

Chapter 15

CALL OF GOD 1

CALL, GIFT, MINISTRY

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In the church we often tend to be rather imprecise in our use of terms and definitions. This is partly due to the fact that we are dealing with spiritual and not material things. But it also has the element of simply not making sure we are using the right term consistently for the right concept. In this study we will define and show the inter-relationships of Callings, Gifts, and Ministries, the three main terms we will use to discuss finding and fulfilling the Purpose of God for our lives.

- I. **CALLING.** The idea of a “calling” comes from the concept of a vocation or an identity. To be called is to be “named,” given an identity. In vocational terms we could say that one is a carpenter, a teacher, or a doctor. The calling is a vocation that gives an identity. When we think in terms of a Christian calling, we are also thinking of a vocation that gives an identity. The vocational calling affects how one sees oneself and how others see one. It is not only those who go into “full-time” ministry who have a calling. (Romans 11:29; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Hebrews 3:1)
- A. In the New Testament, especially in Paul’s letters to churches, we find several things that we are called to. These “callings” are part of our essential identity as Christians and are common to all believers.
 1. We are called to be saints and to belong to Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:6-7)
 2. We are called according to God’s purpose; to be redeemed, to be conformed to the likeness of God’s Son. (Romans 8:28-30)
 3. We are called to be known as God’s people. (Romans 9:23-26)
 4. We are called to be holy (set apart for God). (1 Corinthians 1:2)
 5. We are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:9)
 6. We are called by the Grace of God. (Galatians 1:6)
 7. We are called to be free. (Galatians 5:13)
 8. We are called to the hope of a glorious inheritance and to God’s incomparably great power. (Ephesians 1:18; 4:4)
 9. We are called heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)
 10. We are called to peace. (Colossians 3:15)

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 1 – Chapter 15 – Call of God 1

11. We are called to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:14)
12. We are called to eternal life. (1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Peter 5:10)
13. We are called to a holy life. (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:15-16)
14. We are called to receive the promised eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:15)
15. We are called out of darkness into His wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)
16. We are called to suffer for righteousness. (1 Peter 2:21)
17. We are called to live in harmony, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. (1 Peter 3:9)
18. We are called to be children of God. (1 John 3:1)

B. We are also “called” to an individual identity and placement in the Body of Christ. Individual Christians are members of the church body just as eyes, ears, feet, and head are members of a physical body. Each member or part has its own individual identity and function, but none is complete without its relationship to the others. (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-12; Ephesians 4:11-16)

1. Paul was called to be an apostle, “one who is sent” to carry the message of salvation to the world and to establish groups of believers into churches. (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1)
2. In the New Testament we find examples of people who were called to be evangelists, apostles, teachers, pastors, deacons, administrators, prophets, leaders. Many were also called to very practical areas of service such as helping, serving, showing mercy.
3. As Christians, we are all called to the things that the Bible tells us are our common identity (see point A), but we are each called to a special, individual identity within the body of Christ. One does not have to be in “full-time” service to have a calling.

II. **GIFTS.** Gifts are divine enablements for service. They are called “*charismata*” or grace gifts and are given by God’s grace to Christian believers to enable us to serve within and out from the Body of Christ. Spiritual Gifts are spiritual and practical abilities we can use to be a blessing to others. They are like tools with which to do the work God has called us to do. (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-12; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10)

- A. Paul makes it very clear in his letter to the Corinthian church that “gifts” are not given on the basis of merit, maturity, or status. They are “*grace gifts*” given by God’s choice on the basis of grace alone.
- B. It is also made very clear that spiritual gifts or grace gifts are not given for the benefit of

the individual with the gift, but for the benefit of the Body of Christ. My gift is to benefit you, your gift is to benefit others.

- C. Spiritual Gifts are not toys. Spiritual Gifts are tools. Tools are for work, not for play. One should desire to receive gifts that are appropriate to one's calling or identity within the Body of Christ and that are appropriate to the ministry or service one is called to perform.

III. **MINISTRY OR MINISTRIES.** The word ministry comes from the same word as deacon or servant. A minister is one who serves. A ministry is the way in which one serves. Ministry is the act of serving others. When one stops serving, one is no longer a "minister." (2 Corinthians 4:1; 5:18; 1 Timothy 1:12 AV)

- A. One does not so much "have a ministry" as one performs or "does ministry." Ministry is service and one only "has a ministry" as one is serving others in the Body of Christ.
- B. A Christian should first look at ministry as simply being willing to serve as where and when needed. We all need to develop the ministry of "doing what needs to be done."
- C. As a Christian matures and develops a clearer sense of "calling" or identity within the Body of Christ, then the ministry one performs should increasingly be shaped by one's calling and gifts.
- D. No matter how clear one feels his or her "calling" is, or how gifted one may be, one must never become too "called" or "gifted" to simply be willing to do what needs to be done.

IV. Application

- A. In seeking to apply these terms and concepts with a degree of consistency we can say:
 - 1. God's **CALLING** on your life is **WHAT YOU ARE** (what you are becoming). You may be called to be a teacher, an administrator, an evangelist, or a giver. This calling is tied in with your personality and nature. It is not something that changes easily or often.
 - 2. Your **GIFTS** from God are **THE TOOLS YOU HAVE TO WORK WITH**. You need to have gifts that are consistent with your **CALLING**. Gifts are like tools you use to do the work that is appropriate to your **CALLING**. Gifts are tools for service not toys for entertainment.
 - 3. Your **MINISTRY** is **WHAT YOU DO**. Ministry is service, not position. Ministry is the task you are doing. You don't **HAVE** a ministry, you **DO** a ministry. Ministry can change from day to day, depending on how you are serving, what actual job you are doing to serve God and others.
- B. It is important that we use both spiritual insight and natural "eyesight" to examine ourselves, our hearts, desires, and motives to find **WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE HAVE TO WORK WITH, and WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO DO** for God in the limited amount of time we have.

- C. We must also be aware that as we grow and mature, and as our base of knowledge, gifting, and experience grows, God may adjust and enlarge the scope of our **CALLING**, the level of our **GIFTING**, and the operation of our **MINISTRY**.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 15 Call of God 1 - Call, Gift, Ministry: Definition of Terms

1. Do you feel that most Christians are aware of a Call of God for their lives? What are the greatest hindrances from knowing God's call for our individual lives?
2. How do you feel the church can help Christians discover the Call of God and develop that call into effective service?