

II. RELATIONAL CALLING

The primary call of God is when He calls us into a relationship with Himself. God pursues us in order to have a love relationship with us. God always initiates this relationship with man, never the other way around. This relationship is man's most necessary requirement for life and should be characterized by intimacy and not casualness. It must become our highest priority.

This relationship is characterized in terms such as a child of God (John 1:12), a friend of Christ (John 15:14) and the bride of Christ, brother, etc. All these characteristics are relational and yet capture different elements of what a relationship with God might be. At the heart of each of these relationships is love. A 2-way love: an unconditional love of God toward us with a command to love God in return with all of our heart, soul, might and strength (Matthew 22:37). From our part, this kind of love must be our first priority and requires all that we have - it must be total. Our calling to love God needs to transcend all other relationships such that they appear as hate! (Luke 14:26). What a radical call.

God desires a kind of love relationship that could be described as an affectionate, exclusive, intimate love. It is an intimacy that we can enjoy now and will prepare us for eternity. It will be forever. Yet we don't instantly attain intimacy - it is a growth process.

Our love for God can be expressed in many ways: worship, praise, thanksgiving, etc. These all could be summed up as our ministry to God (Acts 13:2, Exodus 28:1,4,43). This must be our first ministry - a ministry to God that glorifies Him. Out of this ministry to God flows our universal calling ministry to the lost and saved and our individual calling.

This relationship with God can be strengthened through the spiritual discipline of prayer, silence, solitude, death to self, study of God's word, etc. Yet the fundamental mark of a love for God is obedience (John 14:21). Obedience is at the heart of calling. We are invited to be with God and obedience is our first step. This relational calling is not just an emotional response but one of obedience.

SCRIPTURE

Relational Calling

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2 Thessalonians 2: 13-14

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul indicate about calling in these verses?
2. Reflect on what God has called us to. Why does God desire this? How do we enter into this relationship?
3. How are you doing in your relationship with God?
4. How does obedience play a role in our relational calling?

Philippians 3:8-14

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

QUESTIONS

1. In Phil.3:14 Paul talks about an upward call of God, what is this call of God and how much did Paul risk in order to gain it?
2. Reflect on Phil. 3:10 what does it mean to know Him?
3. Why does God call man to Himself?
4. Why can we do nothing without Christ?

OSWALD CHAMBERS

My Utmost For His Highest

Oswald Chambers was a man of remarkable spiritual wisdom and maturity. As a Bible teacher, he was renowned throughout the world and his writing has inspired millions of Christians. In November 1917, Oswald Chamber entered into God's presence. Since then many of his talks have been published in book form. The most famous and world renowned is "My Utmost for His Highest". A large proportion of the readings were chosen from the talks given during the Devotional Hour at the College - an hour which for many of the students marked an epoch in their life with God.

January 18

"Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." John 20:28

"Give Me to drink." How many of us are set upon Jesus Christ slaking our thirst when we ought to be satisfying Him? We should be pouring out now, spending to the last limit, not drawing on Him to satisfy us. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" - That means a life of unsullied, uncompromising and unbribed devotion to the Lord Jesus, a satisfaction to Him wherever He places us.

Beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for Him. It is easier to serve than to be drunk to the dregs. The one aim of the call of God is the satisfaction of God, not a call to do something for Him. We are not sent to battle for God, but to be used by God in His battlings. Are we being more devoted to service than to Jesus Christ?

QUESTIONS

1. What is this devotion to Christ?
2. What in your life competes with this devotion?
3. What is the passion of your life? What gets you thrilled and motivated every morning when you get out of bed?

OSWALD CHAMBERS

So Send I You

The Call

The voice of the nature of God – “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

When we speak of a call we nearly always leave out one essential feature: the nature of the one who calls. We speak of the call of the sea, the call of the mountains, the call of the great ice barriers. These calls are heard by a few only because the call is the expression of the nature from which the call comes, and can only be heard by those who are attuned to that nature.

The call of God is essentially expressive of the nature of God; it is His own voice. Paul says that “God demonstrates His own love toward us” (Romans 5:8), the love that is exactly expressive of His nature. Get that thought with regard to the call of God. Very few of us hear the call of God because we are not in the place to answer; the call does not communicate because we have not the nature of the One who is calling. In the case of Isaiah, his soul was so attuned because of the tremendous crisis he had passed through, that the call of God was recorded to his amazed soul. God did not lay a strong compulsion on Isaiah. Isaiah was in the presence of God and he overheard, as it were, the soliloquy of God: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” and in conscious freedom he replied, “Here am I! Send me.”

The call of God is not the echo of my nature, but expresses God’s nature. The call of God does not consider my affinities or personality. It is a call that I cannot hear as long as I consider my personality or temperament. But as soon as I am brought into the condition Isaiah was in, I am in a relationship to God whereby I can hear His call.

The call to service is the result of my obedience to the realized call of God. Profoundly speaking, there is no call to service for God; it is my own actual “bit,” the overflow of super abounding devotion to God. God does not have to come and tell me what I must do for Him; He brings me into a relationship with Himself where in I hear His call and understand what He wants me to do, and I do it out of sheer love to Him. To serve God is the deliberate love gift of a nature that has heard the call of God. When people say they have had a call to foreign service, or to any particular sphere work, they mean that their relationship to God has enabled them to realize what they can do for God. Their natural fitting for service and the call of God is identified as one in them.

The most, seemingly, untoward circumstances will be used by God for the men and women He has called. How ever much of wrong or of the devil there may seem to be at work, if an individual is called of God, every force will be made to tell for God’s purpose in the end. God watches all these things when once we agree with His purpose for us, and He will bring out only the conscious life, but all the deeper regions of life which we cannot reach, into harmony with His purpose. If the call of God is there, it is not within the power of untoward things to turn you. Your heart remains, not untouched by them, but unbroken, and you are surprised at yourself – Why didn’t I go under here, and there? “I called you.”

We try to make calls out of our own spiritual consecration, but when we are put right with God, He blights all our sentimental convictions and devotional calls. He brushes them all aside, and rivets us with a passion that is terrific to one thing we had never dreamed of, and in the condition of real communion with God, we overhear Him saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" And for one radiant, flashing moment we see what God wants, and say in conscious freedom, "Here am I! Send me."

QUESTIONS

1. How do we hear the call of God?
2. Why is intimacy with God critical to hearing God?
3. Why does God call us?
4. How can our service get in the way of our calling?
5. What is God saying to you?

REVIEW

Relational Calling

- God calls us into a relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ. This relational calling is our primary calling.
- This relationship should be one of growing intimacy that governs our world view, values and behavior. This intimacy should be passionate, affectionate, and exclusive.
- This love or devotion to God could also be referred to as our “ministry to God”.
- God first loved us and we respond to God in love. Without this love relationship with God our life has no meaning or value.
- Our relational calling (devotion to God) should never be replaced by what we do and where we do it. This service can be our chief competitor for our love for God.
- This devotion to Christ/God (intimacy with Him) can only be through the means of humility.
- Our relational calling should be developed through the exercise of spiritual disciplines of prayer, God’s Word, fellowship and solitude reflection.
- In our relationship with God intimacy and obedience are two side of the same coin. My intimacy will enhance my obedience and likewise my obedience will me grow in intimacy with God.