVED A DEFINITE CALL WHILE HE WAS ACTIVELY ENGAGED: God's call came to Elisha when his hands were on the plough. (19:19) He was not only a man of plain background, he was a man of conscientious outlook.

Ills: The story is told of the coloured man in Alabama who felt the work in the cotton fields exhausting and looking up to the sky he said, "Lawd, de cotton am so grassy, de work am so hard, and de sun amd so hot, dat I believe dis labourer am called to be a preacher". No person can sincerely claim to be called of God if there is a determined desire not to work. Elisha did his work faithfully and faithfulness in little things is God's appointed way to bigger things. (Matt 25:21 Lk 16:10) Are you looking to the Lord for direction in these days Are you doing your present work faithfully, conscientiously, and wholeheartedly My, To hear God's call is like the touch of God on a man's or woman's shoulder! (1) (2) THE COST Can you imagine the thoughts that raced through Elisha's mind when Elijah's mantle fell on his shoulders I think we have some idea of what Elisha was thinking when we look at his request. (19:20) Elijah was saying, " This is between you and God Elisha.

I'am not dragging or coercing you into my service. God is calling you into His. You will have to make your own decision whether or not you follow His call. There will be danger, threats upon your life: criticism, disappointment. Blessings, of course... but its up to you whether you are willing to pay the price in order to see those blessings". My, whether its full time service for the Lord or not, there's a price we must pay if we follow the Lord fully! Look at the context and notice that Elisha was prepared to pay the price: (a) MATERIALLY: The whole narrative suggests that the eleven other workmen were the ordinary farm-hands and that Shaphat and his son were men of extensive possessions.

And in exchange for this great inheritance Elisha was required to share the lot of Elijah, with all its hardships and dangers. He was to be the companion and fellow-worker of a man who had not where to lay his head and whose very life was overshadowed by the threat of Jezebel! From FARMER to FORTHTELLER: from SECURITY to INSECURITY: from COMFORT to HARDSHIP: from HOME to GOING ABROAD: from LOVE to HATRED! Do you recall the Saviour's words "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple". (Lk 14:33) Have you abandoned all claim to all that you have money, property, possessions so that you no longer look upon these things as yours but His My, we are generation of Christians who want GAINS without PAINS!

We are interested in short term commitments hoping that our former employer will keep our post open until we've done our stint for God! Ills: Hudson Taylor, the pioneer missionary to China said, "God is looking for wicks to burn, the oil and the fire come free". Will you become one of those wicks Are you prepared to "burn on", for God until He decides you have burned long enough and you "burn out" (a) (b) DOMESTICALLY: He was a loving son. This is revealed in his request to kiss his father and mother.

(19:20) He went back "not to ask leave, but only to take leave".

For Elisha who delighted in the simple joys of the home there was the severing of tender domestic ties! So it is with many who are called into God's work! Ills: Gladys Aylward, known popularly as "the little woman", left a message under her pillow before she set out for China. "I found it", said her mother "on October 15th 1932. It read, "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me". (Matt 10:37 Lk 14:26) In a word that means that Christ must occupy FIRST PLACE in the affections of His people.

Does He occupy first place in your heart In your home (a) (b) (c) PERSONALLY: Elisha might have said, "To me to live is Elijah". Years afterwards he was known by this title, "Elisha that poured water on the hands of Elijah". What a task! To be a successor of a giant in the spiritual world! To be the representative of God before an unfaithful people! To occupy a high and onerous position in the face of many difficulties! He could have cried with Paul, " Who is sufficient for these things" (2 Cor 2:16) I find it amazing that many 20th century believers still have limelight conceptions and romantic notions about the Ministry and the Mission Field.

My, its anything but a joyride! Its a task where like Elisha you become the target of Satan: of the World: of Christians, that's why you need to be sure you are CALLED! Thats why Elijah said to Elisha "Don't act impulsively but sit down and count the cost before you definitely commit yourself to this". But Elisha was prepared to pay the price. (a) (b) (c) What about you Has God been exercising your heart about His service in recent days Are you prepared to pay the price to obey Him My, its costs nothing to become a Christian: it costs everything to be a Christian!

How did Elisha respond to this summons to the prophetic office (1) (2) (3) THE COMMITMENT F.W.Boreham said, "We make our decisions and then our decisions turn round and make us". Of course Elisha made the right decision. Things would never be the same again. Here was a commitment: (a) TO DEFINITE SERVICE: " Then he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him". (19:21) Do you see that word "ministered " it's used with reference to the priesthood serving the Lord (Exod 28:1-4) The word is used of Samuel serving before the Lord. (1 Sam 2:18 3:1) It basically means "to attend or wait upon as a servant or worshipper", in the case of Elisha it meant to act as a servant to Elijah.

This involved various menial tasks of an Eastern slave. (2 Kings 3:11) But Elisha was prepared to serve faithfully and humbly! My, God did not choose you to be a SENSATION but simply to be a SERVANT! Servants are people who will take on all kinds of roles and responsibilities which at first glance don't seem related to the " ministry." Servants are people who how to set up the chairs: lock up the building: care for the babies: send a bunch of flowers when they are needed: arrange the refreshments.

Are you involved in this type of ministry Performing an endless sequence of thankless and unspectacular tasks Will if you are, you're in good company. This is was Elisha did. It was a commitment to (a) (b) TO DIVINE SERVICE: Now this is not the miserable option it might at first seem to be, for Elisha is seen here organising a hugh open-air barbecue with roast oxen on the menu, boiled over a pit of charcoal from the fire made by the burning plough-share. You see there is tremendous festivity and joy in sacrifice.

Someone has said that "Sacrifice is the ecstasy of giving the best we have to the one we love the most". My, we don't do God a favour by choosing His service: He did US the favour by choosing us for that service! Elisha has put his hand to another plough and the burning of the old one was a pledge, that there was to be no turning back. He had burned his bridges: from now on, one thing only was to command his strength... the work of the Lord! WHAT IS YOUR CALLING What kind of commitment are you making to

the work of the Lord In relation to your TIME: TREASURE: TALENTS Like Elisha is God calling you to special service Illus: A Christian girl called on her pastor and told him she was convinced that God wanted her on the Mission Field!

He thought he would test her and so he put to her a number of questions: "Are you prepared to leave your job and parents Are you ready for hardships and loneliness What about martyrdom "Yes, she had counted the cost". Then he asked her the most difficult of all question: "Are you prepared to face the fact that you might never be married/family" With tears coursing down her face she said, "Yes, I sorted out with the Lord at three am this morning". She was prepared to pay the price! Are you?

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