

UNDERSTANDING THE CALL OF GOD

A Call To Ministry Training Manual

Theme Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:9 (KJV)

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

Teaching Objectives

By the end of this lesson, ministers should be able to:

1. Understand what it biblically means to be **called by God**.
2. Recognize the difference between a **burden, gift, opportunity, ambition, and divine calling**.
3. Identify common ways God confirms His call upon a person's life.
4. Understand the **internal warfare and conflicts** that often accompany a genuine call.
5. Understand the difference between being **called, chosen, prepared, qualified, and commissioned**.
6. Embrace the **cost, character development, discipline, and process** necessary to carry the call faithfully.

THE CALL IS BIGGER THAN THE PERSON

One of the greatest responsibilities in the life of a believer is properly discerning and responding to the call of God. The call of God is not merely an invitation to preach, hold a microphone, receive a title, wear clerical garments, or occupy a position. **The call of God is heaven placing a demand upon an earthly vessel for a divine purpose.** When God calls a person, He lays claim to their life for His purposes. A calling is therefore not simply about **what you will do for God; it is about who you must become in order to faithfully represent God. This is why calling and preparation cannot be separated.** God may reveal your assignment in a moment, but He may take years developing the person who can carry that assignment without destroying themselves, hurting others, or dishonoring His name.

Jeremiah 1:4–5

“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

Notice the progression:

God knew Jeremiah.

God sanctified Jeremiah.

God ordained Jeremiah.

Then God sent Jeremiah.

I am Saved and Called

Your calling begins in the **mind of God**, not in the applause of people.

DIVINE PRINCIPLE:

God does not call you because people discovered you. People eventually discover what God has already determined concerning you.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CALLED BY GOD?

The word **call** carries the idea of being summoned, invited, appointed, or designated for a particular purpose. When God calls someone, He is summoning that person out of merely living according to personal preference and into living according to **divine purpose**.

Jesus demonstrates this clearly when calling His disciples. **Matthew 4:18–20**

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”

Notice three dimensions:

“Follow Me” — Relationship.

“I will make you” — Transformation.

“Fishers of men” — Assignment.

You operate according to the measure of the thing that’s already working inside of you. You have a personal responsibility to be fortified in your God-given identity, otherwise, you won’t be effective.

Many people want the assignment without the relationship and transformation.

But the biblical order is:

FOLLOW → BECOME → DO.

Before ministry is something you **do**, ministry must become something God has **formed within you**.

THE CALL OF GOD HAS SEVERAL DIMENSIONS

1. The Call to Salvation

Before God calls us to ministry, He calls us to Himself.

Romans 8:30

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Never allow your ministry calling to become more important than your relationship with Christ.

You are a Christian before you are a minister.

2. The Call to Holiness

1 Peter 1:15–16

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

The call of God carries a demand for consecration.

Your gift may attract people, but your **character determines whether you can safely carry what your gift attracts**.

3. The Call to Service

You’re called to work. Service is work in the Kingdom.

Galatians 5:13

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

Ministry is fundamentally service.

If serving people beneath you feels beneath you, you are not ready to lead people entrusted to you.

4. The Call to a Specific Assignment

God gives different people different assignments.

Paul understood this.

Galatians 1:15–16

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen...”

The call answers: “God wants my life.”

Assignment answers: “What does God specifically want to accomplish through my life?”

CALLING IS NOT THE SAME AS GIFTING

This distinction is extremely important for ministers.

You can be gifted without being ready.

Gift identifies **capacity**.

Calling identifies **purpose**.

Character determines **trustworthiness**.

Preparation develops **capacity and maturity**.

Commissioning releases you into **responsibility**.

Romans 11:29

“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

Never interpret gifting as proof of maturity.

A person can preach powerfully and still need development.

A person can prophesy accurately and still need character formation.

A person can be anointed and still need accountability.

Manifestation is not maturity.

HOW DO I RECOGNIZE THE CALL OF GOD?

Calling is often recognized progressively rather than instantaneously.

God may reveal something internally and then confirm it through Scripture, circumstances, spiritual leadership, fruit, gifting, burden, and opportunity.

1. There Is Often a Persistent Holy Burden

Jeremiah attempted to stop speaking, but the burden would not leave him.

Jeremiah 20:9 “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

A genuine calling frequently survives inconvenience.

You may become discouraged.

You may question yourself.

You may attempt to run.

But something keeps pulling your heart toward the assignment.

A divine burden is often an indication of divine assignment.

2. There Will Be Grace and Gifting Connected to the Assignment

1 Peter 4:10 “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

God does not call without supplying grace.

Where God assigns you, there will normally be evidence of His grace operating through you.

3. There Will Eventually Be Fruit

Jesus said: **Matthew 7:20 “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”**

Calling produces more than excitement, it eventually produces **fruit**.

People are strengthened.

People grow.

People receive clarity.

Lives are transformed.

Christ is revealed.

The kingdom advances.

4. God Often Uses Spiritual Leadership to Confirm Calling

Acts 13:2–3 “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

Notice something powerful:

God had **already called them**, but spiritual leadership **recognized, confirmed, and released them**.

Healthy ministry does not despise accountability.

God calls.

The Church recognizes.

Leaders develop.

Character qualifies.

God determines the timing.

HOW DO I ACCEPT THE CALL OF GOD?

Acceptance begins with surrender. Isaiah encountered God and responded:

Isaiah 6:8 “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

Acceptance means: “Lord, my answer is yes, even before I understand everything my yes will require.”

Acceptance requires surrendering:

- Your timetable
- Your comfort
- Your personal agenda
- Your need for recognition
- Your fear of people
- Your right to control every outcome
- Your preferred method
- Your definition of success

The surrendered minister says:

“Lord, I belong to You. Develop me, correct me, teach me, send me, restrain me, reposition me, and use me according to Your will.”

INTERNAL CONFLICTS WHEN YOU ARE CALLED

One of the least discussed aspects of calling is the **internal warfare of the called person**. Being called does not automatically eliminate insecurity, fear, inadequacy, or uncertainty. Sometimes the announcement of your calling exposes everything inside you that must now be confronted.

1. “I AM NOT ENOUGH” — INADEQUACY

Moses struggled with this.

Exodus 3:11 “And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

Moses’ question was: “Who am I?” God’s answer was essentially: “Certainly I will be with thee.”

The answer to inadequacy is not always increased self-confidence.

Sometimes the answer is increased **God-confidence**.

God’s call is not dependent upon your sufficiency; it is dependent upon His sufficiency working through your surrender.

2. “I CAN’T DO THIS” — INSECURITY

Exodus 4:10–12 “And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent... but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth?... Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”

Moses focused on his weakness.

God focused on His ability.

Calling often forces us to confront the areas where we have built an identity around our limitations.

3. “I’M NOT READY” — FEELINGS OF IMMATURITY

Jeremiah experienced this.

Jeremiah 1:6–8 “Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.”

God was not denying Jeremiah’s development.

He was correcting Jeremiah’s **identity**.

Do not allow your current condition to make you deny God’s future intention.

4. FEAR OF FAILURE

A minister may privately wonder:

“What if I fail?”

“What if people reject me?”

“What if I misunderstood God?”

“What if I make mistakes?”

“What if I’m not as gifted as others?”

Fear causes many called people to remain spectators when God has called them to become participants.

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

5. COMPARISON

Comparison is particularly dangerous in ministry. You begin measuring your preaching against someone else's preaching, your church against another church, your prophetic gift against someone else's gift, or your progress against another person's progress.

2 Corinthians 10:12 "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

You cannot accurately measure your calling with someone else's measuring stick.

Their assignment requires their grace.

Your assignment requires yours.

6. THE DESIRE TO RUN FROM THE CALL

Jonah represents the called person attempting to escape divine responsibility.

Jonah 1:1-3 "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it... But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD..."

Sometimes people run because they are rebellious.

Others run because they are afraid.

Others run because they understand something about the **cost attached to their yes**.

But running from the call does not remove the call.

"MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN"

Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

This statement comes at the conclusion of Jesus' parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14. Therefore, we should not isolate the phrase from its context. Many received the **invitation**, but the invitation required an appropriate **response**.

This gives us a powerful ministry principle:

CALLING IS AN INVITATION. CHOOSING INVOLVES RESPONSE AND QUALIFICATION.

God may call many, but not everyone responds properly to what the call requires.

Some love the **idea of ministry** but reject the discipline of ministry.

Some want the **platform** but reject the process.

Some want **authority** but resist accountability.

Some want **anointing** but reject consecration.

Some want to be **sent** but refuse to be trained.

Some want public **recognition** but resist private correction.

THE CALL MAY BE FREE, BUT CARRYING IT WILL COST YOU SOMETHING.

THE COST OF THE CALL

Jesus never advertised discipleship as convenience.

Luke 9:23 "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Notice three requirements:

DENY YOURSELF. Your flesh cannot be allowed to govern your ministry.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS. There will be sacrifices attached to obedience.

FOLLOW CHRIST. You do not determine the direction, Christ does.

WHAT CAN THE CALL COST?

The call may cost you:

- Comfort
- Convenience
- Popularity
- Certain relationships
- Personal preferences
- Time
- Sleep
- Money
- Opportunities that conflict with assignment
- The freedom to respond emotionally whenever you want
- The freedom to live carelessly
- The need to always be understood
- The need to always be celebrated

Paul declared:

Philippians 3:7–8 “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...”

Anything you refuse to surrender can eventually become competition with your calling.

THE PROCESS OF BEING QUALIFIED

There is a difference between being **called** and being **qualified to carry responsibility**. God calls us by grace, but Scripture still establishes qualifications for leadership.

1 Timothy 3:1–2 “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.”

Notice Paul immediately begins discussing **character**.

This teaches us something critical:

Your calling may open the door to development, but character determines what responsibility can safely be entrusted to you.

GOD DEVELOPS THE PERSON BEFORE ENTRUSTING THEM WITH A PLATFORM

Look at Scripture:

Joseph had a dream, but went through the pit, slavery, temptation, false accusation, and prison before the palace. Moses had a burden for Israel, but spent forty years in Midian before confronting Pharaoh. David was anointed king, but returned to tending sheep and later endured the wilderness before occupying the throne. Paul encountered Christ, but still experienced seasons of preparation before becoming one of the primary apostolic voices of the early Church.

The pattern is unmistakable:

REVELATION → PREPARATION → FORMATION → TESTING → TRUST → RELEASE.

Do not despise the season between **anointing and appointing**.

Psalms 105:19 “Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.”

Sometimes the prophecy over your life becomes the very thing that tests your life.

Can you wait?

Can you serve?

Can you submit?

Can you remain faithful when nobody recognizes you?

Can you celebrate another person while your own promise is still developing?

Can you carry an anointing without demanding a title?

SEVEN AREAS GOD OFTEN DEVELOPS BEFORE HE RELEASES US INTO GREATER

1. CHARACTER

Can God trust your private life?

Proverbs 10:9

“He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.”

2. HUMILITY

Can God increase you without you becoming impressed with yourself?

1 Peter 5:6

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

3. OBEDIENCE

Can God trust you to obey when His instructions are uncomfortable?

1 Samuel 15:22

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

4. FAITHFULNESS

Can you be trusted with little before demanding much?

Luke 16:10

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much...”

Your next assignment may be hidden inside your faithfulness to your present assignment.

5. SUBMISSION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Can you receive instruction and correction?

Hebrews 13:17

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls...”

A person who cannot be corrected is dangerous with authority.

Before God gives you people to lead, He will often test whether you can be led.

6. SERVANTHOOD

Mark 10:43–45

“But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister...”

Kingdom greatness is measured differently.

In the Kingdom:

We don't lead because we need people to serve us.

We lead because God has trusted us to serve people.

7. ENDURANCE

James 1:3-4 “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

God develops ministers who can remain faithful through seasons of pressure, disappointment, misunderstanding, correction, warfare, waiting, and change.

A ministry that will last requires a minister who has learned how to endure.

FIVE DANGEROUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT CALLING

1. “BECAUSE I’M CALLED, I DESERVE A PLATFORM.”

No. Calling gives you responsibility, not entitlement.

2. “BECAUSE I’M ANOINTED, I DON’T NEED TRAINING.”

Anointing does not eliminate the need for development.

3. “BECAUSE GOD CALLED ME, I DON’T NEED ACCOUNTABILITY.”

Biblical ministry repeatedly demonstrates community, leadership, order, and accountability.

4. “BECAUSE I HAVE A TITLE, I AM MATURE.”

Titles identify functions. **Character reveals maturity.**

5. “BECAUSE I’M NOT BEING SEEN, I’M NOT BEING USED.”

Some of God’s greatest preparation happens in obscurity.

Hidden does not mean forgotten.

Sometimes God hides what He intends to reveal later.

THE MINISTER’S PROGRESSION

Each minister must be able to recognize these stages:

1. CALLED

God awakens you to divine purpose.

2. CONVICTED

You become unable to comfortably ignore the assignment.

3. SURRENDERED

You give God your yes.

4. PREPARED

You study, serve, learn, submit, and develop.

5. PROCESSED

Your motives, character, ego, wounds, habits, attitudes, and weaknesses are confronted.

6. PROVEN

Your faithfulness is tested over time.

7. TRUSTED

Greater responsibility can safely be placed upon you.

8. COMMISSIONED

You are released into greater levels of assignment and responsibility.

9. CONTINUALLY DEVELOPED

Even after commissioning, **God never stops developing the minister.**

PROPHETIC CHARGE TO ALL MINISTERS: PROTECT YOUR YES

The call of God upon your life is precious.

Protect it.

Protect it from pride.

Protect it from offense.

Protect it from sexual immorality.

Protect it from bitterness.

Protect it from jealousy.

Protect it from competition.

Protect it from greed.

Protect it from premature exposure.

Protect it from wrong relationships.

Protect it from spiritual laziness.

Protect it from the need for applause.

Protect it from the temptation to become something God never called you to become.

Paul told Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:14–16 “Neglect not the gift that is in thee... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them...”

You have a responsibility to steward what God has placed upon your life.

FINAL CHARGE:

Ministers, **do not merely ask God to use you, ask God to make you usable.**

Do not merely pray: “**Lord, increase my platform.**” Pray: “**Lord, increase my capacity.**”

Don’t merely pray: “**Lord, give me authority.**” Pray: “**Lord, develop the character necessary to carry authority.**”

Don’t merely pray: “**Lord, send me.**” Pray: “**Lord, prepare me so that when You send me, I can represent You well.**”

Because the greatest tragedy is not simply failing to recognize your calling.

It is recognizing your calling but refusing the process necessary to carry it.

God is not merely raising **gifted ministers.**

He is raising **formed ministers.**

Consecrated ministers.

Accountable ministers.

Teachable ministers.

Stable ministers.

Faithful ministers.

Servant-hearted ministers.

Ministers who can survive success.

Ministers who can endure adversity.

Ministers who will protect the integrity of the call.

2 Timothy 2:20–21 “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth... If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

THE CALL IS GOD’S CHOICE.

THE PROCESS REQUIRES YOUR PARTICIPATION.

THE GLORY MUST ALWAYS BELONG TO GOD.

MINISTERS DECLARATION:

“I will not merely carry a title; I will carry the weight of my calling. I will submit to God’s process. I will embrace correction, preparation, consecration, and development. I will not run ahead of God, and I will not shrink back from what He has spoken. I will protect my character, cultivate my gift, remain teachable, honor spiritual order, and faithfully serve wherever God plants me. I accept the call, I embrace the cost, I submit to the process, and by the grace of God, I will finish my assignment well.”