

- **Opening comments**

- Thank my team for doing such a great job while Shannon and I were away last week.
- We had a great time of refreshing as well as being a part of the National Fine Arts Festival in Orlando, Florida.
- This year over 65,000 teens were a part of the Fine Arts Festival at their local state level, and 15,000 of them advanced to the national level.
- I can assure you that the future is looking tremendous purely based on these numbers. There's a generation rising and preparing themselves for the last day revival that is coming. Young people's gifts are being discovered, developed, and deployed into ministry.

Connecting To Your Calling

(please stand for the reading of God's word)

Ephesians 4:1-16 (NLT)

4 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. **2** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3** Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. **4** For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 one God and Father of all,
who is over all, in all, and living through all.

7 However, he has given each one of us a special gift^[a] through the generosity of Christ. **8** That is why the Scriptures say,

“When he ascended to the heights,
he led a crowd of captives
and gave gifts to his people.”^[a]

⁹ Notice that it says, “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world.^[a] ¹⁰ And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever, they sound like the truth.¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Let’s look back at verse 1:

4 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

- It seems that there is a misconceived mindset these days that only the people on staff at churches are called. Or, maybe only the people who are on a stage and hold a microphone are called. Or, maybe only those who lead large groups of people are called. Or, maybe only those who’s names are well known are called. My friend, if you have surrendered your life to Christ, **YOU** are called!

Tonight, my heart's desire is that all of us would connect to our calling.

Maybe you're asking yourself: What am I called to do? Why would God call me? Am I even qualified to be called?

Let's look at the 12 disciples that Jesus chose.

These 12 disciples were not always the most intelligent and wise people. Often they were knuckle heads.

Most of us, if we were honest, would have to admit that we probably wouldn't have picked these 12.

- They fought over position.
- They argued about who would sit at the right hand of God.
- They went into cursing fits. (they had a "blankady-blank anointing)
- They cut people's ears off.
- They denied Christ.
- They wanted to call down fire from heaven.
- They got mad and said things they shouldn't have said.
- They doubted!
- One even betrayed Him.
- They had lots of issues.

These weren't "perfect vessels", these were rough and rowdy men that Jesus connected with and before long, **the connection led to a course correction.**

Consider Simon the Zealot

- A zealot was more than a person who had zeal.
- They were a political party (more like terrorists) and they hated Romans and Jews.
- They hated tax collectors.
- They felt like tax collectors were the scum of the earth.
- They actually wanted to kill tax collectors.

Consider Matthew

- When Jesus called the 12, He didn't find them all in a group and tell that group to follow Him.
- He called them as individuals.
- As individuals, they did not know who else would be coming to this fellowship.

Simon and Matthew were coming from 2 different extremes, and they were being called into a close fellowship. They had to learn to forgive, love, and lay pre-conceived ideas down. 2 extremes met and were commanded to love God and love others.

3 All-Inclusive Callings

Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)

² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your **love**.

1. A Call to Love

In this passage, the call to love is described by, "always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your **love**."

- (story about the angry choir director at fine arts)
- Last week while Shannon and I were in Orlando, we met a friend for coffee at this amazing Latin bakery. (tell the story about the homeless man)

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'^[a]; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[b]"

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Our quality of living is a reflection of our quantity of loving.

Luke 7:40-50 (NIV)

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

⁴¹ “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,⁴¹ and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

⁴³ Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

One of the highest forms of love is forgiveness.

2. A Call to Effort

Effort is defined as: *the amount of exertion expended for a specified purpose.*

(verse 3)

³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

- Recently, there have been some people to leave our team. Some of them transitioned respectfully and properly. Others chose to leave without any communication.
- In this situation, it required effort on my part to “let them go” and choose to bless them even when they did not transition respectfully.

- Sometimes, we let the lack of effort from others effect our effort.
- Be the one who initiates effort that produces unity in the Spirit.
- (story about the treadmill at the gym: person next to me speeds up.....)

10 things that require no talent:

1. Being on time
2. Work ethic
3. Effort
4. Body language
5. Energy
6. Attitude
7. Passion
8. Being coachable
9. Doing Extra
10. Being prepared

Ephesians 5:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

3. A Call to The Future

(verse 4)

⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope **for the future**.