

THE CALLED

DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)

Four Special Adult Sunday School Lessons to Connect Us to God’s Call of Leadership.

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This resource is provided by the Office of Sunday School, Alabama Baptist Convention, State Board of Missions and is made possible by your gifts through the Cooperative Program.

It is a joy to share with you some keys to hearing, understanding, and responding to the call of God on your life. The Alabama Baptist Convention's emphasis for the next two years is "LEADERconnect" as people seek to "connect with God, connect with purpose, and connect with others." It is hoped that through these studies, individuals will make those essential connections for a healthy spiritual life.

I want to thank Rick Ellison, State Missionary in Sunday School, for developing the series and enlisting the writers for each biblical commentary, teaching guide, and daily devotional. Rick and his wife, Sheila, have become a valuable part of the Sunday School team in the creation of resources to strengthen leaders and families.

The writers of the biblical commentaries have experience in numerous ministries serving as Pastors, Professors, State Missionaries, Directors of Missions, and more. At each stop along their journeys, they have listened for and discovered God's call on their lives. Additionally, they have worked with others in discerning God's plan and purpose. I am thankful for these leaders who represent both old and new friends to the Office of Sunday School staff. I know you will be blessed through the wisdom and work of Dr. Barry Cospser, Dr. Bobby DuBois, Dr. Jim Graham, and Dr. Angulus Wilson.

Kenny Hoomes is a longtime friend to the Sunday School Office. He has extensive experience in writing lesson plans for adult leaders. We could not think of a more qualified person in Alabama to produce quality teaching guides.

Thomas Treadwell, a corporate attorney, is on the journey with you in discovering God's call on his life. As a gifted Sunday School teacher, curriculum writer, and friend, Tommy has impressed me with his knowledge of the Word and his ability to apply it in life. I do not know all of what God has in store for him, but I know that Tommy will hear and heed the call.

The truth is that God has created us for a specific work and purpose (Ephesians 2:8-10). We are "the called" who, in that call, will discover the real value of our lives.

Rejoice!

Daniel E. Edmonds
State Missionary
Director of Sunday School
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

“THE CALLED – DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE” is a series of four special Adult Sunday School lessons designed to focus attention on God’s call to serve Him in the church and world. According to Ephesians 2:10, “God has created us for good works.” God has called all of us to serve and lead as we walk with Him.

Each lesson contains the following:

1) A TEACHERS BIBLICAL COMMENTARY – The commentary reveals the scripture to be studied and taught, the lesson title, the teaching aim or main spiritual truth and the biblical background and explanation of the scripture.

2) A TEACHING GUIDE – The teaching guide provides a plan, ideas and resources for teaching the Bible study.

3) DAILY DEVOTIONS – Each Bible study has five daily devotions. The daily devotions are designed for one’s time alone with God to be used the week following Bible study. This allows the learner to read scripture each day and continue to prayerfully think about the Bible study as God works in their life. The devotions are designed to help the learner make personal applications of biblical truths to life. The local church or association has permission to make as many copies needed to be distributed during the Bible study to each individual.

May God bless and strengthen your church as you use this resource.

Rick Ellison
State Missionary
Office of Sunday School
Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE

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THE CALLED
–DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE–
LESSON #1

Created For Value
God's Call for Your Service
TEACHERS BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Rev. Angulus Wilson, Senior. Pastor
New Beginnings Community Baptist Church, Clovis, CA

Scripture: I Samuel 3:1-10 (Samuel's call)
I Samuel 16:1, 13 (David's call)

Lesson #1 Created For Value
God's Call for Your Service, Ephesians 2:10

Teaching Aim: Through the call of Samuel to be a prophet discover scriptures that speak of God's call to us. Samuel served God when he anointed David to be the future king called of the Lord. God calls us to his service today because we are of great value to him.

Samuel's Call

One of the greatest privileges of the child of God is to be able to have an encounter with God. The call for the Christian to serve God in ministry is one of those calls.

There are several calls that come to you and me as believers and followers of Christ. However, none are as distinct as the call of service for a particular assignment from the Lord. Our lesson today is such a call.

In our text today Samuel is serving in the temple as a helper to Eli the high priest. Samuel was a gift from God to his parents who could not have children. Samuel's mother promised God that she would give him back to the Lord if the Lord gave her a child.

As a special child he was set apart for the task of ministry unto the Lord.

You and I are like Samuel, in that we were made in God's image and made to bring him honor and glory in the earth. We too are like Samuel in that there is a call upon our lives to serve God for His honor and glory in the earth.

There are two things we can observe from Samuels call to service to the Lord.

- The clarity of the call
- The communion in the call

The clarity of the call

In the passage above Samuel is just a boy serving in the temple of the Lord. He doesn't know the Lord yet, but God knows him. When God calls out to Samuel, the young lad can clearly hear the voice of the Lord. He doesn't understand who it is doing the actual calling, but he hears a voice from the Lord.

So it is with mankind today, God is calling out to man in the earth for a personal relationship with him, but man cannot discern with the carnal ear who it is doing the calling.

The child of God has a similar situation when God is calling for them to join him in the harvest for a particular assignment. Sometimes we can clearly hear the voice of God, yet not be sure of whom it is calling us.

Samuel had clarity in noise but not clarity of heart. He could hear the caller but he didn't know the caller. The bible says that he went to Eli instead of going to God.

When the child of God comes into a relationship with God he will begin to know the difference between his mentor's voice and the voice of the Lord.

Clarity of the call will keep us from doing everything and anything and help us to do what God wants done. After Eli instructed Samuel he was able to go back and get the call right.

The communion in the call

I noticed that in this text there was communion in the call. When God called the second time the young lad answered, "Speak lord your servant is listening". Samuel had communion with God when he was able to discern the voice of the Lord. Communion with God is a beautiful thing when the child of God can recognize his voice. Samuel has just experienced a new encounter with God for the very first time.

As children of God there is no greater honor than to hear God speak to us and to know what it is that he asks of us. This is what we were made to do, live in complete relationship with God serving him with all that we have. In the call of God there is communion with God. Samuel's life will never be the same again after he interacts with God.

David's Call

When God gets ready to appoint a leader for a situation in the earth he always issues a call. In the case of David, God had a plan for Israel and it included getting them a new King. When God got ready he used his servant Samuel to go and select the man that God had chosen.

Leadership is very important when we are appointing those servants that God has appointed to serve us for his honor and glory. Samuel is instructed to appoint and to anoint for the service of the Lord.

In the above written passage God has rejected Saul and called David to be King. David doesn't know it yet, but the man of God is on his way to give him the word of the Lord. This is a picture for you and I concerning Gods will and timing for special task.

We like David can never know what it is that God has in store for us. It behooves us to live lives that will bring God honor and glory in the earth, so that if God be pleased he can call us whenever he is ready.

1 Samuel 16:13

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. (KJV)

Here in this wonderful passage we see the Spirit of God being given to his servant through the symbolic ceremony of the pouring of oil upon his head. In the Old Testament this was a picture of the anointing for service.

In the New Testament we have this indwelling anointing given to us by the spirit of God at the new birth.

So for every assignment that the God of heaven and earth gives to his child, they are already filled with the Spirit of God to accomplish the task that is before them. Like David, we have everything we need to carry out the assignment that is given to us.

THE CALLED

-DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE- TEACHING GUIDE

Kenny Hoomes, Associate Pastor for Spiritual Maturity
First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama

Lesson One: Created for Value
God's Call For Your Service. Ephesians 2:10

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (Samuel's Call)
1 Samuel 16:1, 13 (David's Call)

Teaching Aim:
Through the call of Samuel to be a prophet, discover scriptures that speak of God's call to us. Samuel served God when he anointed David to be the future king called of the Lord. God calls us to His service today because we are of great value to Him.

I. Create Interest

As learners arrive, direct attention to the theme verse Ephesians 2:10 you wrote on the board or a large sheet of paper IN ADVANCE. Distribute copies of **Item 1: God's Call In My Life** to learners. Allow time for learners to silently complete the handout. Invite volunteers to share their responses to numbers I, II, and III with those sitting near them.

Direct attention again to the theme verse. Invite learners to read the verse in unison.

II. Purposeful Bible Study

Invite learners to open their Bibles to 1 Samuel. State: "During our Bible Study time, we will discover how God called Samuel and David for His service. We will also discover how God calls us to service today."

Call on the learner, enlisted IN ADVANCE, to read 1 Samuel 3:1-10 aloud. Briefly describe the background setting of how Samuel came to live with Eli. Ask: "How does Eli discern the voice calling to Samuel is from the Lord?" Stress to learners that God's call is upon Samuel's life. During the Lord's nocturnal appearance to Samuel, judgment on Eli's house is announced a second time (see 1 Samuel 2:27-36).

Invite learners to "fast forward" in their minds. Samuel becomes a great prophet of the Lord and anoints Saul as the first king over Israel. However, Saul disobeys and God's hand is removed from him.

Direct attention to 1 Samuel 16:1. Call on a learner to read this verse aloud. State: "Samuel is now on a mission to anoint a new king over Israel." Invite learners to scan verses 2-12 and search for the parade of Jesse's sons before Samuel. Ask learners to describe what this scene must have been like.

Read aloud v. 13. Write the following words on the board: *character, leadership, obedience*. Stress to learners that these unseen qualities are important to God. For David, he was divinely equipped to perform his role as king of Israel.

III Closing

DAILY DEVOTIONS
LESSON #1
Created For Value: God's Call For Your Service
Thomas Treadwell

Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery AL

Created For Value: God's Call For Your Service

1. Called to Follow – Matthew 4:18-22

"Delayed obedience is disobedience." If you're a parent, this is probably a concept that you have communicated to your children in one form or another at some time. Unfortunately, this is not a maxim that we can claim immunity from by virtue of our adult status, particularly when it comes to our response as a follower of Jesus Christ. We see through Jesus' calling of the twelve disciples the type of response that is required of us today. In this passage, we see the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. These men were minding their own business, focusing on the day's work, when Jesus appeared and issued His call – "Come, follow me." How did these men respond? Peter and Andrew "at once" left their nets. James and John "immediately" left their boat and their father. They didn't tell Jesus, "We'll be right with you" or "let us put these nets up" or even stop to ask "where are we going." No, they responded immediately and unequivocally to follow Him. This is the response God wants of us. What do you feel God is calling you to do? He is calling. Respond today.

2. Called to Serve – Matthew 8:14-15

Once you've been touched and called by Jesus, you should respond quickly – this we know. But *how* do you respond? Here, we see Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law. As I read this very simple and short passage recently, which is an easy passage to skim through, something stood out to me. Look at the woman's response. She is touched by Jesus, and her immediate response is service. Now, this woman was apparently very sick – a fever could indicate a serious, potentially deadly, illness in those days. We know that the sickness was bad enough that she was in bed in the middle of the day. Upon being healed, however, she doesn't ask for something to drink or eat, she doesn't ask to be served; she serves. Her desire to serve her healer overcomes any desire she has to be served or to care for herself. You have been healed by Jesus. (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24; Exodus 15:26; Psalm 103:3; 147:3) Will you serve your divine Healer today?

3. Called to Believe (Can God Use Me?) – 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

Knowing that you are called out to service to Christ (1 Corinthians 4:1), you may wonder how God can use you, an "ordinary" believer. "I'm no Billy Graham or Beth Moore," you may say. You only need to look at the Corinthian believers for encouragement. In this passage, Paul reminds them of their condition when they were called – not wise, influential, rich, or strong. But nonetheless, God called them out as His own. Thanks be to God that He chose the "foolish things of the world to shame the wise [and] the weak things of the world to shame the strong." And why? So that you will boast only in the cross. God calls out ordinary people to do extraordinary things for His glory – so that all boasting will be in Christ alone. Paul says that even he did not come preaching to them with eloquence or great wisdom, "but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power," so that their faith would rest on God's power, not man's wisdom. Paul also reminds us that our competence for service comes from God. When you are tempted to think that God can't use you because you have no special talents compared to

others in service for Christ, stop looking around, start looking up, and thank God that His strength is made perfect in weakness and that when we are weak, He is strong. Are you doubting that God can use you? Are you looking around at other believers you think are more qualified for service than you? If so, pray and ask God to forgive your unbelief and rest in the faithfulness of His Word. Not only can God use you, He will use you. And He likely already is.

4. Equipped to Serve – 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

While the fact that God has called us as ordinary believers to service for Him may seem overwhelming at times, we can find comfort in the fact that God has equipped us for our appointed service. Indeed, we are told that He has given us everything we need for both life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us. (See 2 Peter 1:3.) When you accepted Christ as Savior and Lord and were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you became equipped for service by receiving a spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are given to believers for service to the body. Importantly, not every believer has the same gift. God gives believers gifts as He alone determines. Each part of the body is important and works with the other parts for the good of the entire body. So as we mentioned yesterday, and as Paul points out, you should not be jealous of others' gifts; you're uniquely gifted for your appointed service and have a unique role in the overall body. Do you know your spiritual gift? If not, there are wonderful tools that will help you – ask your pastor. However, don't wait until you "discover" your gift before you begin serving. A hand doesn't need to be told it's a hand before it begins functioning as a hand. It simply functions as a hand. Similarly, begin to serve in areas to which you are drawn and to which you have a passion. You will likely discover your gift and experience true joy in your service.

5. Rewarded for Service – Matthew 16:24-28

Not only has God called us and equipped us to serve, He will reward our faithful service. After telling His disciples about the cost of following Him, Jesus told them that when He returned to earth, He would reward each person according to what he has done. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 3:1-15, Paul explained that each believer builds on the foundation of Jesus, and the value of his work as eternal or temporal would be revealed on the Day of Judgment. If what has been built is of eternal value, he will receive a reward. It is important to remember the standard by which our service will be judged for the purpose of determining rewards. Unfortunately, we often view our ministry and our service to God in worldly terms, focusing on numbers, popularity, and other measures of "success." God, however, rewards faithfulness – that is His expectation and His standard. (See 1 Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:21.) Knowing that the Day of Judgment is approaching and the test of our service is near should spur us on to continued faithful service to Christ and his church. If we remain faithful, we will one day hear the words we long to hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your master."

THE CALLED
–DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE–
LESSON #2
REJECTING GOD’S CALL
THE TRAGEDY OF EXCUSES
TEACHERS BIBLICAL COMMENTARY
Rev. Jim Graham. Pastor
Coosada Baptist Church, Coosada, Alabama

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-14 (Moses’ call)
Exodus 4:1-17

Scripture: Exodus 3-4 (Moses’ call)

Teaching Aim: Just like Moses we can give excuses and even reject God’s call.

Doesn’t everyone have that person in their life that is always asking them to do something? They’re clingy, needy, and bothersome. Do you keep your list of excuses handy for when you see them coming? Aren’t you thankful when you have a conflict that interferes with whatever they’re throwing at you this time?!

Well it’s one thing to keep excuses handy for a bothersome and needy person in your life, but do we do the same to God? What do we do when God calls? I’ve always heard that you’ve never been more unpopular than when people find out that you are on the nominating committee. We usually have a pretty good list of excuses ready for God, too. Moses was no exception.

Today, we’re going to look at my list of favorite excuses from Exodus 3 and 4. Excuses usually follow a challenge or a call. Moses was no exception. (Exodus 3:9-10 KJV) ⁹*Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.* ¹⁰*Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.* God’s calls are so often challenging us to leave our comfort zone. And that brings out the excuses. Moses answers to God’s call sound very familiar. Look at his first excuse.

Excuse #1: But Who Am I? – Exodus 3:11-12

When we ask “who am I?” we are questioning God’s creative powers. He’s the one who made you. Certainly He should know what you are capable of.

When we ask “who am I?” we are questioning God’s reasoning. Why would He choose me? I guess we feel so incapable at times that we would wonder why God – with so many servants – would choose us.

God’s answer is quite impressive. He basically says, “It doesn’t matter who you are. It matters who I am. And I will be with you.”

We so easily lose focus on what is important. Or maybe I should say – on WHO is important. And folks . . . it’s not US. It’s HIM.

Well, the Lord’s answer created another question for Moses.

Excuse #2: But Who Are You? – Exodus 3:13-15

Moses has a valid concern. By what authority do I approach the pharaoh? Do I get some paperwork or a title or something? For those with a limited amount of experience with God, such as Moses at this point in his life, perhaps "Who are you?" is the right question. But for the rest of us, maybe I should reword this question. We ask it this way – "Can I trust you?"

The Lord answered, "I AM" What does He mean? I am what?!

I am the creator – I have the power.

I am the King – I have the authority.

I am the God of your fathers – I am trustworthy because you can see my faithfulness in the lives of others.

I have a plan. – 3:16-22 – God always has a plan!

(Jeremiah 29:11 KJV) "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

But Moses is too much like us. He needs more. He has another question.

Excuse #3: What If They Won't Believe Me? – Exodus 4:1-9

What if they argue with me? What if I don't have all the answers?

Sometimes we are kind of wimpy. We're perfectly agreeable to serve God if it doesn't cost anything, or make us uncomfortable, or if the road won't be rocky. But is this going to be tough? I'm not sure I want to do it if it's going to be too hard.

God's response – If they need proof, **I** will provide it.

I'll prove myself to them, you won't have to. Thank goodness it is not my job to prove to you that He is God. It's just my job to present Him to you. He can prove it himself.

Through your staff (2-5) turned into a snake.

Through your hand (6-8) turned leprous and back.

Through the water (9) turned to blood.

(Exodus 4:5 KJV) "That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee."

Okay, so you're God and you're going to handle your part, but what about my part!!!

Excuse #4: What If I Can't Do It? – Exodus 4:10-12

I can't! It's amazing how many things we think we can't do. I didn't think I could hold my toddler down for a medical procedure, until I had to do it for him.

A little boy was in the store with his dad one day. He was helping out by carrying some of the items. It wasn't long before his arms were full. An overzealous lady, seeing the boy's dilemma, decided that this dad had put too large of a burden on this young man. She decided to act and confronted them "My! That's an awful lot to carry for such a small, young man. I think you need some help." The little boy responded, "Don't worry lady. My dad knows exactly how much I can tote!" Your heavenly father knows exactly how much you can carry as well.

God's answer – Who are you to tell me what my creation can or cannot do?

Moses' fear was speaking. Yours may be different. But God's answer to him is the same for us. I will help you speak. I will provide the courage. I will teach you what to say. I will provide the words. Your job is to be willing and I have chosen you because I need you.

One last try from Moses. A favorite of many Christians . . .

Excuse #5: Can't Someone Else Do It? – Exodus 4:13-18

First, I want you to note that God was beginning to get angry with Moses. Enough excuses can bring about God's wrath. And that's not something that any of us want to experience.

Second, isn't God amazing! God was already providing the solution before Moses asked. Verse 14 tells us that Aaron was already on his way. Notice, though, that God didn't let Moses off the hook. God called Aaron to help Moses, but not to do it in place of Moses.

Many times when people are making excuses, their mind is already made up. But Moses was still listening. He had questions. He had doubts. He had concerns. He had fears. But he listened. And God had the answers. Therefore, Moses responded to God and did what God challenged him to do. Will you?

THE CALLED
-DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE-
Teaching Guide

Rev. Kenny Hoomes

Associate Pastor for Spiritual Maturity
First Baptist Church Montgomery, Alabama

Lesson Two: Rejecting God's Call
The Tragedy of Excuses

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-14 (Moses' call)
Exodus 4:1-17

Teaching Aim:

Just like Moses, we can give excuses and even reject God's call. Discover scriptures and Biblical examples of those who in contrast to Moses accepted God's call.

I. Create Interest

As learners arrive, say: "Perhaps the best musical interpretation of the call of Moses was recorded by Ken Medema some 25 years ago with his song 'Moses'." Invite learners to listen carefully as you play a recording of the song you secured IN ADVANCE. (If you do not have a copy of the recording, you will find it available on-line at www.kenmedema.com. The song is located on Medema's "People of the Son" CD.)

II. Purposeful Bible Study

Invite learners to open their Bibles to Exodus 3:1-14. Call on a learner to read the passage aloud. Briefly relate the background as to why Moses was in Midian tending sheep. Ask: "How does God appear to Moses?" "What request does God make of Moses?" "How does Moses respond to God's request?"

Stress to learners that Moses finds himself in the very presence of God and yet begins to make excuses as to "why" he cannot fulfill the Lord's request. Remind learners that as believers today, we are God's hands and feet. For Moses, God was going to redeem His people, but He was going to work through Moses to accomplish this task.

Direct attention to v. 14. Ask: "What does God say His name is?" (I AM) Stress to learners that for the ancient Hebrew, the name was the summation of one's character, the self-disclosure of the person. In this passage, God makes a full declaration of His inmost being to Moses.

Invite learners to look at Exodus 4:1-17. Call on a learner to read this passage aloud. State: "Moses continues to make excuses before the Lord." Ask: "What signs does God give to Moses?" (rod, leprous hand, Nile water to blood) "What new excuse does Moses offer?" "What promise does God make regarding Moses' speech?"

Write the following phrase on the board: *Those whom God calls, He confirms and equips.* Request learners tell if they agree or disagree with the statement and why.

III. Closing

State: "In today's passage, we see Moses giving many excuses to reject God's call?" Ask learners to think of other biblical examples who, in contrast to Moses, accepted God's call. Allow learners time to respond. Say: "Let us not forget the ultimate example of Jesus who willingly followed God's will for His life in sacrificing Himself for us to have eternal life."

Distribute copies of **Ten Guidelines From God (Item 2)**. Assign one paragraph to each of ten learners in the room. Request learners to use their imaginations and picture themselves before God at the burning bush. After you read the opening paragraph aloud, direct the learners to continue to read as assigned.

Remind learners of the Ken Medema song "Moses" used at the beginning of the session. State: "Medema draws attention to God asking Moses to give up his rod and to throw it (the rod) down. The rod was seen as Moses' sense of security, his most prized possession. Invite learners to pray silently and search inwardly to see what might be standing between them and God's call on their lives.

Close the session in a verbal prayer, asking God to help learners as they seek to obey His call in their lives.

Item 2

Ten Guidelines from God

Effective immediately, please be aware that there are changes YOU need to make in YOUR life. These changes need to be completed in order that I may fulfill My promises to you to grant you peace, joy and happiness in this life. I apologize for any inconvenience, but after all that I am doing, this seems very little to ask of you. Please, follow these ten guidelines.

1. QUIT WORRYING:

Life has dealt you a blow and all you do is sit and worry. Have you forgotten that I am here to take all your burdens and carry them for you? Or do you just enjoy fretting over every little thing that comes your way?

2. PUT IT ON THE LIST:

Something needs to be done or taken care of. Put it on the list. No, not YOUR list. Put it on MY to-do-list. Let ME be the one to take care of the problem. I can't help you until you turn it over to Me. And although My to-do-list is long, I am after all... God. I can take care of anything you put into My hands. In fact, if the truth were ever really known, I take care of a lot of things for you that you never even realize.

3. TRUST ME:

Once you've given your burdens to Me, quit trying to take them back. Trust in Me. Have the faith that I will take care of all your needs, your problems and your trials. Problems with the kids? Put them on My list. Problem with finances? Put it on My list. Problems with your emotional [roller coaster](#)? For My sake, put it on My list. I want to help you. All you have to do is ask.

4. LEAVE IT ALONE:

Don't wake up one morning and say, "Well, I'm feeling much stronger now, I think I can handle it from here." Why do you think you are feeling stronger now? It's simple. You gave Me your burdens and I'm taking care of them. I also renew your strength and cover you in my peace. Don't you know that if I give you these problems back, you will be right back where you started? Leave them with Me and forget about them. Just let Me do my job.

5. TALK TO ME:

I want you to forget a lot of things. Forget what was making you crazy. Forget the worry and the fretting because you know I'm in control. But there's one thing I pray you never forget. Please, don't forget to talk to Me - OFTEN! I love YOU! I want to hear your voice. I want you to include Me in the things going on in your life. I want to hear you talk about your friends and family. Prayer is simply you having a conversation with Me. I want to be your dearest friend.

6. HAVE FAITH:

I see a lot of things from up here that you can't see from where you are. Have faith in Me that I know what I'm doing. Trust Me; you wouldn't want the view from My eyes. I will continue to care for you, watch over you, and meet your needs. You only have to trust Me. Although I have a much bigger task than you, it seems as if you have so much trouble just doing your simple part. How hard can trust be?

7. SHARE:

You were taught to share when you were only two years old. When did you forget? That rule still applies. Share with those who are less fortunate than you. Share your joy with those who need encouragement. Share your laughter with those who haven't heard any in such a long time. Share your tears with those who have forgotten how to cry. Share your faith with those who have none.

8. BE PATIENT:

I managed to fix it so in just one lifetime you could have so many diverse experiences. You grow from a child to an adult, have children, change jobs many times, learn many trades, travel to so many places, meet thousands of people, and experience so much. How can you be so impatient then when it takes Me a little longer than you expect to handle something on My to-do-list? Trust in My timing, for My timing is perfect. Just because I created the entire universe in only six days, everyone thinks I should always rush, rush, rush.

9. BE KIND:

Be kind to others, for I love them just as much as I love you. They may not dress like you, or talk like you, or live the same way you do, but I still love you all. Please try to get along, for My sake. I created each of you different in some way. It would be too boring if you were all identical. Please, know I love each of your differences.

10. LOVE YOURSELF:

As much as I love you, how can you not love yourself? You were created by me for one reason only -- to be loved, and to love in return. I am a God of Love. Love Me. Love your neighbors. But also love yourself. It makes My heart ache when I see you so angry with yourself when things go wrong. You are very precious to me. Don't ever forget....

--Anonymous

DAILY DEVOTIONS
LESSON #2
Rejecting God's Call: The Tragedy of Excuses
Thomas Treadwell

Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery AL

Lesson #2 – Rejecting God's Call: The Tragedy of Excuses

1. Excuses, Excuses – Matthew 26:36-45

God's call on our lives may not always involve something that we think is particularly attractive or desirous from a worldly perspective. In fact, it often is not. When we face a call of God, we have come upon a fork in the road. We have a choice between only two options – obedience or disobedience. Disobedience comes in different forms. It may be an outright rejection or it may be delayed obedience. Disobedience also typically comes with an excuse, a reason why we cannot obey in that way at that time. We will spend the next two weeks looking at Biblical responses to some common excuses given in response to a call of God. Sometimes our excuses are very creative, even convincing us that our disobedience is okay. But the tragedy of each excuse is that it doesn't truly mask or excuse our disobedience. In disobeying, we yield to the temptation of self will and to the question that still echoes from the Garden, "did God really say?" (See Genesis 3:1.) Instead, we should look at Jesus' example. His response in Matthew 26:36-45 to the knowledge of what was to come for Him shows us our proper response when we perceive something as a challenging call of God. Thankfully, Jesus yielded to the Father's will, despite the fact that it was to lead Him on a road of temporary, yet excruciating, suffering. Suffering the depths of which we cannot fathom. We must similarly yield to the Holy Spirit and pray as Jesus did, "Father, not my will, but yours be done." Today, stop making excuses and begin walking the path of obedience.

2. Too Great a Sacrifice? – Matthew 19:16-26

Many times people ignore the call of God because they perceive the sacrifice associated with following the call as too great. The sacrifice may be of time, money, possessions, or status. Sometimes, we may not ignore the call, but delay responding to the call until a time when we think the sacrifice won't be as great. Maybe you put off giving until you have "enough." Maybe you put off going until it is more convenient. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the story of a rich young ruler who came to Jesus seeking to know how he could obtain eternal life. When Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor, the man walked away sad, because he had great wealth. He rejected the call of God and rejected Jesus as Lord of his life because he perceived the sacrifice associated with accepting the call to be too great. He gave up the eternal rewards of obedience because he foolishly believed his earthly rewards were better. Are you not responding to a clear call of God because you believe it will involve too great a sacrifice on your part? Respond today, knowing that the blessings of obedience far outweigh what you believe to be the sacrifices of obedience.

3. Too Hard? – Judges 6-7

Have you ever faced something you knew God was calling you to do and seen it as impossible? You examined it from every angle, tried to work it out on paper, talked to friends or family, and it just seemed . . . well, impossible? Gideon faced just such a task when he was called by God to lead Israel in driving out the Midianites. When Gideon was first introduced, he was threshing wheat in a winepress, hiding from the Midianites. Later, in 6:27, Gideon was following God's

command to offer a sacrifice, but doing so at night because he was "afraid of his family and the men of town." It is not too hard to see why Gideon was so surprised when God called him a "mighty warrior." Gideon appeared anything but! Gideon even told God that the task was too hard, and that he was too weak to fulfill it. However, God responded to Gideon with the same response He has for us today – "I will be with you." (6:16). When you face a call that you think is too hard, maybe even impossible, remember that it is the all powerful God of creation who is calling you. God Himself once said to Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (See Genesis 18:14.) The answer was "no" then, and the answer is "no" today. Don't forget – nothing is impossible with God.

4. Too Hurt? – Colossians 3:17, 23-24

Sometimes our excuse for not responding to God's call, either to new service or to continued service, is a result of how we've been treated in the past or are presently being treated. It is often a simple case of hurt feelings. "They don't appreciate what I do" or "Do they realize what a sacrifice this is for me to do this," are things that may have gone through your head, if not your lips. I know it has mine. It is at those moments when we must remember that our service in response to God's call is service to the Lord. Certainly, there is an earthly benefit of our service to those being served, but primarily our service is an act of obedience to God and a loving response to Him. Remembering who it is you are truly serving will return the joy to your service that you may have lost by focusing on the response you get from your service. These passages in Colossians remind us that it is the Lord we are serving in whatever work we do. Serve knowing that it is Jesus you are serving; and whatever you do, do it thankfully and joyfully, knowing that you will receive an inheritance from Him as a reward.

5. Too Proud? – John 13:1-17

Have you ever not accepted an opportunity for service because the task was beneath you? Maybe you didn't think about it in those terms; maybe the task didn't appeal to you because it involved getting a little dirty or doing something a little too subservient in a situation where others might see? As followers of Christ, we are called to follow Jesus' model of servanthood and view all of our relationships as opportunities for submission and service. (See Philippians 2:1-10; Ephesians 5:21.) This passage in John describes an incredible display of the servant leadership modeled by Jesus when he washed his disciples' feet. Looking closely at verse 3 will give some added impact to what Jesus did. Jesus, knowing that God had put all things under His power, and knowing that He was from God and was soon returning to God, did what? He could have asked His disciples to serve *Him*, to wash *His* feet. But, instead, He humbled Himself and served *them*. He taught them about the attitude of humility and selfless service that should exist in the life of every believer. This is our model. If the very Son of God can stoop to wash the dirty, smelly feet of common men, surely there is no task that is "beneath" us. What service opportunities or other things God is calling you to do compare to foot washing? Put your pride aside and practice the humble servanthood modeled by Jesus.

THE CALLED
–DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE–
LESSON #3

RUNNING FROM GOD’S CALL
NO PLACE TO HIDE
TEACHERS BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Dr. Bobby DuBois, State Missionary
Associate Executive Director
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State Board of Missions

Scripture: Jonah 1

Jonah is a great example of how futile it is for a person to run from God. The Psalmist affirms in 139:7-10, *“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou are there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (KJV)*

God’s call comes to us in many different forms. There is a call to salvation that allows one to experience the forgiveness and restoration of God. There is a call to ministry that may even come daily as God opens doors of ministry opportunity in front of us. There is also a vocational call where God sets some apart for special service through a local church, association or convention. When God’s call comes, there is no place to hide – the story of Jonah affirms that. Jonah 1 helps sharpen our understanding of what happens when one hears His call and refuses to answer affirmatively.

God is Calling (Jonah 1:1-3)

Verse 1

“Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying...” Now make no mistake about it. God was not issuing an all points bulletin in hopes of finding a volunteer to go to Ninevah. He was extending a call to one of His prophets. Jonah had, no doubt, been given other assignments previously but there was something different about this one. He heard the call of God clearly and when he determined his response he knew exactly what he was doing. When God calls, a person has but two options. One either says, “Yes” or “No.” There can be no debate with God. Then is no room for procrastination. A decision must be made and once it is made one must be willing to accept the personal consequences of the decision.

Verse 2

God’s call to Jonah included the clear instructions of, “Arise, go.” The contextual meaning of the command includes swift response. Jonah is not given a window of time in which to respond. The command comes with the expectation that Jonah will accept the mission and respond as directed. The assignment included a directive that God wanted His prophet to go to Ninevah – a city with a spotted reputation at best. It was a pagan city where its citizens did not have a very good track record in their dealing with outsiders. It was a tough assignment but no one even told Jonah that his service to God would be anything less. It is one thing to stand among your own countrymen and proclaim God’s judgment but to go into a pagan city and predict their impending doom is another matter. This was a tough task but Jonah was not in a position to pick his assignments. When God calls, the prophet (and disciple!) is expected to say, “Yes!”

Verse 3

Jonah proceeded to Joppa, the nearest seaport to board a ship. Instead of taking a 500 mile trip northeast of Palestine to Ninevah, his destination was 2000 miles due west to Tarshish. There was no warning of his sudden decision. No appeal was made to God (as did Moses at the burning bush) as to why God needed someone else for the job. He simply got on a ship and headed in the opposite direction. Why? What would cause a prophet of God to run in the face of one of the most exciting opportunities of His life? Ninevah was a city of 120,000 people – 120,000 lost people! God was about to do a miraculous work by extending to them His offer of grace and Jonah was called to be the preacher at the crusade! Why would Jonah not jump at this opportunity? The best we can conclude is that Jonah rebelled out of fear! Fear of what? Fear that the Ninevites would kill him as they had killed others before him? Fear that he would not be up to the task? The answer is found in Jonah 4:2. Jonah was afraid that God would show mercy on the city of Ninevah and spare them from the punishment they so rightly deserved! Jonah was afraid that the residents of Ninevah would repent! The prophet of God would rather die than see that happen. His answer, the only thing he knew to do, was to flee from the presence of the Lord. He ran!

Storms are Coming (1:4-6)

Verse 4

The Lord, the Great Initiator, sent a great wind to the seas where Jonah's ship was travelling. There was no need to check with the Weather Channel for a long-range forecast on this one. It appeared from nowhere as the God of Creation reached out to His rebellious prophet. The plans of the Sovereign God will not be stopped because of a running prophet. The ship was about to break due to the fierce power of the storm.

Verse 5

The perfect storm formed and the ship was placed in its path. Now these were experienced sailors who were accustomed to storms and such but they knew this was no usual storm! Their lives were on the line and there was nothing they could do to stop the inevitable from happening. They were Polynesian sailors with a polytheistic view of god. They did not worship the One, True God. Their gods were many and they called on anyone out there who might be listening but no one did. While they were fighting and praying for their lives, Jonah was in the belly of the ship fast asleep – oblivious to the peril awaiting himself and his fellow travelers.

Verse 6

The sailors were fighting for their lives while the source of the problem was snoozing away down below. The captain of the ship went to Jonah and begged him to help them. How can someone sleep at a time like this? It is time to get up, time to spring into action! A pagan captain was begging a Hebrew prophet to begin praying to his God.

Men are Crying (1:7-10)

Verse 7

The crew members wanted to know who was responsible for this storm so they chose a method for determining guilt that was even common for the Hebrews themselves. They cast lots (See I Sam 10:19; Judges 20:9; Nehemiah 11:1; Leviticus 16:8-10; Nehemiah 10:35; Nahum 3:10; Proverbs 18:8) in an effort to discover the cause of their calamity.

Verse 8

Once the lots fell on Jonah, they began asking a series of questions of him:

- Who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?
- What do you do?
- Where do you come from?
- What is your country?
- From what people are you?

Verse 9

Jonah gave only two answers – “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord...” The One behind this storm was none other than Yahweh, the Maker of Heaven and Earth! Jonah’s rebellion had placed the lives of the entire crew at risk.

Verse 10

The experienced sailors were even more afraid when they learned that the Creator God was the One to whom Jonah prayed. What was already a tense situation became even worse as the sailors continued to stare death in the face. An exclamation of horror followed. “What have you done?” What have you done to put us at risk like this? Why is your God angry with you? Must we perish because of your rebellion?

Seas are Calming (1:11-16)

Verse 11

The crew wanted to know what they could do to spare themselves. Was there any action that could be taken to cause the storm to be silenced?

Verse 12

Jonah instructed them to cast him overboard. For the first time, Jonah is willing to admit that his rebellion is the cause of God sending the storm. Their only hope for escaping the fury of the storm is to cast Jonah overboard.

Verses 13-16

Even Jonah could not convince these men of the sea to cast him overboard. They were afraid that if they did harm to Jonah then his God might well turn his anger toward them. That was a risk they were unwilling to take. They began rowing the ship toward land – the last thing one should do while in a boat in a storm. They were headed for certain death. The Creator turned the storm so that it was not possible for them to reach the shore and they realized they had but one option – to do as Jonah suggested and cast him overboard.

A Fish is Waiting (1:17)

Verse 17

One can only imagine what went through Jonah's mind when the sailors laid hands on him to throw him into an angry sea. What does one do when he/she realizes that their life is about to end? Jonah had no reason to expect deliverance; no reason to expect grace; he had run from God and knew that he deserved whatever God was about to give him. Then the fish came. From out of nowhere the great fish swallowed Jonah and for the next three days and nights, Jonah had the blessed opportunity to sit and think about what he could have done with his life. How pitiful! The prophet of the One true God sitting in the dark, smelly stomach of a big fish wondering when, and how, the end will come.

What does Chapter 1 tell us about God?

- God calls people into His service
- God cares enough about sinners to send a word of hope, love and grace
- No one can run from God and escape His presence
- When running from God, one is at risk
- When running from God, others are at risk
- God's grace is as real to a rebellious prophet as it is to the citizens of a godless city
- The call of God always requires a choice

Remember, one can run from God but there is no place to hide!

THE CALLED
-DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE-
Teaching Guide

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Lesson Three: Running From God's Call
No Place to Hide

Scripture: Jonah 1 (Jonah's Call)

Teaching Aim: Jonah ran from God's call and so can we. Discover scriptures and biblical examples of those who ran from God's call and the value that was robbed from their lives.

I. Create Interest

As learners arrive, ask for a show of hands to the following questions: "How many of you enjoy going fishing?" "How many of you have gone fishing and caught nothing?" "How many have literally loaded the boat?" "How many have caught a really large fish?" Call on a few learners to share their stories of "the big one" they landed. Keep this time humorous, remind story tellers of where they are. Also, be time conscious as learners relate their fishing stories.

Say: "We have heard some stories of catching a big fish but none of these can compare with the story of Jonah and his experience with a big fish." Invite learners to open their Bibles to Jonah 1.

Say: "Jonah ran from God's call and so can we. In today's scripture passage, we will see how Jonah disobeyed God's call and the consequences that followed. We will also discover scriptures and biblical examples of others who ran from God's call and the value that was robbed from their lives."

II. Purposeful Bible Study

Distribute copies of **Running from God's Call Outline (Item 3)** to learners. Direct learners to make notes on the outline as they make their way through the study.

Call on a learner to read Jonah 1:1-3. Ask: "What does God want Jonah to do?" "What is Jonah's response?" Say: "Jonah was considered a true and successful prophet (see 2 Kings 14:25). However, in the book that bears his name, we find him making an attempt to resign his commission as God's spokesman." Stress to learners that God's words are an imperative to Jonah and yet he decides to go as far as possible in the opposite direction (Tarshish). Ask: "How do people run from God today?"

Direct attention to Roman numeral II on the outline. Call on a learner to read aloud verses 4-6. Ask: "How does God respond to Jonah's running?" "How do the sailors respond to the storm?" "What do we find Jonah doing in the midst of the storm?"

Stress to learners that like a holy chess match, Jonah thought he held God in "check." However, when God sent the storm, He was saying, "check-mate." Invite learners to contrast how Jonah and the pagan sailors reacted to the storm. Stress to learners that the conduct of the sailors is placed in a favorable contrast with that of God's prophet. Say: "Jonah knows God's 'grip is on the ship'."

Direct attention to Roman numeral III on the outline. Call on a learner to read aloud verses 7-9. Ask: "How do the sailors determine the guilty person causing the storm?" Relate casting lots to "drawing straws" for us today. Direct attention to the questions asked after the casting of lots had pointed to Jonah. Say: "After a trial by lot, a trial by question followed." Again, the pagan sailors are shown in contrast to Jonah's attitude to the Ninevites. Direct attention to Jonah's response to the sailors' questions. Say: "In the midst of the crisis, Jonah is seen as a missionary to the heathen in spite of himself."

Direct attention to Roman numeral IV on the outline. Call on a learner to read aloud verses 10-14. Say: "In the beginning, the sailors feared the storm." Ask: "Now who do they fear?" (God) "What is Jonah's solution to their problem?" "How do the sailors respond?"

Say: "Jonah responds to the sailors with a voice from his conscience. However, he still does not have compassion for the heathen." Again, contrast the attitude of the pagan sailors with that of Jonah.

Direct attention to Roman numeral V on the outline. Call on a learner to read aloud verses 15-17. Say: "Like listening to a great symphony, the story moves to a crescendo in this climatic moment. Jonah is thrown into the sea and the full orchestra of literary sound ceases." Ask: "What do the sailors do next?"

Direct attention to verse 17. State: "These following verses have been debated throughout the years. However, it is important for us to realize God's ability to use His creation for His divine will. The God of history controls nature as well as man." Relate the miracle of Jonah surviving three days and three nights to Jesus' use of the story (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32).

III. Closing

Say: "Jonah is not the only example of one that ran from God's call." Invite learners to name other examples from scripture of those who ran from God's call and the value that was robbed from their lives. Allow time for learners to respond.

Call on a learner to read aloud the poem **Turn to God (Item 4)**. Remind learners that we, too, can run from God's call in our lives.

Request learners close their eyes and pray silently, asking for courage to obey God's call. Close the prayer time by reciting John 3:16 together.

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Item 3

Running From God's Call Jonah 1

I. The Rebellion – verses 1-3

II. The Storm – verses 4-6

III. The Trial – verses 7-9

IV. The Sentence – verses 10-14

V. The Punishment – verses 15-17

Item 4

Turn to God

When your life is filled with darkness,
Disappointment, hurt and strife;
And you've run from God and given up on life.
You may ask, "Will He still use me?
I've not listened to His call."
Simply stop and pray, giving Him your all.

Turn to God, He's waiting there for you;
Turn to God, He'll make your heart brand new.
Don't worry about your past,
His love for you is cast.
Turn to God and do His will today.

It matters not how deep the sin, how low the lowest low;
There is no sea too deep for God to go.
Just trust His means to use you
And accomplish now His will.

He's reaching down, waiting for you still.
Turn to God, He's waiting there for you;
Turn to God, He'll make your heart brand new.
Don't worry about your past,
Your uselessness won't last.
Turn to God and do His will today.

Kenneth A. Hoomes
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DAILY DEVOTIONS
LESSON #3
Created For Value: Running From God's Call: No Place To Hide
Thomas Treadwell

Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery AL

Lesson #3 – Running from God's Call: No Place to Hide

I. Too Scared? – Acts 9:1-19

Can you think of a time when fear kept you from doing something? Fear can be a powerful motivator or inhibitor. From something as seemingly small as stage-fright to life-affecting phobias, fear can keep us on the sidelines from many fun and beneficial activities. It can also keep us from following a call of God. Certainly in the life of Jonah, fear was a motivator in his running from God's call to Nineveh. Ananias also dealt with fear as God called him to interact with a dangerous, murderous man named Saul of Tarsus. Saul had a passion for persecuting Christians. He was present at the stoning of Stephen, "giving approval to his death." Acts 8:1. We are told in Acts 9:1 that he was "still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" as he prepared to go to Damascus. He was truly a dangerous man, who was feared by many in the early church. That is why Ananias responded as he did when Jesus told him to go find Saul and restore his sight. Ananias had no idea that Saul's life had been changed. He knew nothing of the blinding encounter Saul had with the living Christ. He only knew Saul as a persecutor of Christians who had come to Damascus to arrest all believers. Ananias, however, responded in obedience, choosing to place his faith in the call of Christ over his fear. When we are fearful of a call God has for us, we too must trust in Him, knowing that He is our protector. "The Lord is my light and salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? . . . For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock." Psalm 27:1, 5. Fear not, for God is with you.

2. Too Inconvenient? – Luke 10:25-37

Sometimes our excuse for not responding to a call of God is inconvenience. We like our schedules and routines, our comfort zones and norms, and we simply do not want to be inconvenienced. Typically, responding to a call of God will require us to adjust our schedule or get out of our comfort zone. Jesus told a story of three men who were faced with an inconvenient opportunity to serve someone in need. Two did not want to be inconvenienced with the needs of another and passed the injured man by. The third, though greatly inconvenienced in time, energy, supplies, and finances, chose to stop and serve. Jesus told us to be like this third man. Don't let your routine or your comfort zone trap you from the rich blessings God has in store for you. God will call you into new and exciting opportunities that will grow and bless you in ways you cannot even imagine. Are you so focused on your routine that you don't notice the needs and opportunities God has put around you? Are you forsaking a call of God because it's too inconvenient? Instead, walk in obedience and experience the blessing!

3. Too Disqualified? – John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-17

Have you ever felt like you were not qualified for service because of your past? It may be because of the life you led before you were a Christian or because of a failure you experienced in your Christian life. At least one of Jesus' disciples could have felt that way. Peter, after Jesus' arrest, adamantly denied being a disciple of Jesus. He denied it not once, but three times, just as Jesus had predicted. Having denied being a Christ follower was certainly enough to

discourage Peter and cause him to question his qualifications for future service. However, we see, following the Resurrection, that Jesus restored Peter, asking him not once, but three times, if Peter loved Him. Peter is next shown in Acts boldly and powerfully delivering a sermon, healing the lame, preaching to the Sanhedrin, and continuing his faithful service to Christ. Peter did not let his past hinder his effectiveness in the present. He lived the admonition in Philippians 3:13-14: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Don't be weighted down by your past. If necessary, seek God's forgiveness, then press forward in freedom from the bondage of sin and in faithful service to Christ, your Savior and Redeemer.

4. Too Busy? – Luke 14:15-24

If I asked you to describe your life right now, you would probably say it's busy. In this world of fast food, cell phones, dishwashers, 24-hour stores, and other conveniences that were designed and marketed to make our lives easier, we're actually busier than ever. In fact, we're often too busy to answer God's call. In this parable, we see guests who were invited to a great banquet, but were too busy to come. They were so consumed with their lives and the things of the world that they rejected the call. Note that even in their absence, the banquet was still held. The master didn't cancel the banquet; he just extended the invitation to others, who gladly responded. Those who attended enjoyed a great blessing. When God calls you, does He get a busy signal?

What blessings are you missing because you are too busy to answer? Remember that God is the creator of time and gives you enough time in each day to accomplish what He wants you to accomplish. If you are too busy to respond to His call, then what are you filling your time with that is not His will for you? Evaluate your schedule and ensure that you are filling it with activities that glorify God. Honor Him with your time.

5. Hide and Seek – 1 Samuel 9-10

Have you ever seen a little child try to hide by covering his eyes? He thinks that if he can't see you, you can't see him. While this is cute for a two-year-old, it looks pretty foolish for a thirty-year-old. When we try to run and hide from God, we are in essence doing the same thing. We think we are hiding, when God actually sees right where we are. We've looked at Jonah and his attempt to hide from God, but there was another Bible figure who did a similar thing. It happened when Israel asked God for a king, and God chose Saul. The anointing and announcement of Saul as king is an interesting story. Picture it in your mind. Samuel assembled all of Israel to reveal who their king would be. When with great fanfare he announced Saul, no one could find him, until God said, "He's hiding in the luggage." They pulled Saul out of the pile of bags and Samuel announced, "This is your king!" Although the people cheered, Saul, the reluctant king-to-be, had to look and feel a little foolish. Like Jonah, Saul tried to hide from a call of God. Both Saul and Jonah learned that, with God, you cannot run and you cannot hide. Are you running from God? Are you giving excuses as to why you cannot respond to His call? If so, repent of your disobedience and unbelief, trust that His will is good, perfect, and pleasing, and respond today.

THE CALLED
–DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE–
LESSON #4

DISCOVERING GOD’S CALL
WHAT IS GOD CALLING YOU TO DO?
TEACHERS BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Dr. Barry F. Cospers, *Director of Missions*
Tallapoosa Baptist Association

Lesson Four: Discovering God’s Call
What is God Calling you to do?

Scripture: Acts 9:1-19
I Thessalonians 5:23-24
Ephesians 2:10

Teaching Aim: Jonah ran from God’s call and so can we. Discover scriptures and biblical examples of those who ran from God’s call and the value that was robbed from their lives.

INTRODUCTION

An exciting moment following salvation is God’s call upon our lives. Just think the very God of heaven has called you and me to serve Him for the rest of our lives. What a calling! What a life!

Allow me to ask you a very personal question? What is God calling you to do? Let each of us look at the call experience of the Apostle Paul. May we glean theological insights and practical applications as we seek to understand God’s call upon our lives. As we go through this journey together, let us open our minds and hearts to God’s call and God’s purpose for us and allow God to do something huge in our lives.

I. A CHANGED LIFE (Acts 9:1-9)

Paul’s changed life was undeniable. He was wonderfully converted by his encounter with the living Lord on the Damascus Road. Let us notice what happened to Paul.

- He went storming out of Jerusalem in a huff; he came stumbling into Damascus in humility (9:8-9).
- He went to arrest Christians; he ended up being arrested by Christ (9:1-5).
- He began the trip determined to wipe out the message of Christ; he ended the trip devoted to the cause of taking that message to the ends of the earth (9:19-22).
He went from being a persecutor to being a persecuted one (9:23-25).¹

When Paul was converted, his whole life was turned upside down. He came to realize that Jesus was not dead, but He was alive. Jesus was not the Nazarene rabble-rouser that Paul had previously thought. Rather, Jesus was, and is, the Messiah, the very Son of God.

II. A CALLED LIFE (Acts 9:10-15)

¹ Bruce B. Barton, “Acts”, *Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House publishers, Inc., 1999) 154.

Paul's call was one all of grace. God chose Paul, Paul did not choose God (I Tim. 1:14). Paul became God's vessel (II Tim. 2:20-21). Therefore, God would work through Paul to accomplish His purposes (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12-13). Paul's call and ministry would bring glory to God as he would take the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles, kings and commoners.² Paul would also suffer for Christ's sake.

As God called Paul to serve Him, He also calls each of us to serve Him. We may not have a call experience such as Paul had, but each of us are called to serve Jesus with all of our heart. We may feel insignificant or even like a "nobody." Let us again be taught afresh from Acts 9:10-15. Due to God's call of Paul as a key person to take the Good News of the Kingdom to the entire world, it would seem that Peter or one of the other apostles should have ministered to Paul. But notice what God did. He chose what many would have considered a "nobody" who was an unknown disciple by the name of Ananias for such an occasion as this. Let us also consider a list of "nobodies" that God has used.

- John Staupitz: The man who helped lead Martin Luther to Christ.
- John Eggen: Instrumental in the conversion of C.H. Spurgeon.
- Edward Kimball: Just a shoe salesman who happened to be D.L. Moody's spiritual mentor.
- Mordecai Hamm: A little known evangelist who preached the night that Billy Graham yielded his life to Christ.³

We have two callings on our lives. The first is to salvation and the second is to service. There is no one who has been gloriously saved that has not been called to service. We are to yield ourselves to the purposes of God by living a life of faithful obedience.

III. A LIFE OF WORSHIP (I Thessalonians 5:23-24)

The purpose of worship is to become more like Christ in both character and conduct. William Temple, former Archbishop of Canterbury, gave the following definition for worship:

"For to worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to fuel the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open up the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God."⁴

Worship must be a priority for the local church. Ministry must flow out of worship. If ministry does not flow out of worship, then ministry only becomes a busy activity without power and without heart. There may be "some" results, but not the kind of results that bring honor to God. Too many churches have substituted religious entertainment for real worship by catering to the desires of the congregation.

Notice what Paul included in the worship ministry of the church.

² Warren Wiersbe, "Acts 1-12", *Be Dynamic* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, third printing, 1989) 113.

³ Barton, *ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴ Warren Wiersbe, quoting William Temple, "1 & 2 Thessalonians", *Be Ready* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, ninth printing, 1984), 119.

Prayer (5:17)
Praise (5:18)
Word of God (5:19-21)
Godly living (5:22-24)
Christian fellowship (5:25-28)

We are offered the very hand of God. God pulls us up to a higher and more glorious way of living.

IV. A LIFE OF SERVICE (Ephesians 2:10)

God created us in Christ Jesus to do good works. God has prepared a path of good works for Christians who walk by faith. This does not mean that we do good works for God. Rather, it means that God does good works through us as we live in faithful obedience. God is at work around us, in us, and through us.

Authentic believers work for God. No one was more adamant than Paul as he repudiated good works as a ground for salvation (2:8-9). Also, no one insisted more strongly than Paul that good works were a fruit of salvation (2:10). "Justification is by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone" (Martin Luther).

Where there is faith, there are works. We have a job description that is eternally designed by God. In this job description God gives us our call, our task, our ability, and our place to serve.

As Christians, we are "God's workmanship." We have been given "good works" to do that were appointed by God. He gives us the necessary power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this. There is nothing more beautiful than His workmanship working for Him.

V. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Every Christian is called to a lifestyle of service. But what is involved in one's calling? The following will assist our understanding of what is in a calling.

1. Person ... His Son.
"As a leader within the body of believers, our primary calling is by Him, to Him, and for Him" (Colossians 2:6-7).
"God's primary calling for each of us is to His Son, for His Glory, and His primary calling must remain our primary calling."
2. Purpose . . . His Agenda.
We are called to serve God's purpose. Scripture clearly links our calling to God's purpose (cf. II Timothy 1:8-9).
"God always designs our individual calling for His purpose."
3. Passion... His Desire In Your Heart.
You can measure your connectivity to God's calling by its link to your passions.
"God has uniquely called you to accomplish a unique task."
4. Path ... His Map For Your Journey.
Calling is unique ...and His path for you includes the preparation needed to succeed in your unique calling.
"God's path is rarely the smoothest path."
5. Position ... His Roles In Your Life.
God places each of us in leadership roles within and for His kingdom.

"If you are faithful with His current assignments for you, He will trust you with future assignments."⁵

CONCLUSION

We are called to a person (Jesus),
For a purpose (God's),
With a passion (He provides),
Down a path (He directs),
In positions (He assigns).⁶

When you received Christ into your life, you also released your life to be used any way God would choose.⁷

⁵ Next Level Leadership Network (Atlanta: North American Mission Board, 2004) 8-10.

⁶ Ibid., p.10.

⁷ Henry T. Blackaby and Norman C. Blackaby, *Called and Accountable* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2007), 92.

THE CALLED
-DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF MY LIFE-
TEACHING GUIDE

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- Lesson Four:** Discovering God's Call
What is God Calling You to Do?
- Scripture:** Acts 9:1-19 (Paul's Call)
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
Ephesians 2:10
- Teaching Aim:** When Paul was able to see God's call, it added the most value to his life. Discover scriptures and biblical examples of what it means to see God's call. Discover how to know through prayer what God has laid on your heart to do.

I. Create Interest

As learners arrive, direct their attention to Acts 9. Say: "As we continue our study today of "The Called – Discovering the Value of My Life," we cross the bridge into the New Testament. Today we will see how God's call added value to the Apostle Paul's life. We will also discover scriptures and biblical examples of what it means to see God's call. Call on the member enlisted IN ADVANCE to share the **Monologue on Paul (Item 5)**. Note to teacher: If possible, enlist this person soon enough to allow them to memorize the monologue. Use biblical clothing to help set the stage for a better learning environment.

II. Purposeful Bible Study

Thank the learner for their portrayal of Paul. Invite learners to form small groups of three or four people. Distribute copies of **Discovering God's Call (Item 6)** to learners. Request learners work together in their groups and be prepared to share their answers with the larger group. Allow time for learners to complete their assignments and call for responses. Use the background material to supplement learners' responses as listed below.

1. Read Acts 9:1-9
 - A. What evidence do we see of the persecution movement increasing in intensity? Saul broadened the scope of his operations moving beyond Jerusalem to areas where the believers had fled for refuge. Now threats were being made to kill the disciples.
 - B. What senses are involved in Saul's experience on the road to Damascus? Seeing: light flashed from heaven Hearing: He and the members of his party heard a voice, but saw no one. The witnesses and the use of two senses assured this event could not be passed off as an illusion.
 - C. What is Saul told to do? To go to Damascus and await further instructions. Jesus identifies himself with the Christian community. To persecute the Christians is equivalent to persecuting Him.

D. How does Saul respond?

He does as instructed. He is blind and spends the next three days without sight and does not eat or drink. He is basically in a state of shock.

2. Read Acts 9:10-19

A. How would you respond to the Lord's request if you were Ananias?

(Personal responses will vary)

B. What details does Luke give for Ananias' commission?

Plenty – God tells Ananias where he can find Saul, who to look for, and what to do once he finds him.

C. How does Saul respond when Ananias comes and speaks to him?

Saul is humbled. Scales fall from his eyes, he regains his sight. Saul is baptized and eats to regain his strength.

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Paraphrase Paul's words to the Thessalonians as a prayer for you today.

(Personal responses may vary)

Thank learners for their participation in the groups and the discussion that followed.

III. Closing

Say: "In today's passage, we have seen how Paul was able to understand God's call and how that call added value to his life." Invite learners to brainstorm together to name other scriptures and biblical examples of what it means to see God's call.

Read aloud Ephesians 2:10 to the group. Remind learners that this passage was used in Lesson One. Say: "Our 'walk' should involve His 'will'."

Invite learners to pray silently and seek to discover what God would have them do this week to follow His will.

Following the prayer time, close the session by singing "**Lord, We Ask for Your Direction**" (**Item 7**).

Item 5

Monologue On Paul

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, pardon me; please allow me to introduce myself. My given Jewish name is "Saul," named of course after the first King of Israel. We both came from the tribe of Benjamin, you know. However, I am better known by my Roman name, "Paul." The story I wish to tell you today has much to do with how that name change came about. However, as you will see, much more than my name was changed!

It all started with the brutal death of Stephen. You'll find the full story in Acts, chapters 7 and 8. You see, these followers of "The Way" were growing in number and causing great havoc among our Jewish people. Therefore, my friends and I decided this group must be stopped. Drastic measures needed to be taken. Stephen was stoned to death by an angry mob and I went right along with the plan. I must confess, I could never forget that horrible scene and how Stephen died for his Lord.

Soon after this experience, the followers of "The Way" began to flee from the city of Jerusalem. I came up with the plan to go and arrest them and bring these lunatics back to be punished. It was during this adventure that God brought me to my knees and changed my life forever. You'll look deeper at my Damascus Road experience during your Bible study in a few minutes. Here you will discover how I was able to understand God's call for my life. By the way, as you study my story today, ask yourself if you have had a Damascus Road experience in your journey of life. There's nothing better than knowing what God has laid on your heart to do.

Item 6

Discovering God's Call

1. Read Acts 9:1-9

- A. What evidence do we see of the persecution movement increasing in intensity?

- B. What senses are involved in Saul's experience on the road to Damascus?

- C. What is Saul told to do?

- D. How does Saul respond?

2. Read Acts 9:10-19

- A. How would you respond to the Lord's request if you were Ananias?

- B. What details does Luke give for Ananias' commission?

- C. How does Saul respond when Ananias comes and speaks to him?

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Paraphrase Paul's words to the Thessalonians as a prayer for you today.

Item 7

“Lord, We Ask for Your Direction”

(Tune: Hymn to Joy – “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”
The Baptist Hymnal, 1991, No. 7)

Lord, we ask for Your direction,
As we follow You each day;
May our lives be pure and spotless,
Seeking always to obey.
Consecrated, dedicated,
To Your will we must excel.
Sanctified for work and service,
Your Good News forever tell!

Words by Kenneth A. Hoomes
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DAILY DEVOTION
LESSON #4
Created For Value: What is God Calling You To Do?

Thomas Treadwell

Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery AL

Lesson #4 – Discovering God’s Call: What is God Calling You to Do?

1. Buried Treasure? – Psalm 119:105

My oldest son loves pirates, and at his five-year-old birthday party, we had a treasure hunt. I made a map of our house and yard with clues and an “X” for where the treasure (aka party favors) was hidden. The kids had a great time following the map to the location of the buried treasure. While none of the adults participated in our treasure hunt, there are many adults who are on a similar search, viewing God’s will as hidden treasure to be searched for or a great mystery they must solve. But, if God’s will is truly His will, wouldn’t His desire be for us to know it, and do it? It’s important to know that God’s will for your life is not like buried treasure that you must hunt for; in fact, it is clearly revealed within the pages of Holy Scripture. The will of God for our lives is more about who we are than what we do. And, the fact is, you already know most of God’s will for your life. We’ll cover some of these specifically this week. But, primarily, remember that the Bible, the very Word of God, is useful and is a light by which we can see as we walk through our journey of life. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17.) We would think someone was foolish if they stumbled along a rocky path in the darkness carrying a flashlight they never turned on. But how many of us do the same thing? We have the bright light of scripture, yet stumble through life without using it to illuminate our steps. Read and meditate on scripture. Turn your light on and discover the treasure that awaits.

2. Be Saved – 1 Timothy 2:1-7

In school, there were some advanced courses that required a prerequisite before taking them. You couldn’t take the more advanced class until you had taken and passed the more basic class. Many people who desire to know the will of God haven’t met a prerequisite that is God’s fundamental will for them. This prerequisite is the thing upon which the remainder of God’s will is dependent. That prerequisite is salvation. You are without question out of God’s will if you have not committed your life to Jesus Christ. You are living in rebellion as an enemy of God. He has no reason to reveal anything specific about your life because you haven’t met the first qualification – salvation. Jesus said that His sheep know His voice and follow Him because they know His voice. (See John 10:4.) If you are a stranger to God, you cannot discern Jesus’ voice and therefore cannot follow Him. So, the prerequisite to walking in the will of God is to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. You must be saved. Have you met the prerequisite? Today, examine yourself to see if you are in the faith.

3. Be Filled – Ephesians 5:15-18; Colossians 3:15-17

Foolish! That’s what Paul says we are if we don’t know how to understand what God’s will for our lives is. And to make it easy, he tells us how – by being filled with the Spirit. There is some confusion today over the concept of being Spirit-filled. Some think that possessing the Holy Spirit is the same as being filled with the Spirit. But, there is a difference. Every believer, at the moment of salvation, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (See Romans 8:9.) Therefore, if you are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit. He is in you. However, to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be yielding to the Holy Spirit’s control in every decision and every area of our lives. Paul gives

some practical examples of what the Spirit-filled life looks like in the remaining verses of Ephesians 5 and 6. But, how do we do that? How do we let the Spirit control us? Colossians 3, which is a parallel passage of Ephesians 5, tells us. In Colossians 3:16, Paul says to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” instead of saying, “be filled with the Spirit,” as he does in the parallel Ephesians passage. To be Spirit-filled, you must study the Word, meditate on the Word, and let it dwell in you. Let it wash over and renew your mind. As the Holy Spirit renews your mind through the washing of the water of the Word, you will increasingly grow in Christ-likeness and be transformed. “Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (See Romans 12:1-2.) Be filled with the Spirit – that’s God’s will for your life.

4. Be Holy – 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

It is God’s will that you be sanctified, which means that you live a life holy and pleasing to Him. (See 2 Timothy 1:9.) There are many specific commands that come under this general command of God over our lives, and Paul here focuses on three. First, avoid sexual immorality. Christians are to be pure in their sexual lives, avoiding any sexual sin, including adultery (sex with someone who is not your spouse), fornication (sex while unmarried), pornography, and the lust of the eyes, which God considers adultery. (See Matthew 5:27.) This call to sexual purity also includes guarding what we see. Many people watch other people do things on TV or movies that they would never do themselves and call it entertainment. Guard your mind and heart, and “flee sexual immorality.” (1 Corinthians 6:12-20.) Second, be self-controlled. We must not act like the world, who are controlled by their passions. Instead, honor God by keeping your body in subjection. This includes all areas of the lust of the flesh, including our diet, exercise, harmful habits, and even how we dress. Are we dressing to attract attention to ourselves or to honor Christ? “You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:20.) Third, be fair. Paul tells us we should not wrong or take advantage of others. Many passages address this broad directive, but one that comes to mind demands emphasis: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4) Paul ends this passage with an admonition we should remember – God did not call you to lead an impure life, but a holy one. “Be holy because I am holy,” says the Lord God. (1 Peter 1:15). That is His will for you, walk in it.

5. Be Faithful – 2 Peter 3:1-18

After going through this study, you should now realize that God does have a will for your life. He has saved you and called you to a holy life, a life of obedient service for which He has equipped you and will reward you. You must strive daily to be a disciple of Jesus; to take up your cross and follow Him; to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” and “run with perseverance the race marked out for” you. You do this by daily fixing your “eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of [your] faith.” (Hebrews 12:1-3) Your faith must then be worked out in service to others. (See James 2:14-26; Philippians 2:12-13.) The Christian life to which you are called is much like a race. There will be temptations along the way to divert your focus, but you must persevere. Be faithful to the end. Finish well. That is our prayer, and God’s will, for you.