

SGI

STRENGTHEN · GROW · INCREASE

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**A HIGH
CALLING**

THE SGI
JOURNAL
OF LEADERSHIP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM THE SGI COMMITTEE CHAIR

Called to be Saints

Darrell Johns

FROM THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

A Specific Calling

David K. Bernard

Knock, Knock, Who's There?

Bryan Parkey

A High Calling

Scott Graham

Funneling the Call

Eugene Wilson

The Call of God

Brent Coltharp

Products of Investments

Gary Dornbach

The Mantle of the Call and the Dismantling of Expectations

Chris Paris

ISSUE 21 TOOLBOX

Calling and Vocation Questionnaire



MISSION STATEMENT

Leading the United Pentecostal Church International to think strategically about future growth.

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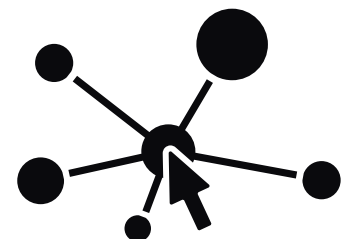
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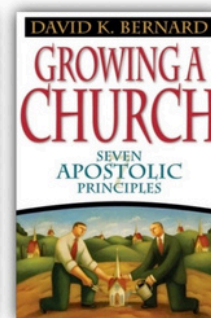
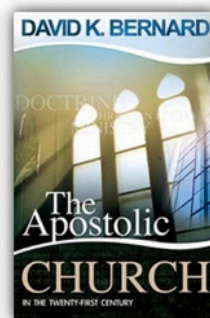
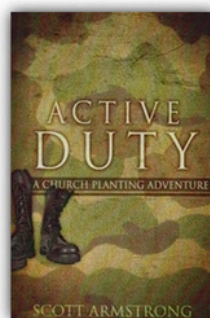
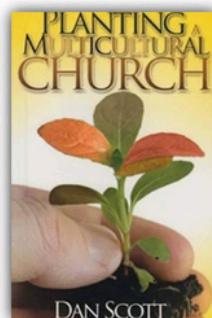
Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) Resources



The Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) was born in the heart of General Superintendent David K. Bernard as God gave him a vision for growing the North American church. The General Board of the UPCI approved the forming of SGI for the purpose of highlighting growth in the areas of the number of churches and ministers in North America. The four focus points of SGI are outlined below along with resources available through the Pentecostal Resources Group.

Multiply the number of churches

SGI will assist districts by providing promotion, planning, and training with the goal of enabling every district to at least double the number of churches (including preaching points, daughter works, autonomous church plants, multicultural church plants, integrate independent Apostolic churches, etc.) in one decade.



Feedback





Called to be Saints

Darrell Johns, SGI Committee Chair

On multiple occasions, I heard the late Reverend J. T. Pugh say, “It’s nice if a preacher can also be a Christian.” Brother Pugh would sometimes chuckle when he made this statement, but there was much truth in his jest.

In this issue of the *SGI Journal* dedicated to the call of God, it is imperative we reinforce the obvious: preachers are called first to be saints. In the opening verses of Romans and I Corinthians, Paul reminded believers they are “called to be saints” (Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2). Paul considered himself to be “less than the least of all saints” but a saint nonetheless (Ephesians 3:8).

The foundation for ministry is a Christian life. “It is nice if a preacher can also be a Christian.” Preaching is not performance. It must be the spiritual outflow of a godly life. Experience teaches it is possible to succeed as a preacher while failing as a saint—at least for a while.

Every preacher’s priority must be personal salvation and spiritual wholeness. We must save ourselves from this crooked generation (Acts 2:40). We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling—before we preach to others (Philippians 2:12).

The greatest failure in ministry is for someone to preach to others and then “be a castaway” (I Corinthians 9:27). I have been told that spiritually shipwrecked preachers still get sermon thoughts, but they have disqualified themselves from preaching them. These preachers testify it is one of the most painful consequences of backsliding.

“It is nice if a preacher can also be a Christian.”

Let me get personal. I live with an awareness that I need to constantly care for the state of my soul. Proverbs 4:23 is a life verse for me: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Everything I do in life and ministry flows from my inner spiritual world. If I keep my soul, it becomes a resource for my marriage, family, and ministry. If I lose my soul, I lose everything that matters. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). Perhaps this article comes across as a little preachy, but I have witnessed too many spiritual collapses in preachers not to care for my own soul... and yours.

As you pray and study the Bible, always consider the promptings you feel that could make a good sermon might be a sermon for you as well. Sermons are always first for the preacher and then for the congregation. As you fulfill the call of God in your life, be mindful that your ministry rises and falls on your call to be a saint.

Darrell Johns serves as pastor of Atlanta West Pentecostal Church, assistant general superintendent of the Eastern Zone, UPCI, and chair of the Strategic Growth Initiative Committee of the General Board.



A Specific Calling

David K. Bernard, General Superintendent

Since every Christian is called to serve, we can serve the Lord no matter where we are. If life places us in less than ideal circumstances, we can still be productive. Sometimes job, family, or health issues limit our options. Sometimes doors close due to circumstances beyond our control, due to our own poor choices, or due to the actions of carnal people. Nevertheless, if we turn to God and seek His will, God will open doors for us. When we love God and are called according to His purpose, He will work all things together for good (Romans 8:28). If Plan A is blocked, God can give us Plan B, C, or D. As in the case of Joseph, it may seem that the actions of others have maneuvered us completely out of God's plan, but in the end we will be where God wants us.

Ultimately, our ministry isn't in the hands of people but in the hands of God.

At the same time, we should actively seek the will of God, and in order to enter the fivefold ministry there must be a call of God upon our lives. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers of the New Testament were called by God, and their call was recognized by the body of believers. They had the joint approval of God and the church. (See Acts 13:13; Galatians 2:7-10; 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5.)

We need a sense of God's long-term call for us and a sense that we are fulfilling this call. We also need God's direction to fulfill our ministry in the short term. The will of God isn't mystical or mysterious. He wants us to know His will (Ephesians 5:17). It isn't merely for the remote future but also for the present. We seek God's will in our present circumstances and follow it to the best of our ability. As we do, the will of God unfolds for the future. Regardless of physical location, we can attain a place of consecration, communion with God, and personal development so God can lead us where He wants us to go.

Most of the will of God consists of doing what we already know to do.

As we fulfill His will for the present, He opens doors of opportunity and provides fresh direction. We continue in the will of God. We place ourselves in God's will and let it unfold and develop.

There should be a definite call to the ministry of the gospel. Throughout the Scriptures, God's spokespersons received a divine call, including the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. Barnabas and Paul received a definite missionary call (Acts 13:2). Paul alluded to the call of an otherwise unknown minister: "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it'" (Colossians 4:17).

Everyone's call is different. Some may have a more dramatic experience than others. Generally, it's a process in which God deals with people, gives them a burden for souls, and develops them, but there comes a time when they clearly understand that He wants them to preach the gospel. Not all ministries are the same, but in each case there should be awareness that the person has received a ministry and a mandate from God. Sometimes we may feel a "holy dissatisfaction" in which God is preparing us for change. At first we may find things to criticize in our current circumstances, but they aren't the problem. Rather, God wants to move us out of our comfort zone and further into His plan.

Not only do ministers need a divine call, they need divine direction in the exercise of their ministry. Barnabas and Paul were already ministers of the gospel, but while serving as leaders in the Antioch church they received a missionary call, apparently through a vocal gift of the Spirit. This call came from God, but the church leaders recognized it and approved it by the laying on of hands. “As they [the prophets and teachers in Antioch] ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3).

If a call isn’t recognized by the church, then the person who feels a call should continue to demonstrate faithfulness and fruitfulness in his or her present area of service until God opens a new door. A call doesn’t mean an automatic qualification. Those who are called may need to qualify themselves for their call until their preparation is evident to leadership, for leaders have the responsibility to ensure that ministers meet the proper biblical qualifications.

We find further examples of God’s direction in Paul’s missionary work: “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:6-10). Paul and his missionary company had planned to go into the Roman province of Asia, part of modern Turkey, but the Holy Spirit forbade them, whether by impression, spiritual gift, or other means. Then they attempted to go to Bithynia, but again, through the work of the Spirit, they discerned it wasn’t God’s will. Eventually Paul received a vision instructing him go to Macedonia. The members of the missionary team were already called as preachers and as missionaries, but they received further direction from God that they accepted as a call to preach the gospel in Europe.

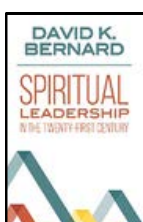
At different times in life we need direction from God. Our ministry, focus, or location may change.

While we can minister effectively wherever we are, we need God’s specific leading to know what God wants us to do and where He wants us to go.

We need assurance that we are at the right place at the right time in the will of God for our ministry. When we face trials, opposition, and spiritual attack, we need confirmation from God that we are where He wants us to be and are doing what He wants us to do.



David K. Bernard is the general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International.



Recommended Resource
Article adapted from *Spiritual Leadership in the Twenty-First Century* by David K. Bernard (Word Aflame Press, 2015).



Recommended Resource
Click here to access *Apostolic Life in the 21st Century Podcast*.



Knock, Knock, Who's There?

Bryan Parkey

Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle when the Lord called him in the middle of the night. Thinking Eli was calling him, he ran to him, saying, "Here am I." Eli sent him back to bed two times before recognizing that God was speaking to Samuel. When he realized what was happening, Eli instructed Samuel to return to bed and, if the call came again, say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." (See 1 Samuel 3.) God spoke again, Samuel responded accordingly, and a new era of spiritual leadership began.

Your voice as a leader is vital in helping others recognize their call, gifts, and place in the kingdom of God. All of us have had moments where the voice of a mentor illuminated our potential and put us on a path to ministry. You can be and must be that voice for someone else. God is calling, but we must help them know who's there.

Here are a few suggestions for doing so:

- **Look for potential in others:** As a leader in a ministry, listen to the voice of the Spirit and look for those who have a calling. Observe their strengths and where they show promise in serving the Kingdom.
- **Tell them what you see in them:** Encourage individuals by letting them know how their unique qualities can contribute to the mission. Share your observations and affirm their abilities to inspire and motivate them.
- **Direct them to the source of all ministry:** Emphasize the necessity for a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. Help them to develop daily spiritual disciplines and spiritual accountability.
- **Provide training and growth opportunities:** Offer opportunities for further training and spiritual growth. This could include mentoring programs, leadership seminars, or educational resources to help them develop their skills and deepen their understanding of ministry.
- **Make time for them:** In the busy world of ministry, it's essential to prioritize spending quality time with those you are guiding. Whether through regular one-on-one meetings or informal conversations, your connection to them is vital for their growth and well-being.
- **Create avenues to exercise their gift:** Provide platforms within the ministry where individuals can put their talents into practice. Consider assigning specific roles or responsibilities that align with their gifts.
- **Compliment their successes:** Acknowledge and celebrate their achievements in ministry. A little bit of encouragement goes a long way.
- **Encourage them when they fail:** Ministry can be challenging, and failures are inevitable. Be a source of support when setbacks come. Help them see failures as opportunities for growth and learning rather than reasons for discouragement.
- **Celebrate their wins with others:** Share success stories within the church or ministry team. Celebrating together builds a sense of community and encourages others to recognize and appreciate each other's efforts.
- **Teach them to be a mentor to someone else:** The best way for them to learn from you is to share what they are learning with others.

Bryan Parkey

Bryan Parkey is the district superintendent of the Missouri district UPCI and serves as the vice chair of the SGI Committee. He and his wife, Lisa, have been married for twenty-five years and live in Wentzville, MO. Bryan is passionate about seeing a thriving Apostolic work in every community.

A HIGH CALLING

Scott Graham



IDEA IN BRIEF

YOUR CALLING IS HIGH BECAUSE OF ITS SOURCE.

YOUR CALLING IS HIGH BECAUSE OF ITS REWARD.

YOUR CALLING IS HIGH BECAUSE OF ITS PURPOSE.

In his letter to the church of Philippi, the apostle Paul penned the following words, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14). While that calling can certainly have broader applications than solely a call to preach, for those of us who are engaged in the public proclamation of the Word of God, it serves us well to remember that the calling to do so is indeed a high one.

Charles H. Spurgeon, the famed and influential pastor for thirty-eight years of what became the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England, once said, “If God calls you to be a minister, don’t stoop to becoming a king.” On earth there is no calling higher than that of a preacher of the gospel. Having received that call does not place one above others on some kind of hierarchy of position. Jesus Himself reminded us that anyone who would be great must become a servant. So, we are not exalted by a call to preach, but we are distinguished by it.

The magnitude of what it means to be so chosen by God, compels us to diligence and faithfulness in fulfilling that calling. We must never treat it lightly, for it is a holy thing. It is a high calling. Let’s consider why.

Your calling is high because of its source.

I’m sure each of us have a story to tell of when and where and how God called us. While the details may vary, the common fact is our calling was not self-generated. It was not the product of man’s influence. It was and remains the “high calling of God.” You are not here of your own choice. You didn’t ordain this for your life. Your labor in His kingdom is not the result of random circumstances, nor is your path merely a collection of cosmic coincidences!

You are a preacher because a voice from another realm beckoned you and commissioned you. While there are men who have undoubtedly influenced you positively and invested in you, we must always remember this fact: He called you!

The same God who spoke to Moses from a bush that burned but didn't, who sent Samuel to anoint David, and who arrested Paul on the road to Damascus came to you perhaps at an altar, in a sermon, or in a dream. And He called you. Your calling is high because of its source.

Your calling is high because of its reward.

No pure-minded preacher answered God's call for what he could receive from doing so. I recently saw the Forbes list of the five hundred richest Americans, and I don't believe there was one preacher on the list!

But in all the ways that matter most, that list was flawed because our riches cannot be audited here. We are laying up treasures where moth and rust can't corrupt and where thieves are not a problem! We may not have any barns here, but we have a reward there. "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).

We work for the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, as well as the hills, the gold in the hills, and the air over the hills, and He has a profit-sharing plan! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

I admit there are no wages, but that's because I'm a servant! The wages I had earned was death, but I get the gift of God, eternal life with Him! The benefit plan is applied daily as found in Psalm 68:19, and the retirement package is literally out of this world.

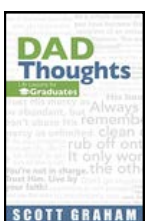
This calling is a high one given the magnitude of the reward it carries.

Your calling is high because of its purpose.

We have not been called to make money. We have not been called to acquire fame. We have not been called to secure popularity. We have not been called to amass things. We have not been called to gather accolades.

These quests all pale in comparison to our calling, for we have been called to reach the lost with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ! Discipling one individual is a greater accomplishment than winning a Nobel prize. Praying one inmate through to the Holy Ghost is more notable than having your name read before the highest seats of human government. Preaching one sermon under the anointing that draws a sinner to the cross is more significant than finding a cure for some dreaded disease.

We must never get distracted. Nothing else in life is as high as this calling. Loving someone and reaching him with the Word of God has the power to change his eternal destiny. Nothing is higher. Nothing is greater. That purpose is what defines your calling!



Recommended Resource
Click here to access *Dad Thoughts: Life Lessons for Graduates* by Scott Graham.

Scott Graham



Scott Graham has been involved directly in ministry all of his adult life. He has served as a youth pastor, associate pastor, and senior pastor at the local church, and in various sectional, district, and general offices of the United Pentecostal Church. He currently serves as the general secretary/treasurer of the UPCI. He has been blessed to travel around the world spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and teaching and is a published author. He is proud to be Michelle's husband for almost 38 years, Jeremy's and Jessica's dad, and Braxton's father-in-law!



Funneling the Call

Eugene T. Wilson

I was fifteen when I understood God was calling me into pastoral ministry. I had felt God's hand on my life and had a balanced perspective that ministry extended beyond pulpit ministry. I still think this way and realize it as a correct biblical view. Paul did, too. In Ephesians 4:11-12, he wrote about the responsibility of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip or prepare others for their work of ministry. For some, their work of ministry might be to be a doctor, schoolteacher, auto mechanic, farmer, and so on. For many, their ministry isn't a job but a calling. That is a good thing.

The father of one of my childhood friends was a podiatrist. His story is unique. He loved to tell it. At the age of twenty-seven and while working on the back of a garbage truck, he decided to return to school and become a foot doctor. He would encourage my friends and me often to try different jobs. To avoid getting caught up in trying to impress others. To be what God had called us to be. To understand life is a journey, and we should enjoy it to the best of our abilities. He would tell us we should never stoop to be the CEO of a company if God had called us to manage a coffee shop.

His exhortations remind me of Paul's writings. Paul wrote that we should not compare ourselves amongst ourselves (II Corinthians 10:12). If God calls us to be an assistant pastor, we shouldn't stoop to become a senior pastor. We need help with such thinking, though. We often view things hierarchically and try to work up the ladder. This is not wise.

I recall a short conversation with an elderly minister years ago concerning a friend of mine who was an assistant pastor. I was asked, "When will he do something for God and pastor his own church?" Interestingly, my friend was responsible for a significant ministry in a thriving church. In the eyes of the elder, however, he wasn't doing much at all because he didn't have the title "senior pastor." While I highly respected the elder, I knew such thinking wasn't right.

Paul, in his writings in I Corinthians, spoke against such. We shouldn't create hierarchies within the church. We shouldn't be driven by ego. We shouldn't divide up the body of Christ. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul's focus is not one of power. The apostle has power over the prophet. Together, they have control over the pastor. That is not right. The focus is one of purpose. The purpose of the ministry is to equip others for ministry.

The Ministry of Brethren

Ministry isn't just for certain people; ministry is for everyone. Interestingly, the word pastor appears only one time in the New Testament. The term "elder," which in many ways resembles the role of a pastor today, appears only five times in Paul's letters. And overseers, which is often used interchangeably with "elder," appears four times. While the elders/overseers held an essential role within the New Testament church and, according to I Timothy 5:17, were worthy of double honor, particularly those who worked diligently in the Word and doctrine, Scripture reveals that the primary focus was the believers, not the elders. For example, the word translated as "brethren," which means "fellow believer," appears 346 times in the New Testament. It occurs 134 times in Paul's epistles alone. In most places, this word is Paul's shorthand way of referring to all the believers in the church—both men and women.

Paul repeatedly emphasized that every member fulfilled a vital role in the body; everyone was to engage in ministry and was gifted. In other words, ministry wasn't restricted to a select few; the believers were also responsible.

Notice what the Bible says about the brethren and ministry:

- o Be kind to one another (Romans 12:10).
- o Honor one another (Romans 12:10).
- o Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
- o Instruct one another (Romans 15:14).
- o Discipline fallen members (I Corinthians 5:3-5; 6:1-6).
- o Organize the church's affairs (I Corinthians 11:33-34; 14:39-40; 16:2-3).
- o Care for one another (I Corinthians 12:25).
- o Abound in the work of the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58).
- o Forebear one another (Ephesians 4:25).
- o Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
- o Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).
- o Encourage one another (I Thessalonians 5:11).
- o Warn the unruly (I Thessalonians 5:14).
- o Comfort the feeble (I Thessalonians 5:14).
- o Support the weak (I Thessalonians 5:14).
- o Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25).

Principles for Equipping

The message is clear: believers are not to sit and absorb ministry. Believers are to be actively engaged in ministry. Everyone is to be involved in ministry.

Our responsibility is to equip others to fulfill God's call on their life. To do so, we should build on the following principles:

- Ministry is broader than pulpit ministry.
- We should honor one another's ministry.
- We should celebrate the diversity that exists within the body.
- We must empower others for their ministry instead of dictating ministry to others to fulfill our vision.
- We should help others understand how to funnel ministry.

Funneling Ministry

I was first exposed to the concept of the funnel when my mentor spread his arms wide and then brought his hands close together while saying, "Eugene, you've done something unique. Like a funnel, you have homed in on your calling." This was during a period in which I had resigned as senior pastor, taken on a role as family pastor, returned to school for my MA, and then on to my doctorate. Since then, I have experienced refunneling numerous times, and looking back, I can see where I had previously engaged in the same.

Acts 6 offers a biblical example of refunneling. The seven were selected to serve tables. Stephen and Philip, however, went on to engage in other venues of ministry. Both experienced a refunneling.

We must home in on what God has called us to do. Often this involves refunneling. As ministers, we are called to equip others for their work of ministry. This includes helping others to experience refunneling. It is a biblical thing. It is the right thing. And it is a good thing.



Read works by Eugene Wilson by clicking here.

Eugene Wilson

Dr. Eugene Wilson serves as president of Texas Bible College. He is the founder of the coaching and consulting organization Equipping Leaders. He has a doctorate in strategic leadership from Regent University and over thirty years of pastoral experience. He has written several books including *Realign*, *Seventy*, *Rodentivity*, *Rhythm*, and *The Difference Maker*.



The Call of God

Brent Coltharp

Called and Chosen

The call of God was first extended to Abram and his children, the Israelites (Isaiah 51:2; Hosea 11:1). In the first century, the call extended to the church, which consisted of both Jew and Gentile, fulfilling Yahweh's promise to Abraham concerning all the nations of the earth (Genesis 22:18). It is important to recognize the Greek word for church (ekklesia) indicates individuals who have been called out or called from. Peter emphasized God called this holy nation out of darkness into marvelous light (I Peter 2:9).

Jesus would elaborate, occasionally using a slogan that stated, "For many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16, 22:14). Hearing a call and receiving an invitation doesn't necessarily mean the individual invited will answer the call and become a part of the chosen. For example, Jesus used an arranged marriage as an analogy to teach about the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 22:1-14). A certain king commissioned his servants to call those invited to the wedding, but many were unwilling to come. The call was not a priority to others, as they chose to focus on their farm or business ventures instead of answering the call. Many were called.

Walk Worthy of the Call

Paul exhorted the Ephesians to walk worthy of the call with which they were called (Ephesians 4:1). On occasion, he would elaborate on what walking "worthy of the call" entailed: lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, pleasing God, being fruitful in every good work, etc. (Ephesians 4:2-3; Colossians 1:10-11).

However, the first step in walking worthy of the call is answering, responding to the invitation, and becoming a part of the chosen.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, following his appeal to walk worthy of their calling, he referenced the gifts that God gave to the church for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). In particular, he mentioned the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Readers can witness a specific example of Paul's understanding in his letter to the Romans, where he opened by introducing himself as one called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God (Romans 1:1).

Paul understood that beyond the initial call to the eternal life of salvation, to become a part of the chosen holy nation of the body of Christ, additional calls invite disciples to separate themselves for an additional purpose in fulfilling the Great Commission. Paul answered the call to follow Jesus, to become a preacher (II Timothy 1:11), to become an apostle to the Gentiles, to embark on missionary journeys (Acts 13:2), and even to go to preach the gospel in specific areas such as Macedonia, of which we refer to as the famed Macedonian call (Acts 16:10).

The Call to Ministry

Whose Call?

During the late 1980's, a family member was commuting to work when she shared with her coworker that her brother-in-law had been called into ministry. The coworker received the news, discerning that this call was a positive occurrence based on the enthusiasm of the announcement. After offering her congratulations, she responded with a follow-up question, "Who called him into ministry?" That is a valid question. Verbs require both subjects and objects. If a call is taking place, someone must be issuing the call. Unwittingly, this coworker had identified the most crucial question when considering calling into ministry.

In an increasingly secularized society, the assumption that a person is called to enter Christian ministry can be perceived as the product of family influence, recruitment by the greater faith community, or the result of a career counselor identifying a field that matches a person's temperament, passion, and gifting. Like many other contemporary topics, the focus and emphasis of a call into ministry has become increasingly about the object, the one receiving the call, rather than the one issuing the call. It is common to hear ministers speak of their calling rather than the call of God.

We must always maintain the proper emphasis on the one who calls above who receives the call.

God must always issue the call and it must never decline into becoming simply a vocation option or just another career choice.

A Sacred Call

As a young man entering ministry, one of the first book assignments given by Pastor Bill Coltharp was J. T. Pugh's *For Preachers Only*. The first chapter, *The Preacher's Call*, provided an initial warning and shaped personal ministry philosophy for over thirty years. The author has shared the contents of this chapter countless times. J. T. Pugh emphasized that no man takes the honor of ministry upon himself, but God calls him. Ministry is more than a vocation; it is a sacred call. Paul taught Timothy that preaching the gospel is a holy calling (II Timothy 1:9).

Yet, more than the critical truth shared by Brother Pugh, the rationale behind the proposition has been affirmed and provided comfort and encouragement throughout the years. J. T. Pugh stated that the problems and discouragements of ministry make it imperative that the minister is convinced of his or her calling. How several witnesses affirmed that point caused a pause, established this understanding, and engrained its truth deep into the mind. The enthusiasm of ministry and the perceived blessings must not overshadow the realities of the stress of opposition, loneliness, and disappointments.

In his book, *The Motive: Why So Many Leaders Abdicate Their Most Important Responsibilities*, Patrick Lencioni argues two fundamental motives drive people to become leaders. The desire to serve is the first and only valid motive. However, he has observed that many people want to be leaders because they want the rewards associated with the role. People are drawn to leadership because they observe the attention, status, and power often associated with the role.

When leadership is viewed as a prize for years of hard work, once the individual has secured the role, they will avoid the unpleasant situations and activities that leadership requires.

They will abdicate the associated responsibilities.

Admittedly, Lencioni is not addressing the spiritual, holy calling to preach the gospel. However, he has observed some of the same tendencies and train wrecks that Brother Pugh warned his readers of in *For Preachers Only*:

**A minister must receive a definite call from God.
If not, the pressures of ministry will lead to a
minister compromising his calling.**

Paul stated that he was innocent of the blood of all men because he declared the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). The apostle did not waver when chains and tribulations awaited him (Acts 20:22-24). Paul continued to watch and warn, not being moved from fulfilling his mission nor counting his life as dear to himself, that he might finish the ministry that he had received from the Lord (Acts 20:24).

Conclusion

Even though initially hesitant, answering the call to ministry has proven to be fulfilling beyond expectations. Yes, perks and privileges are associated with the ministry, as with all occupations. Yes, there are responsibilities to shoulder and a price to pay. However, when you know that God has called you, ministry is more than a vocation; it is worship. Ministry is about serving and shepherding and knowing that God's grace is sufficient every step of the way. If God has called you into the ministry, there will never be fulfillment in any other pursuit.



Dr. Brent Coltharp serves as lead pastor of FAC Aurora, as the district superintendent of the Illinois District UPCI, and as the President of Urshan College (UC) and Urshan Graduate School of Theology (UGST).



Products of Investment

Gary Dornbach

I am the product of those who invested in me. You are too.

I sometimes think back to the church where I grew up in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. I not only think about my great parents, but also about the Sunday school teachers, choir directors, a youth pastor, Christian school teachers, and a pastoral team. So many people made so many investments in my life. **I am the product of those who invested in me.**

Once I felt God call me toward a life of ministry, I immediately contacted my pastor, Anthony Tamel, to share my heart and seek direction. He encouraged me to serve in every way possible to learn the ins and outs of a church, and he challenged me to do it with excellence as unto the Lord.

Years after that initial conversation, Pastor Tamel contacted all the North American missionaries in the state of Wisconsin to offer them my services as a young preacher. I do not think I had much to offer at that point, but he had a heart for missions and a heart to develop young men and women with a passion for God's call. He told those missionaries that he would pay me to come and minister and give them a weekend off, so they would not need to feel obligated. I assured him the experience was payment enough, but he insisted, saying that missionaries would feel uncomfortable if he did not remunerate, and he also wanted me to see what real ministry looked like.

Little did I know that as I traveled to church plants, God was placing a burden in my heart for future church planters. Now, I serve our district as our North American Missions director, and our local church is planting our first Daughter Work. **I am the product of those who invested in me.**

As pastors or church leaders, we may be tempted at times to look at "all the gifted people" at other churches and dream about what it would be to have "someone like that in our church." Maybe as a ministry leader, you may have wondered "what you could do with a different team."

Brother Stan Gleason once preached a message, "Be a Paul. Pursue a Barnabas. Train a Timothy." This is the mission of the New Testament church.

Feeling a call from God can actually be a frustrating process, especially if a person feels that calling without guidance.

Ephesians 4 clearly states that the fivefold ministry exists for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry.

As pastors and church leaders, we have a responsibility to identify and equip the saints of God for what He is calling them to do. We must ask ourselves these questions:

WHOM are we investing in?

Investments matter. If we are all products of those who invest in us, then we must ask ourselves some serious questions about investments. I am not talking about investments like 401k, 403b, or Roth IRA. I am talking about eternal investments. These investments will far outlive our own lives and ministries.

Whether you pastor ten people or one thousand people, who are you investing in?

Ministry is people, not just groups of people but individual people. I hear people preach often about the miracles of Jesus, but what about the stops of Jesus?

Jesus stopped for:

- A Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 who had several strikes against her.
- A Gentile woman with a demonized daughter in Matthew 15 who the disciples asked to send her away because she was bugging them.
- A Roman centurion with a paralyzed servant in Matthew 8.
- A woman with a bleeding problem in Mark 5.
- A prostitute in Luke 7 who crashed the party held at the home of a Pharisee; when the religious people wanted to call security and have her tossed out, Jesus stopped and acknowledged her.
- A man with a legion of demons in Mark 5 who was so scary that everyone avoided him.
- A vertically challenged tax collector named Zacchaeus in Luke 19.
- And then, when His disciples wanted to kick out all the children, Jesus stopped for them and called them in closer!

Jesus was all about the individual and not just the crowds. He was intentional about stopping for a person who had a name, a face, and an issue. He invested time in people.

I pray daily that God would help me to see people through His eyes and not my own. If God can use anyone or anything, certainly there are people in our churches whom He could use to accomplish miraculous things. I have a responsibility as a pastor to find them, equip them, and develop them.

WHAT do we want them to do?

Once people in your church express their burden for ministry, what do you have them do next? If we are called to equip them for ministry, what does our training ground look like?

I am so passionate about this that I wrote a book, *I Think I'm Called. What Do I Do Now?*, on aiming to help people identify and develop the calling God has for them.

At the church where I am blessed to pastor, when someone comes to me to express a calling from the Lord, I aim to speak clearly to them about what to do next. Here are the areas I specifically ask them to focus on:

- **Personal spiritual disciplines** – If they cannot get this down, they will not go to the next step in ministry.
- **Consistency** – Anyone can serve for a season. Serve in an area with excellence and show God and others that you can do it consistently.
- **Make disciples** – If ministry is people, I am not interested in someone who wants to sing, teach, or preach if this person cannot teach a home Bible study. I tell them they need to get their hands in the harvest.

If a person expresses a calling but cannot go into the harvest and make a disciple, then I will not sign off on this person pursuing a license with the UPCI.

HOW am I training them?

Our local church leadership team is encouraged, in every department, at every level, to go and make disciples. Our Children's pastor is currently teaching a Bible study to children outside of scheduled church time.

One of the key components of our VIP Lunches for returning guests is home Bible studies. After I have lunch with the returning guests and talk to them about the next steps, our associate pastor follows up with them within twenty-four hours to try to get that returning guest into a Bible study.

These Bible studies are not just taught by all our staff or pastoral team. We hand these off to teachers in our church who have been trained on how to teach Bible studies and equipped with the content we want them to teach.

I do not think it is fair to expect people in our church to teach Bible studies and be frustrated at them if they do not do so but not then be willing to teach or train them *how* to do so.

At our church, we aim to train them, put a Bible study curriculum in their hands, and then connect them with someone to teach.

WHEN do we release them?

I first went to my pastor at the age of seventeen to express what I was feeling from God. He did not just hand me a microphone and say, "Go speak to more than one thousand people this Sunday! Good luck!"

Just like this, we do not hand our car keys to our fifteen-year-olds and tell them to go have fun. There is a process in ministry, just like there is in life.

I am thankful my pastor met with me regularly to help me continue moving forward in the process. I am thankful he did not give up on me. I am also thankful that when God opened the door for me to move to Liberty, Missouri, to become a lead pastor in 2009, that he also did not try to hold me down and keep me.

I want to be intentional about developing people. And when it is time to let go, I want to also be intentional about celebrating the next step of the minister leaving.

WHY is this important?

Without pastors doing these things, the New Testament church would no longer reflect the Apostolic model set forth in Scripture and the Great Commission would no longer be the way Jesus intended it to be.

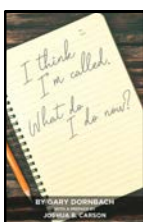
I am the product of those who invested in me.

You are a product of those who invested in you.

People in your church will be the product of someone who will invest in them.

Gary Dornbach

Gary is the husband of Jaqueline (better known to some as the owner of "The King's Daughter Boutique") and the dad to three awesome kids named Kiera, Jude, and Titus. He has been serving as lead pastor of Refuge Church in Liberty, MO since 2009. In 2018, he graduated from Urshan Graduate School of Theology, and was blessed with the first ever "David K. Bernard Award of Excellence." He is the author of the book, "I Think I'm Called. What Do I Do Now?" He currently serves as the Missouri District North American Missions director.



Recommended Resource
Click here to access *I Think I'm Called: What Do I Do Now?* by Gary Dornbach.



The Mantle of the Call and the Dismantling of Expectations — *Dr. Chris Paris*

They say that clothes make the man or the woman, but our calling may lead us to an unexpected mantle. One day the boss chastised a promising young employee for his outfit. Clad in his three-piece Wall Street suit, the head honcho said, “Don’t dress for the job you have. Dress for the job you want.” The next day the young man showed up in a Chicago Cubs uniform. When the boss questioned his attire, he replied, “I’m following your advice. I’ve always wanted to play centerfield for the Cubs.”

Even when we succeed, we may not don the clothes we like. Every year, commencement for Urshan Graduate School of Theology (UGST) features people who have spent many years and tears earning a Ph.D. Their reward? Wearing a strange robe with a funny hat. The chancellor drapes himself in a large red outfit with a gargantuan hat that looks like the pillow designed to hold the rings at royal weddings. Instead of evoking the renowned and learned individual he is, his University of South Africa robe gives off ketchup bottle vibes. Heinz should make a special edition in his likeness! If they did, we could put the anthropomorphic bottle next to Mrs. Butterworth in our refrigerators.

My regalia is somewhat better because of the black and gold of Vanderbilt University. And yet, when I stand next to the Chancellor, some people say we look like ketchup and mustard. And to that, I reply, “Pardon me, but I went to Vanderbilt. If this gold represents any kind of mustard, then it is Grey Poupon.” But no matter how much I invoke the elite name of my school, gourmet mustard comparisons aside, I think that, though we have book knowledge, my colleagues and I may have sacrificed our fashion sense for prestige.

To Mantle and to Dismantle

Doctoral robes represent a distinct type of calling. The gowns are “old school” just like the system that grants their investiture. Everyone who received a Ph.D. worked in a mentor/mentee relationship. Students only achieved the milestone when their mentor signed off on their dissertation. Even then, they had to defend their research before a board of inquiry.

The tradition of completing a doctoral degree and wearing a robe may seem somewhat like the story of Elijah and Elisha. The great prophet passed down the mantle to the faithful servant who boldly desired a double portion. While I am thankful that I studied under the direction of one of the most respected men in my field, completing my Ph.D. was as much about dismantling expectations as it was receiving a mantle.

Many people desire to receive a mantle. Some individuals already have mentors they trust. Others seek out chief advisors at conferences. Networking can lead to success, and perhaps important individuals will take a fledgling under their wing and one day grant them their tried-and-true mantle.

In my experience, I received a mantle of education; however, doing so required dismantling a number of expectations. My ideas about life and ministry had to shift. I found myself caught between two opposing forces that strangely enough agreed that I should not pursue a doctorate. Some Apostolics—even those who had boldly proclaimed that God could deliver us from any fiery furnace—worried that I would succumb to the vain philosophies of the world. Non-Apostolics thought that my religious background had hamstrung me with deficient critical thinking skills. Because I understood the vocation of my calling (Ephesians 4:1), I pressed forward, with God’s help, hitting each mark to attain the prize.

Even as I dismantled their expectations, I had to dismantle my own. I knew I had a call on my life, but I would not be a pastor or evangelist like many of my peers. Right before I headed down the long and winding road of graduate school, we heard rumblings that I might succeed someone in a ministry. Potentially, I had my opportunity to receive a mantle from one of the men I most respect in this world.

But it was not to be. As much as I might have considered that mantle to be my birthright and even my destiny, I knew that God was sending me on a different path. Although more and more Apostolics are earning high degrees, few sought them when I began my journey. I greatly respect my pastors, and I learned much from them; yet my calling is radically divergent from theirs. My friend, Dr. Jeff Brickley, points out that we did not have many people to look to as examples. Essentially, we had to make our own mantles.

Lessons from Gideon

Reflecting on our unique quests, I am reminded of Gideon's call. Living in the days of the judges, he lacked good examples. But God chose Gideon because he possessed useful characteristics. When we examine his story, we discern some essential lessons for success:

- Be honest with God.
- Recognize that the Lord couples our own natural talents with His supernatural power.
- Overcome fear.
- Be willing to do more with less.

Gideon's honesty with God represents one of his greatest characteristics. When we study various call narratives in the Bible, we often observe reluctance. Moses complained about his poor oratory skills. Isaiah initially said "Whoa" to his call due to the woe he felt as a sinner.

Jeremiah felt restless about his call due to his youth. While all these objections may have some merit, Gideon probably offered one of the most honest responses to the Lord.

Gideon asked how the Lord could be with his people and him since so many terrible things had befallen them. He questioned the absence of the miracles his ancestors had recounted. He not only felt forsaken, but the tight grip of the Midianites seemed to confirm the divine abandonment of Israel.

Rather than chastising Gideon, the Lord appreciated his candor. Gideon dismantled expectations of calling because he did not simply say what he thought the Almighty wanted to hear. So many times, we pray, "I'll go anywhere You ask, and I'll do anything."

While our hearts may be full of zeal and promise, we still need to find a place where we express complete honesty in our calling.

The truly called will eventually find themselves in a place of questioning. At that point, we should have a strong enough faith to be honest with God and ourselves.

Gideon's circumstances revealed the natural abilities that God could use. The Lord spoke to Gideon while he stealthily threshed wheat in a winepress. God desired someone unconventional, and Gideon fit the bill. In fact, his story may dismantle some of our expectations about what the Almighty desires in a leader. God did not choose a mighty general like Joshua or a bold kid with the gumption to face a giant. The Lord picked a stealthy warrior with espionage skills—a spy who would not be shaken or stirred by the impossible mission he faced. God supernaturally endowed Gideon with the Spirit while utilizing his own natural tendencies and gifts for divine purpose.

Gideon overcame his fears by presenting two fleece tests. We should exercise caution in criticizing this mighty man for a lack of faith. Had we lived in the days of the judges, we might have required extra assurances. Triumphant over his fears enabled Gideon to send home the fearful. If he had not exorcised his own trepidation, then he could not lead.

God further dismantled expectations by having Gideon do more with less. The Lord continued to send able-bodied soldiers home because the operation required a small guerilla band of soldiers who could incite panic. They would need speed, force, strength, and stealth. They would have to be as swift as a coursing river, quickly getting into position. They would need to blow their trumpets with the force of a great typhoon. They would need to demonstrate the strength of a raging fire as they lit their torches. They would also need to be as mysterious as the dark side of the moon, surrounding the camp without awakening the slumbering Midianites.

A Special Mantle

When the men shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," they revealed a key truth. Despite God dismantling so many expectations, the Almighty placed a unique mantle on Gideon. The Bible records that the Spirit of the Lord was on most of the judges. The judge Samson, along with the kings Saul and David, received the description: the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon them. Gideon was different. In Hebrew, the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon (Judges 6:34).

This investiture occurred because God's battles were Gideon's battles. Gideon was not fighting for his own benefit. Gideon's sword and the sword of the Lord were one and the same.

May we so dismantle ourselves of incorrect assumptions and fear that our calling leads us to be clothed with the mantle of the Spirit!

Chris Paris

Dr. Chris Paris has a Ph.D. in Religion (Hebrew Bible) from Vanderbilt University and an MA and an MTS. He earned an MA in Humanities and a BA in English at Western Kentucky University. Paris is author of *the Narrative Obtrusion in the Hebrew Bible*, *Handbook on the Historical Books*, and *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. He recently wrote *Desperately Seeking Direction: But in the Meantime*, selling out all copies at North American Youth Congress and General Conference. A professor at Urshan Graduate School of Theology, Dr. Paris resides in St. Charles, MO, with his wife, Lydia, and son, Luke.

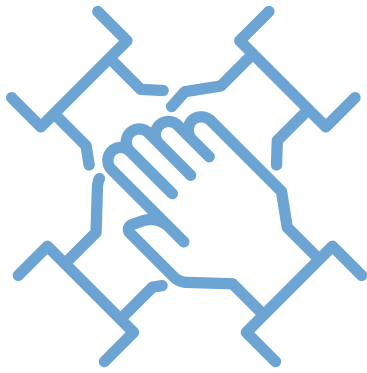


Recommended Resource
Click here to access
*Desperately Seeking
Direction* by Chris Paris.



ISSUE 21 TOOLBOX PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE





Calling & Vocation Questionnaire

Complete the following questionnaire to help discern God's calling in life and ministry.

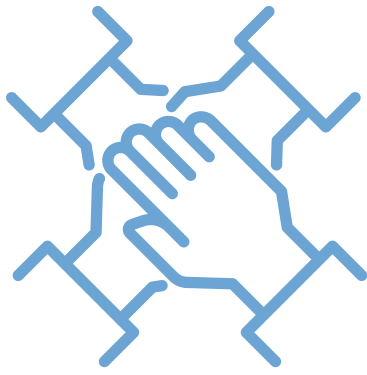
Source: Dik, B.J., Eldridge, B.M., Steger, M.F., & Duffy, R.D. (2012). Development and validation of the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) and Brief Calling Scale (BCS). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20, 242-263.

Instructions

Please indicate the degree to which you believe the following statements describe you using the following scale. Please respond with your career as a whole in mind. For example, if you are currently working part-time in a job that you don't consider part of your career, focus on your career as a whole and not your current job. Try not to respond merely as you think you "should" respond; rather, try to be as accurate and as objective as possible in evaluating yourself. If any of the questions simply do not seem relevant to you, "1" may be the most appropriate answer.

1 = Not at all true of me • **2** = Somewhat true of me • **3** = Mostly true of me • **4** = Absolutely true of me

1. I believe that I have been called to my current line of work.
2. I'm searching for my calling in my career.
3. My work helps me live out my life's purpose.
4. I am looking for work that will help me live out my life's purpose.
5. I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place.
6. I intend to construct a career that will give my life meaning.
7. I want to find a job that meets some of society's needs.
8. I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career.
9. The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others.
10. I am trying to build a career that benefits society.
11. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work.
12. Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career.
13. I yearn for a sense of calling in my career.
14. Eventually, I hope my career will align with my purpose in life.
15. I see my career as a path to purpose in life.
16. I am looking to find a job where my career clearly benefits others.
17. My work contributes to the common good.
18. I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career.
19. I'm trying to identify the area of work I was meant to pursue.
20. My career is an important part of my life's meaning.
21. I want to pursue a career that is a good fit with the reason for my existence.
22. I am always trying to evaluate how beneficial my work is to others.
23. I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so.
24. I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work.



Calling & Vocation Questionnaire

Interpreting Results

The following subscales correlate with the question numbers from the questionnaire, as noted below (1 = 1; 2 = 11; 3 = 8; etc.). Add up your score for each area to see whether you perceive a sense of “presence” in your calling or “searching” in your calling based on transcendence (divine direction), purpose, and prosocial orientation (desire to serve others).

Scale 1: Transcendent Summons—Presence

1. I believe that I have been called to my current line of work. 1
2. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work. 11
3. I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career. 8
4. I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so. 23

Scale 2: Transcendent Summons—Search

1. I'm searching for my calling in my career. 2
 2. I yearn for a sense of calling in my career. 13
 3. I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career. 18
 4. I'm trying to identify the area of work I was meant to pursue. 19
-

Scale 3: Purposeful Work—Presence

1. My work helps me live out my life's purpose. 3
2. I see my career as a path to purpose in life. 15
3. My career is an important part of my life's meaning. 20
4. I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work. 24

Scale 4: Purposeful Work—Search

1. I am looking for work that will help me live out my life's purpose. 4
 2. I intend to construct a career that will give my life meaning. 6
 3. Eventually, I hope my career will align with my purpose in life. 14
 4. I want to pursue a career that is a good fit with the reason for my existence. 21
-

Scale 5: Prosocial Orientation—Presence

1. The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others. 9
2. Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career. 12
3. My work contributes to the common good. 17
4. I am always trying to evaluate how beneficial my work is to others. 22

Scale 6: Prosocial Orientation—Search

1. I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place. 5
2. I want to find a job that meets some of society's needs. 7
3. I am trying to build a career that benefits society. 10
4. I am looking to find a job where my career clearly benefits others. 16