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Consider Your Calling: The Call to the Ministry

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Has God called you to ministry? Though all Christians are called to serve the cause of Christ, God calls certain persons to serve the Church as pastors and other ministers. Writing to young Timothy, the Apostle Paul confirmed that if a man aspires to be a pastor, "it is a fine work he aspires to do." [I Timothy 3:1, NASB] Likewise, it is a high honor to be called of God into the ministry of the Church. How do you know if God is calling you?

First, there is an inward call. Through His Spirit, God speaks to those persons He has called to serve as pastors and ministers of His Church. The great Reformer Martin Luther described this inward call as "God's voice heard by faith." Those whom God has called know this call by a sense of leading, purpose, and growing commitment.

Charles Spurgeon identified the first sign of God's call to the ministry as "an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work." Those called by God sense a growing compulsion to preach and teach the Word, and to minister to the people of God.

This sense of compulsion should prompt the believer to consider whether God may be calling to the ministry. Has God gifted you with the fervent desire to preach? Has He equipped you with the gifts necessary for ministry? Do you love God's Word and feel called to teach? As Spurgeon warned those who sought his counsel not to preach if they could help it. "But," Spurgeon continued, "if he cannot help it, and he must preach or die, then he is the man." That sense of urgent commission is one of the central marks of an authentic call.

Second, there is the external call. Baptists believe that God uses the congregation to "call our the called" to ministry. The congregation must evaluate and affirm the calling and gifts of the believer who feels called to the ministry. As a family of faith, the congregation should recognize and celebrate the gifts of ministry given to its members, and take responsibility to encourage those whom God has called to respond to that call with joy and submission.

These days, many persons think of careers rather than callings. The biblical challenge to "consider your call" should be extended from the call to salvation to the call to the ministry.

John Newton, famous for writing "Amazing Grace," once remarked that "None but He who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel." Only God can call a true minister, and only He can grant the minister the gifts necessary for service. But the great promise of Scripture is that God does call ministers, and presents these servants as gifts to the Church.

Consider your calling. Do you sense that God is calling you to ministry, whether as pastor or another servant of the Church? Do you burn with a compulsion to proclaim the Word, share the Gospel, and care for God's flock? Has this call been confirmed and encouraged by those Christians who know you best?

God still calls . . . has He called you?

