

## **Chosen & Called**

Luke 6:12-16

### **(Discussion Guide on pg. 10)**

Are you living with a sense of calling? Occasionally I get asked the question, how can I discern my calling in life? Why do people ask this question? There are many today, Christians and non-Christians, who are searching for meaning in life and believe it's connected with discerning and living out one's calling.

Moreover, there is plenty of biblical warrant for this idea that God has placed us all on this earth with a purpose and with unique gifts to fulfill that purpose. While writing about his saving encounter with Jesus, for example, the Apostle Paul records these words from Jesus:

*"But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,"*  
Acts 26:16

When you study the life of Paul you'll find that he lived with a great sense of calling. He knew what God had placed him on the earth to do and he went after it with holy resolve and an understanding that he was living for something greater than himself, something that was worth dying for.

Are you living with a sense of calling? You might be thinking, if I had the kind of encounter that Paul had with Jesus it would be more clearer to me and I would be more confident about knowing and living out my calling. Paul's encounter with Christ no doubt had a tremendous impact upon his life.

But if you are familiar with his life you would know that it was the presence and power of the Spirit within him and the providential circumstances without that led him into His specific calling. And if you're saved, the same Spirit that lived in Paul, lives in you to enable you to discern your calling and live it out to the glory of Christ.

In light of this, how can we best define what a calling is? According to 1 Corinthians 12, our unique calling is connected with our unique gifts. And those unique gifts are given with a specific purpose, namely to help make the lives of others better. With this in mind, a Christian vocational Psychologist defines calling as *a transcendent summons toward purposeful work carried out for the greater good*. Bryan Dik

In other words, a calling is connected with a purpose that seeks to make the lives of others better in the present and more importantly for all eternity.

So, living with a sense of calling is not only for Christians in full time or part time vocational ministry. Because it's connected with your gifts, it may involve changing vocations, but more than that it involves having the right perspective in whatever vocation or work you are doing. If you can connect your work to a purpose that helps make the lives of people better, you can find a sense of calling in your work.

**Main idea:** Christians are called to prioritize cultivating intimacy with Christ through which they are enabled to discern and live out their calling.

This morning we are going to learn some lessons from Jesus and His appointment of the twelve Apostles about discerning and living out the call of God upon our lives.

## **1. Chosen and Called through the faithful consecration of Christ**

To start with, we see from our text that the twelve were chosen and called through the faithful consecration of Christ. While the earthly ministry of Jesus was in full swing, Luke records:

*"In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. **13** And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve,"* Luke 6:12-13

Do you pray before making major decisions in your life, especially as it relates to your vocation? Repeatedly throughout Luke's gospel he points out that despite many things vying for His attention, Jesus made time for prayer. As His fame was spreading, for example, which meant that He was in great demand, we read in Luke 5:15-16:

*“But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. <sup>16</sup> But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”*

What does the faithful prayer life of Jesus demonstrate to us and what should be our response? You know, I use to think that Jesus didn't really need to pray, but He did so to be an example to us. Yes, Jesus was 100% God, but He was also 100% human. And during His earthly ministry He surrendered the exercise of His divine attributes, like His omniscience, to the discretion of the Father. Moreover, Jesus cherished fellowship with His Father through which in His humanity He received strength, discernment, and direction.

Again, we see a great example of this in our text. Before choosing the twelve Apostles, who would play a major role in the establishment of the early church and in the spread of Christianity, Jesus didn't just pray, He spent all night in prayer. The prayer life of Jesus wasn't just a formality, it was a significant part of His consecration to His Father.

Concerning His consecration to the Father, we read in John's gospel that when His disciples were urging Him to eat, He responded: *“I have food to eat that you do not know about.” <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”* John 4:32-34

Again, in his humanity, Jesus was subject to the will of His Father, which included the exercise of His divine attributes.

As such, explains one commentator, “He did not possess all knowledge, and his unaided knowledge was not sufficient to know whom to choose. Moreover, Jesus had numerous disciples, so it is

conceivable that during those [night] hours he presented them individually to his Father, so the nod would be given to those who were to become the Twelve.

Prayer was everything to Jesus. Through dependent prayer Jesus lived a life of flawless perfection, so that [according to John's gospel] he could say, *'I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. <sup>29</sup> And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.'* John 8:28-29"

Beloved, the twelve were chosen and called through the consecration of Jesus which was demonstrated in His devotion to prayer. And if devotion to prayer was necessary for Jesus to accomplish the work He was sent by the Father to do, is it any less necessary for us? If we would discern and live out our calling before God, we must be consecrated to God, which necessitates earnest devotion to prayer.

## **2. Chosen and Called to first commune with Christ**

Moving on to our next point, we see that in addition to the Apostles being chosen and called through the faithful consecration of Jesus, they were also chosen and called to first commune with Christ—to be with Jesus. After spending all night in prayer through which He discerned the heart of His Father, we read in verse 13: *"And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles."* Luke 6:13

It's important to note here that Jesus chose the twelve from among other disciples who were following Him at the time. How many disciples He had, we don't know for sure. In Luke 10, we know that He sent out 70 disciples ahead of Him into Jerusalem.

Whatever the number, He chose twelve who were already following Him and appointed them to the office of Apostle. Again, these apostles, minus Judas, with special authority, would play a key role in laying the foundation of the church with Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

An important lesson to learn here is that “discerning your calling is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process” (Bryan Dik). As we take steps of faith in obedience to God’s word, we will discern our gifts and callings.

But as Christian vocational psychologist Bryan Dirk shared regarding his journey to discerning his calling, we can be so worried about making the wrong choice that we don’t take steps and consequently we miss our life’s calling. But what we fail to understand is that not only is our sovereign God able to redirect us, there are likely many pathways we could follow and still be faithful to our calling.

Like Joseph, who went down some challenging paths before he moved into his calling, which included spending time in prison on false charges, sometimes the paths we willingly or unwillingly take, are preparing us for something greater.

But it’s important to emphasize here that unless we maintain close communion with the Lord, we will not only miss opportunities that will lead us into our callings, but we will lack the faith and character necessary to step into it.

In fact, as the parallel account in Mark’s gospel indicates, the twelve Apostles’ first calling wasn’t to ministry, but to intimacy with Jesus.

In Mark 3 we read: *“And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and have authority to cast out demons.”* Mark 3:13-14

Notice that in verse 14 of Marks gospel he notes that Jesus appointed the twelve *so that they might be with him* and then so that He might send them out to preach and have authority over demonic forces. As I heard one faithful Pastor testify, “I used to think I was called to ministry. But then I discovered that I was first called to intimacy. Ministry is the outflow of intimacy.”

As I said in the beginning of the message, many today including non-Christians want to discover and live out their calling in life. Finding your calling has become popular in our culture today. But there's a major difference between a humanistic view of calling and a Christ-like view of calling.

Often the motivation of some for discovering their calling is "a personal drive towards self-fulfillment." The calling of God, on the other hand, is again, a *transcendent summons toward purposeful work carried out for the greater good.*" Bryan Dik

That is to say, a true calling is connected with a transcendent purpose that seeks to make the lives of others better in the present and more importantly for all eternity. This Christ-like calling, which leads to a truly meaningful life, is not motivated by personal gain, but by the love of Christ, who although He was rich became poor so that we through His poverty might become rich. But to have that kind of self-giving motivation we must come to know the heart of Christ by cultivating intimacy with Him.

In light of this, it's important to point out that when Jesus spent time with His Father all night in prayer, He wasn't just giving God a list of requests related to making His life easier. He loved to simply be in God's presence and commune with His Father. Additionally, His prayer life didn't consist of telling God what His plans were. He wanted to know God's plan and God's heart which was oriented to contributing to the well-being of others and bringing them into their calling.

What's more, on that mountain alone with God, He wasn't just talking to God, He was listening for God's voice and submitting to His plan. And perhaps the reason He waited before the Lord all night in prayer was because His aim wasn't for God to hear Him, but rather His aim was to hear from His Father.

I wonder if our prayer lives bear any resemblance to the prayer life of Jesus. Do we only seek the hand of God to move in our lives for our personal gain? Or do we spend significant time seeking His face?

What does it mean to seek His face? It means cultivating intimacy with God which leads to the accomplishment of His purposes which are carried out for the good of others.

### **3. Chosen and Called to fulfill the commission of Christ**

Now in addition to first communing with Christ, the Apostles were chosen and called to fulfill the commission of Christ. Again, in verse 13 God's word says: *"And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:"* Luke 6:13

After praying all night and discerning the heart of His Father, Jesus chose, from among His disciples, twelve, whom He named apostles. The name apostle means *sent ones*. As I noted earlier, the twelve, as eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, were sent by the Lord with special power and authority to lay a new covenant foundation for the early church.

Through mountain top experiences and many trials, they would in time grow in faith and in dependence upon the Spirit to lead a new Christian community to spread the hope of Christ throughout the world. Our presence here today is evidence that they were successful.

Who were these men? Luke listed their names beginning in verse 14: *"Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."* Luke 6:12-16

You know, although most of the Apostles' names are notably familiar to us today, at the time that Jesus called them, they had no notoriety whatsoever. Other than the fact that one was a despised tax collector for Rome and another one was a Jewish zealot, which required that they learn to get along, they were all very ordinary men.



As one commentator observed: “All except Judas Iscariot were Galileans, “country boys.” Four were fishermen. One was a hated tax-gatherer. Not one of them was famous or rich or noble or well connected. Not one of them was a scribe or a priest or an elder or a ruler of the people. They were, as their detractors labeled them, “uneducated, common men” (Acts 4:13). Yet they formed the nucleus of a band that conquered the ancient world with grace. One of the supreme glories of God’s call is that our weakness is the opportunity for his power—our ordinari-ness makes room for his extraordinari-ness.”

We see this principle gloriously displayed all throughout the scriptures in the lives of men and women like Ruth, Moses, Esther, and Gideon (Exodus 2, 4). Moreover, this paradoxical principle that God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary is clearly spelled out by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10:

*“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses...For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Beloved, to live out our calling we must embrace this paradox that those who God mightily uses live with the reality that weakness is an occasion for God to show His might. Moreover, in view of Christ’s self-sacrificing love, we must die to self so that the resurrection power of Christ may rest upon us.

Now it’s important to clarify that to discern God’s calling and live it out with Christ’s resurrection power, doesn’t necessarily mean that we have to go into full time vocational ministry. If you’ve received Jesus by faith as Savior and Lord, according to God’s word, you are a representative of God’s kingdom and as such you have been called, no matter where you are, to be a minister of reconciliation.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, the Apostle Paul powerfully declares:  
*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has*



*passed away; behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-19*

So living with a sense of calling is not only for Christians in full time vocational ministry. Because your calling is connected with your gifts, it may involve changing vocations, or starting a ministry, or joining a ministry, but more than that it can involve changing your perspective in whatever work you are doing. If you can connect your vocation to a purpose that helps make the lives of people better, you can find a sense of calling in your work.

Christian author Al Wolters puts it this way: “If Christ is the reconciler of all things, and if we have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation on His behalf, then we have a redemptive task wherever our vocation places us in his world.”

To illustrate this point, there’s a classic fable about a man who approaches three other men working in a rock quarry. Each was asked what he was doing. The first man said, “I’m breaking these big rocks into little rocks.” The second man responded, “I’m making a living to provide for my family.” The third man said, “I’m building a cathedral.”

What cathedral are you building? Again, living with a sense of calling may not necessitate changing vocations, although that may be in the cards. It’s about connecting what you’re doing with a transcendent purpose that has the capability to not only make the lives of others better, but also to transform your attitude, and the quality of your work as well.

As he was shaking hands with church attendees after the service, recounts a senior Pastor, he asked an unfamiliar attendee the get-acquainted question, “What do you do?” He expected to hear an occupation for an answer. Instead he listened to Heather’s insightful

reply. “Oh, Pastor,” she said, “I’m a representative of Jesus, cleverly disguised as a machine operator.”

I recently heard another similar testimony about a hospital janitor named Maggie Garza told by vocational Psychologist Bryan Dirk. He shared that she has a job description that involves sweeping floors, wiping down surfaces, taking out the garbage, etc. She does all those things and she does them really well. But she sees her job as bigger than that. She builds relationships with people. She prays for them as she goes from room to room. She also orients her activities so that they’re mi-ni-mally disruptive to the flow of doctors and nurses. She sees what she does as a calling because she links it to this broader mission that the hospital has of providing high quality health care. And that’s precisely what she’s doing.

## **Conclusion**

Beloved, whether you are a stay at home mom, a janitor, or a Pastor, living with a sense of calling is about knowing why you are where you are, why you are doing what you’re doing, and who you are doing it for.

If you can link what you do with a transcendent purpose from God that contributes to making the lives of people better, and fulfill that purpose in love from the outflow of your intimate relationship with Christ, you will live a meaningful life and make a difference for the kingdom of God.

## **Discussion Guide**

Read Luke 6:12-13; John 4:32-34; 8:28-29.

- What place did the consecration of Jesus to His Father play in the selection and appointment (call) of the twelve apostles?
- How is consecration and hearing the call of God in our lives vitally related?

Read Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:13-14.

- What is our first calling to and why is prioritizing it essential to fulfilling our ministerial call?
- What is a calling?
- What does it mean to seek God's face versus seeking His hand?

Read Luke 6:14-16.

- What does it mean to live with a sense of calling?
- How do you differentiate between a humanistic view of calling versus a Christ-centered understanding of calling?
- Review the fable about the three rock quarry workers and discuss how a true sense of calling can change our attitude and the quality of our work.
- Do you need to change your vocation to live with a sense of calling?
- What do you need to do to discern and live with a sense of calling? What's the first step?