

The Life of Calling

Series: The Good Life
Brad Bailey – Sept. 18, 2016

What is the Good life?

The Power and Process of God's Calling...

Genesis 12:1

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Matthew 4:18-22

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

1. God's calling is into _____.

2. God's calling is the _____ and _____.

3. God's calling is _____, but grows in _____.

4. God's calling begins with _____ more than simply a destination.

5. God's calling leads to the significance of our _____.

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INTRO: What is the Good life?

The “Good Life”. We all may like the idea of “the good life”...but what is the really GOOD life?

Is it some level of **accumulation**?

Is it the freedom to **just do nothing**?

It’s a phrase that we naturally use to speak of some quality that we are drawn to...or even a quality that we enjoy now and then. “Awwwww” ...we say as we plop down on a beautiful beach... “This is the good life.”

As a coastal kid... **I can identify with this image** a lot. (Image is of sitting on beach like the Corona beer ads represent.)

But I have enjoyed that type of moment enough to know that it **represents a really good moment**...more than a really good life.

I **wouldn’t mind** that **type of time** right now...but it **wouldn’t be a life**. This is a great image of relaxing amidst life...more than an image of life itself.

When we enjoy rest at the end of the day...or amidst a weekend... what makes life “good” is the satisfaction of qualities that life bears.

The good life...is what satisfies us at the end of the day...and at the end of life.

In the longer term.... As we desire to have lived a good life before we die....it is a life of something.

The question is, what are the qualities that can bring the deepest satisfaction at the end of the day...and at the end of a lifetime?

In this series we are going to engage **what makes life really good**.

Over the next 5 week weeks we are going to focus on five qualities that offer us the truly good life.

A Life of **Calling**

A Life in **Community... connection rather than isolation**.

A Life of **Character... of discovering that we have a center and are becoming what we are**.

A Life of **Compassion**

A Life of **Contribution**

I believe that the good life is **not found in our own separated autonomous selves**.

If it is found within us... it is found by that which calls to us. The good life is not found within our self-existence...but from being engaged by the source of life and love.

The Good Life is a Called Life...Called into Real Life by God.

What we call life is not true life as it ultimately exists.

From an ultimate eternal perspective, apart from God we are a dying people living on a dying planet.

Our souls resonate with meaning amidst the chaos...but it is like an echo we can hear but not fully join.

The world is strewn with beauty... but we can never fully enter into it.

There are qualities that are good... actually amazing...but there is an element by which we always experience being separated at some level from them.

This is what God described to us...

Human life began in what is described as a garden where life was joined with God...but we joined life that sought to be it's own gods...and as such... separation... "placed outside..."

As Larry Crabb described...

"Ever since God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden, we have lived in an unnatural environment, a world in which we were not designed to live. We were built to enjoy a garden without weeds, relationships without friction, fellowship without distance. But something is wrong, and we know it, both within our world and within ourselves. Deep inside we sense we're out of the nest, always ending the day in a motel room, never at home." (From "Inside Out")

We hear the **echo of a cry for justice**, the **quest for transcendence**, the longing for relationship, the **yearning for beauty**...that we can never fully enter. [1]

And it is into this condition that God begins to call us back into life...beginning with Abraham.

When we meet him in the Bible, he is living 4,000 years ago in a far-off place called Ur of the Chaldees—on the **banks of the Euphrates River**, not far from the **mouth of the Persian Gulf**. No doubt he and his wife Sarah worshiped the moon-god Sin. He is a prosperous, middle-aged man, successful by any human standard. But then...God calls him....and ultimately alter the course of world history.

Genesis 12:1

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

> **God calls him...** to **something new...**to become a **new nation** through which God would redeem the world.

God began to reveal Himself...for hundreds of years.... 'writing into a people and their history'... revealing His nature....His calling. Then as He promised, through that people...the Jewish people...God sent a messiah...a savior. One comes bearing the very nature of God in human form...and he begins to call lives.

A brief account is given in the Gospel of Matthew...

Matthew 4:18-22 (NIV)

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

At first we may read of this calling and think it's **rather wild** that these guys just **walked off with a stranger**. Didn't their parents ever teach them not to be so trusting of strangers? **These were not strangers**. Jesus had begun teaching in something of the role of a rabbi.....and he was likely already gathering crowds. From those crowd he now chose and called out these followers.

It was the power of this calling that changed their lives.

Imagine... the one people had begun to recognize as divinely sent.... Calls them to be his closest partners.

Now that may be hard for some of us to appreciate. Many of us today can fear expectations.

Rabbi Loy's life work was the study of the power of God's expectations. In an account of speaking to a young man named Dave who had the increasingly common disposition that the good life was that in which you have no ultimate responsibility.

Rabbi Loy [2] says,

"In a life in which there is no demand, there is no meaning."

"That's nuts," Dave snarled rudely. "Demands are the whole trouble."

Rabbi said, "If no demand is put on you, then you are in a sense excluded.

"From what?" "Life itself. To be demanded of gives us dignity." Rabbi continued,

"If someone expects, demands something of you, it means he takes you seriously."

When we are called by God...it means we are being included in life.

I find that **men in particular** have a both a desire and fear of responsibility. As boys..."Do I have what it takes to make it in the world?"

We want to be believed in...to find respectability...honor....but the expectations can bring fear and failure...and so we can resent them... try to dismiss them.

We want to be a hero...but we're not sure we want to wear the suit that will never fit.

Jesus says to all...what he brings is life that fits.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is
light."

God's expectations fit.

We naturally focus on the question of believing in God. But perhaps the deeper question...is whether God believes in us. And that is the power of his calling.
Jesus imparts the transforming reality that God believes in you.

Let's note a few things about ...

The Power and Process of God's Calling...

1. God's calling is into true and lasting life.

One thing stands out in God's calling of Abraham...and the disciples...and every experience.
It is a **calling from life as it was understood** to something of a whole other dimension. It was a radical breaking in.

The life that is called **involves grasping the immensity of something outside us** calling us into a new dimension.

If we think of God as merely some source who can **just help us live life as we know it...**we are going to find it doesn't work very well. God's calling is **not that which will simply enhance** our self-centered lives. God's calling is **not that which speaks** merely of **some adjustment or add-on to life**.

God does **not speak** that which **simply adds to** our version of life.

> **God is imparting** something that is **not of this life...He is calling us into the orbit of true and lasting life.** [3]

Jesus declared quite clearly,

"A thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I came to give life—life that is full and good." - John 10:10 (ERV)

I think we **let our religiosity quench the true calling**. We think **restrictions...that quench life...make it smaller**.

But God isn't the one who is sells us out cheaply.

He calls Abraham from the familiar “normal nowhere”...to go beyond anything he could imagine.

Jesus calls the disciples... to follow him to life beyond what they could imagine.

We are told that those who were fishermen...”immediately dropped their nets” and followed.

No one else can call us to become who we are. This leads to a second point...

2. God's calling is the highest claim and honor.

Who are you? That will be answered by the **many ways** in which **this life** might try to **name you and claim you**.

Telling you what makes you valuable....how you should see your body... where you fit...and what type of identity you should have.

It comes from parents... teachers... friends and peers... culture of celebrities and stars...our working roles and titles. And we have ourselves.

When God calls us ..its the voice that transcends all others.

We are **neither gods.... nor are we goods. We are those who bear the image of God.**

Imagine that the Creator of the universe... reveals that he exists...is personal...and is calling YOU?

How do you think this effected Abraham's whole sense of existence? Significance?

He would be called ... **friend of God**

And that may **sound familiar**...when **Jesus called the disciples**...after three defining years of being followers...he said “I don't call you just servants...**I call you friends**....because the Father is revealing what he is doing to you.”

> There is no higher claim...no higher honor.

There's competition...lots of it. We have given ourselves to many voices. We may have to silence the voices inside of us. You may need to decry the voices that are eating away at your soul, the voices that diminish the image of God in you.

Remember...the calling of God is rooted in God ...not you. [4]

This is so significant... that towards the end of their three years together... as Jesus prepares them to go forth after his death and resurrection... he reminds them...

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.” - **John 15:16 (NIV)**

The calling of Jesus rooted in God... originates in God... emanates from God. It's HIS initiative...his choice.

3. God's calling is personal ...but grows in community.

God chose Abraham...and individual...chose 12 specific disciples. Each had to respond personally.

It may be true the calling is raised up in the family...in community...but each individual who is able... at some level must hear and respond to this call. It is ultimately a personal calling.

And it can help us to realize that it we **don't need the same experience** someone else has.

We **may often hear of dramatic elements** to how and when some people experience God's calling. Some may hear God in the midst of **dramatic desperation...or change...**but many simply at the moment that our hearts are quieted and open to what is beyond us. **The real drama is the personal drama of the soul.**

It is out of that calling that we have to realize that it is going to take others to discern and develop that calling...to join us in the journey.

Someone saw something in Michael Jordon or Kobe Bryant... but they had to join a team to develop that calling.

Do you have a team to develop your calling? That is what a Home Church is...it's spiritual family who share and support the calling.

God's calling is personal...but it grows in community.

4. God's calling begins with direction more than simply a destination.

To Abraham... "Go.to a city I will show you.."

To disciples..."Follow me..." with no clarity about what that was going to involve.

"Follow me.

God's calling begins with direction and dependence that leads to the ultimate destination...

As the Marines declare... "*It's not a job...it's an adventure.*" Their point...is that a job has a job description and expectations that are clear and agreed on beforehand. But an adventure unfolds as we go along.

Relating to God unfolds in personal steps... faith cannot be taught by a book.

God's words speaks to our minds... but it is ultimately a relationship...formed by response.

5. God's calling leads to the significance of our response.

Abraham stepped out on what he knew without knowing all we would generally want to know.

- **He gave a tithe** to one he believed represented the true God....before there was any clarity...or any rule requiring it
 - **He left his home** and people to go where “God would lead him” in due time...
 - Then after so long with no offspring... finally has son...and lays him on Alter not knowing how God would fulfill what had been promised.
- > **He stepped out** in response...he stepped out **into uncertainty** in response to what he heard.

Faith is **not blind**...it always has something... but **neither is it calculation** that knows everything.

How have you responded to God’s call to you?

What are you doing with what you know?

If you have some basis to regard there is a living God ... how are you actively stepping out?

Notes:

1. Larry Crabb so beautifully wrote: “Ever since God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden, we have lived in an unnatural environment, a world in which we were not designed to live. We were built to enjoy a garden without weeds, relationships without friction, fellowship without distance. But something is wrong, and we know it, both within our world and within ourselves. Deep inside we sense we're out of the nest, always ending the day in a motel room, never at home.” (From Inside Out)

2. The work of Rabbi Loy is given reference in *The Young Unicorns*, by Madeleine L'Engle, p. 155

3. Much can be developed about the distinction of calling that is general for all ...and the effectual calling reflected in a response that is rooted in the Spirit effectively calling the heart of one who is unresponsive (dead.).

2 Thess. 2:13-14; Matthew 22:14 – Many are called but few are chosen.”; John 10

Consider also... John 10:1-10

I am the Shepherd, and you are the sheep. My voice gives life. Other voices lie to us about who we are and who we can become.

4. There is a profound difference between what had become the rabbinic tradition and process... and how Jesus chose his disciples. Normally the top students come and ask if they can become disciples... apprentices in every way of life

hey come asking to

> He chose them. If they had sought to be his apprentices...when they faced the immensity they would have realized that they didn't have what it took...and felt bad that the rabbi had accepted their belief in themselves. But Jesus had gone and chosen THEM.