



CALLED

We Are Shaped for Service

*“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

— Ephesians 2:10

The Cornerstone Church

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Introduction: Made for More

There is a question that sits quietly inside the heart of almost every Christian, waiting to be asked: Is there something specific God made me to do?

The answer is yes. And the Bible makes this clear with a wonderful boldness.

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin *vox*—voice. A calling is not an ambition you generate; it is a voice you hear. From the first pages of Scripture to the last, God is a God who calls people by name, shapes them with purpose, and sends them into the world as His servants.

This booklet is an invitation. It is an invitation to think carefully, pray seriously, and explore honestly what God may have designed you for—and what He may be calling you toward.

We will cover the full landscape of the Christian concept of calling: what the Bible teaches, what the Church has believed through the centuries, how to identify the shape God has given you, and how to discern whether He may be calling you into vocational Christian ministry.

You are put on earth to make a contribution.

— Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*

Whether you are a college student wondering about your future, a marketplace professional wondering if there’s more, or a longtime church member who has served faithfully for years—this is for you. God has a design on your life. Let’s discover it together.

Chapter 1: The God Who Calls

Calling in the Bible

From beginning to end, the Bible is the story of a God who calls. He does not simply create and then stand back to watch. He speaks. He invites. He commissions.

The first human vocation appears in Genesis 2: the Lord God placed the man in the garden “to work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15). Before the Fall, before sin entered the world, God had already given humanity a job. Work is not a curse; it is a calling. The curse is the difficulty that follows the Fall. The calling itself is as old as creation.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’

— Genesis 1:27–28

This is what theologians call the “cultural mandate” or “creation mandate.” God designs his image-bearers to be stewards, cultivators, and servants—active in the world for His glory.

The Pattern of the Call

Throughout Scripture, when God calls someone, a pattern tends to emerge. Understanding this pattern can help us recognize God’s voice in our own lives.

1. God Takes the Initiative

No one in Scripture successfully volunteers themselves into a calling. Moses was tending sheep when the burning bush appeared. Isaiah was worshipping in the temple when the seraphim appeared. Peter was casting a net when Jesus walked by. Saul was persecuting Christians when he was knocked from his horse on the road to Damascus.

God calls whom He will, when He will. The calling is always His initiative.

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’

— Jeremiah 1:4–5

This word to Jeremiah is stunning in its intimacy. Before conception, before birth, before Jeremiah took his first breath, God had already determined his calling. The same God who

formed the prophet formed his purpose simultaneously. Your calling is not an afterthought; it was built into your design.

2. The Call Involves Encounter with God’s Holiness

When Isaiah entered the throne room of God in his vision, his first response was not excitement—it was terror. “Woe to me!” he cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” (Isaiah 6:5)

Authentic calling begins with an encounter with the holy God, which always produces humility and a recognition of unworthiness. It is not the confident man who says “Here am I, send me!” because he feels qualified. It is the broken man who says it—because after the burning coal has touched his lips and his guilt has been atoned for, he is free.

The call does not begin with your résumé. It begins with grace.

3. The Call Is Confirmed by the Community

Biblical callings are not purely private experiences. The church plays a vital role in recognizing, affirming, and sending those whom God has called.

In Acts 13, the church at Antioch was worshipping and fasting when the Holy Spirit spoke: “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2) The calling came to the community first. The church prayed, fasted, laid hands on them, and sent them. It was a communal act of recognition.

If you sense a calling, your first conversation should not be with a career counselor or a college advisor. It should be with the people of God who know you—your pastor, your elders, your church family. They may well see in you what God is doing before you can see it yourself.

4. The Call Requires a Response

God calls, but He does not force. When He asked Isaiah “Whom shall I send?” (Isa. 6:8), He was waiting for an answer. When Jesus said, “Follow me” (Matt. 4:19), the disciples had to actually stand up and walk.

Calling requires a response. And the response is always costly. James and John left their father’s fishing business. Matthew left the tax collector’s table. Paul left a prestigious career as a religious scholar. Following where God calls means leaving something behind.

Chapter 2: Every Believer Is Called

The Priesthood of All Believers

One of the great rediscoveries of the Protestant Reformation was the radical equality of every believer's standing before God—and the radical dignity of every form of work done in His name.

Before the Reformation, the word “vocation” (calling) was reserved almost exclusively for the clergy, monks, and nuns. If you wanted to have a “calling,” you had to enter the church's formal religious orders. Plowing a field, raising children, or selling goods in the market—these were considered spiritually inferior, second-class activities.

Martin Luther exploded this idea. Drawing on 1 Peter 2:9—“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession”—Luther argued that every Christian is a priest. Not in the sense of a liturgical officiant who mediates between others and God, but in the sense of offering holy service in all areas of life.

God does not need our good works. But our neighbor does.

— Martin Luther

Luther famously wrote that a cobbler who makes good shoes and a mother who nurses her child are both fulfilling a divine calling—because in serving their neighbors well, they are serving God. Vocation, said Luther, is the “mask of God”: behind the ordinary human face performing ordinary tasks, God himself is at work, providing for His creation.

Two Kinds of Calling

The biblical and Reformation tradition helpfully distinguishes between two overlapping senses of calling:

The General Calling

Every person who is in Christ has received a general calling: the call to follow Jesus, to love God and neighbor, to live as a member of the body of Christ, and to be salt and light in the world.

This calling is not optional. It is not limited to the especially gifted or the specially trained. Every Christian, from the most prominent preacher to the quietest churchgoer, shares equally in this calling.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.
— 1 Corinthians 10:31

Paul’s point here is that every station of life—every job, every family role, every social position—can be a sphere of holy service. The question is not “Am I in the right place?” but “Am I living faithfully where I am?”

The Special Calling

Some believers, in addition to the general calling shared by all, receive a special calling to vocational Christian ministry—to serve full-time as pastors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers, or in other ministry roles.

This calling is no more spiritually significant than the general calling. The faithful mother who prays with her children every night is not doing less important kingdom work than the missionary in a foreign country. But the special calling is distinct. It involves a specific sense of divine appointment, a particular set of gifts, confirmation by the church, and a willingness to structure one’s whole life around ministry.

Paul describes this in Ephesians 4: “Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Eph. 4:11–12) These are not the only workers in the kingdom, but they are called to equip all the others.

Work as Worship

One of the most important things to grasp about Christian vocation is that God is glorified by excellent, faithful work done in any sphere of life.

When a teacher patiently explains a difficult concept to a struggling student, that is worship. When an engineer designs a safe bridge, that is worship. When a nurse sits with a dying patient and holds their hand, that is worship. When a small business owner treats employees with dignity and customers with honesty, that is worship.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
— Colossians 3:23–24

This means that the question of calling is not primarily “What job should I have?” It is “How am I serving Christ and loving my neighbor in the life I already have?”

Chapter 3: You Are Shaped for Service

One of the most helpful frameworks for thinking about calling is the SHAPE model developed by Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church and popularized in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren argues that God has uniquely shaped every believer for specific good works—and that we can identify the shape God has given us by examining five dimensions of who we are.

God never wastes anything. He would not give you abilities, interests, talents, gifts, personality, and life experiences unless He intended to use them for His glory.

— Rick Warren

The foundation for this idea is one of the most remarkable verses in the New Testament: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph. 2:10) The Greek word translated “handiwork” is *poiema*—from which we get our word “poem.” You are God’s poem. You are His masterpiece. And like every good poem, you have a shape—a particular form designed to communicate something specific.

S

Spiritual Gifts

How God has supernaturally equipped you

Understanding Your Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are supernatural abilities given by the Holy Spirit to every believer for the purpose of serving others and building up the body of Christ. They are not natural talents (though they may overlap with them). They are divine enablements given for ministry.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

— 1 Corinthians 12:4–7

The New Testament lists gifts including teaching, prophecy, evangelism, healing, mercy, giving, leadership, administration, helps, tongues, interpretation, and more (see Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28–30; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10–11).

Paul is explicit: the Spirit distributes these gifts “as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:11). You don’t choose your gifts. God gives them. And He gives them “for the common good”—they are not for your personal enrichment but for the benefit of others.

Four practices help you identify your gifts: studying the biblical lists and assessing which descriptions fit you; putting yourself in places of service and noticing where you seem to have unusual effectiveness; asking trusted believers who have seen you in action what they observe; and taking a spiritual gifts assessment as a starting point for conversation.



Heart

What God has made you passionate about

Following Your God-Given Passion

The Bible uses the word “heart” to describe the center of our desires, motivations, and passions—what we truly love, what moves us to tears or to action, what we would gladly do even if we were never paid for it.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

— Proverbs 4:23

Rick Warren writes: “The Bible says, ‘As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person.’ (Prov. 27:19) Your emotional heartbeat is the second key to understanding your shape for service. Don’t ignore your interests—consider how they might be used for God’s glory.”

Your passions are clues, not commands. But they are real clues. If you are deeply moved by the suffering of people experiencing addiction, that passion is not an accident. If you burn with concern for unreached people groups in distant countries, pay attention to that. If you cannot stop thinking about young people who are spiritually adrift, God may have placed that burden in your heart for a reason.

The test of God-given passion is this: it persists through difficulty. It does not evaporate when things get hard. When you are doing what you love for God’s glory, you don’t need to be motivated or rewarded—you do it for the sheer joy of serving.

A

Abilities

The natural talents God built into you

Offering Your Natural Talents to God

Abilities are the natural talents and skills with which God has endowed every human being—not just believers. Unlike spiritual gifts (which are given at the new birth), abilities are woven into us at physical birth.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.

— *Romans 12:1*

The story of Bezalel in Exodus is a remarkable example. When God wanted the tabernacle built, He filled Bezalel with His Spirit and “with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Exod. 35:31). Bezalel was an artist, a craftsman—and his God-given artistic abilities were explicitly used for the glory of God and the worship of Israel.

Your abilities—whether they are in music, mathematics, leadership, communication, organization, technology, medicine, or a thousand other areas—are not yours by accident. They are part of your divinely designed shape. When offered to God, even “ordinary” abilities become extraordinary instruments of grace.

Consider the question: What have I always been naturally good at? What do others frequently ask me for help with? What comes easily to me that seems difficult for others? These abilities point toward the kind of service God may have designed you for.

P

Personality

The temperament God gave you

Embracing How God Wired You

God makes people different from one another on purpose. Some are naturally introverted, reflective, and detail-oriented. Others are extroverted, spontaneous, and energized by people. Some are structured and systematic; others are flexible and creative. All of these temperaments are equally valuable in the kingdom.

Rick Warren writes: “Like stained glass, our different personalities reflect God’s light in many colors and patterns.” There is no single “right” personality for ministry. The fiery boldness of Peter and the tender gentleness of John were both used by Christ. The intellectual rigor of Paul and the pastoral warmth of Barnabas were both necessary for the early church.

Your personality will shape how and where you use your gifts and abilities. An introverted person with the gift of teaching might thrive in a small group or one-on-one discipleship context. An extroverted person with the gift of mercy might flourish in hospital visitation or crisis counseling. Neither approach is better—they’re just different expressions of the same Spirit at work.

Understanding your personality is not an excuse to avoid difficult situations; God stretches us beyond our comfort zones. But it is useful data. Don’t spend your life trying to be someone you’re not. Discover who God made you to be and then be that person—all the way.



Experiences

How your story has shaped you for service

God Redeems Your Story

Your life has not been random. Every experience—the good, the hard, the joyful, the painful—has been shaping you into the particular servant God designed you to be.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

— 2 Corinthians 1:3–4

Paul’s extraordinary insight here is that our suffering is not wasted—it is preparatory. The person who has walked through addiction and found freedom in Christ carries experiences that may allow them to minister to others struggling with addiction that no textbook can give. The person who has lost a child has a ministry to bereaved parents that comes from lived experience. The person who has survived an abusive relationship has a gentle courage in walking alongside others in similar pain.

Your painful experiences are not obstacles to your calling—they may be the very credentials God is using to qualify you for it.

Beyond painful experiences, consider also your educational background, the places you have lived, the vocational skills you have developed, and the relationships that have formed you. All of it is material in the hands of a God who wastes nothing.

Chapter 4: Is God Calling You to Vocational Ministry?

For most Christians, the calling to serve God will be lived out in the ordinary spheres of daily life—in families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. This is a high and holy calling. But some Christians are specifically called by God to give themselves fully to vocational Christian ministry: to pastor a church, serve as a missionary, teach in a seminary, or engage in full-time gospel work of some kind.

If you are wondering whether God may be calling you in this direction, this chapter is for you. But even if you are not personally considering vocational ministry, read on—because part of every Christian’s calling is to recognize and release others into theirs.

Biblical Patterns of Vocational Calling

Isaiah: Called in the Temple

Isaiah’s call is one of the most vivid in Scripture (Isaiah 6:1–8). He was in the temple when he saw the LORD seated on His throne, high and exalted. The seraphim cried “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty!” Isaiah was immediately and completely undone: “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.”

Then the extraordinary happened: a seraph flew to him with a burning coal from the altar and touched his lips. “Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” And then—only then—God spoke the invitation: “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Isaiah’s response: “Here am I. Send me!”

Notice the sequence: encounter with holiness → recognition of unworthiness → receiving grace → call → response. A genuine call to ministry begins not with ambition but with worship—and not with confidence but with grace.

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’
And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’*

— Isaiah 6:8

Jeremiah: Called Before Birth

Jeremiah’s story adds another dimension: the eternal nature of calling. Before Jeremiah was formed in the womb, God knew him, consecrated him, and appointed him. Jeremiah’s calling was not a sudden discovery—it was a revelation of what had always been true.

Jeremiah's initial response is also instructive: "Alas, Sovereign LORD, I do not know how to speak; I am too young." (Jer. 1:6) God's response is a pattern repeated throughout Scripture: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you." The call of God always comes with the promise of God's presence. You don't need to be sufficient; you need to be obedient.

Paul: Called on the Road

Saul of Tarsus was not looking for a calling. He was actively opposing the one who was about to call him. His conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) and his subsequent calling to take the gospel to the Gentiles represent one of the most dramatic examples of divine initiative in all of Scripture.

Paul later wrote of this: "God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles." (Gal. 1:15–16) Again: the call predated Paul's response. Again: it came by grace, not merit.

Paul also gives us the clearest description of the purpose of vocational ministry in Ephesians 4:12—to "equip [God's] people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." The vocational minister exists not to do all the ministry, but to equip others to do theirs.

Signs That God May Be Calling You

Discerning a call to vocational ministry is a serious and prayerful process. Here are some biblical and practical signs to consider:

1. A Deep, Persistent Inward Compulsion

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16) The Greek word translated "compelled" means necessity—Paul felt he had no choice. He had to do it.

If the thought of not preaching, not serving, not going out—if the thought of never doing full-time ministry—produces in you a sense of spiritual anguish and unfaithfulness, pay attention to that feeling. It may be the voice of God.

2. Confirmation of Spiritual Gifts

There is no ministry without gifts. If you sense a call to preach, do people respond when you teach informally? If you sense a call to pastoral care, do hurting people naturally gravitate to you? If you sense a call to evangelism, do you lead people to Christ in ordinary conversations?

Gifts that are not yet fully formed may still point toward a calling—but they should be identifiable in some form. If you cannot point to any evidence that the gift is present, seek counsel from wise and honest friends in the faith.

3. Confirmation from the Body of Christ

This cannot be overstated. In the New Testament, calling is confirmed by the community. The church at Antioch recognized and released Barnabas and Saul. Timothy was recognized and ordained through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14). Titus was appointed to every town on Crete to put things in order (Titus 1:5).

Before making any major decision about vocational ministry, talk to your pastor, your elders, and trusted spiritual mentors. If the people who know you best and love you most see no evidence of calling or giftedness, that is significant data—not necessarily a closed door, but an important check.

4. Open Doors and Providence

God ordinarily works through circumstances. If He is calling you to ministry, He tends to open doors—opportunities to serve, relationships with those in ministry, financial provision for training, and communities that embrace and encourage your gifts.

This does not mean that closed doors always mean no. Sometimes God’s timing is different from ours, and what seems like a closed door is a pruning season. But overall, sustained providential opening of ministry opportunities is a strong confirmation of calling.

5. Willingness to Sacrifice

Vocational ministry is not a career. It is a life. And it is a life that will require sacrifice—financial, personal, the sacrifice of privacy and stability, and sometimes family comfort. Jesus was explicit: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

If the appeal of full-time ministry is primarily stability, status, or benefits, examine your heart carefully. But if you are willing to go where God sends you, serve where He places you, and trust Him for provision—that willingness itself is a gift.

Chapter 5: Discovering Your Calling — Practical Steps

Calling is discerned, not downloaded. It is a process—usually a gradual one—of prayer, self-examination, community, and action. Here are practical steps to begin the journey.

Step 1: Begin with the Great Calling

Before you ask “What is my specific calling?” make sure you have answered the foundational question: “Am I following Jesus?” All specific callings flow from and depend on the great calling to discipleship. Jesus said to His first followers, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19) First, follow. Then, fish.

Your SHAPE, your gifts, your experiences—none of these lead anywhere meaningful apart from a living, daily walk with Jesus Christ.

Step 2: Take a SHAPE Assessment

Many churches offer spiritual gifts inventories and calling assessments. These tools are not infallible, but they are helpful starting points. Cornerstone Church offers resources to help you identify your SHAPE—including spiritual gifts assessments, personality profiles, and guided conversations with leaders.

As you work through the SHAPE framework, journal your responses. Notice patterns. Pay attention to what keeps coming up when you think about your gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences.

Step 3: Serve and Observe

You cannot fully know your calling in the abstract. You must try things. Take a risk. Serve in an area that seems to align with your sense of calling—and pay attention to what happens.

Rick Warren writes that you discover your gifts through serving. Don’t wait until you feel perfectly ready. Step into service and let the Lord reveal Himself through you. Your enthusiasm in the service (or your lack of it) is data. Your effectiveness (or lack of it) is data. What others say to you after you’ve served is data.

Step 4: Pray Specifically

Ask God to make His calling clear. Pray for open and closed doors. Ask for the courage to respond when He speaks. Commit to obedience before you know the answer— “Lord, whatever you ask, I will say yes” is the posture of the called.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

— James 1:5

Step 5: Talk to Your Pastor

One of the most important, yet often neglected, steps in discerning a calling is having a conversation with your pastor. Your pastor has watched you, served alongside you, and knows something of your character, your gifts, and your story. He can ask questions that challenge you, affirm what he has observed, and connect you with next steps.

Your pastor will help you discern whether you have the calling, character, capability, and confirmation to continue the journey into vocational ministry.

If you have read this booklet and found yourself repeatedly moved, challenged, or stirred—that is worth a conversation. If you sense that God may be calling you to something beyond where you currently are, talk to your pastor. He will take your sense of calling seriously, pray with you, and help you take the next step.

Step 6: Take the Next Step of Faith

Calling is almost never revealed all at once. It unfolds step by step. Abraham did not know his final destination when he left Haran (Heb. 11:8). Moses didn't know the full scope of his calling when he turned aside to look at the burning bush. The disciples didn't know where following Jesus would take them when they left their nets on the shore.

You may not need to see the full picture. You may just need to take the next step. Sign up to serve in a ministry you've felt drawn to. Talk to a missionary. Visit a seminary. Have that conversation with Pastor Peter. Read a book about ministry calling. Pray for a week with a specific focus.

Take the next step. Let God show you the step after that.

Here are some helpful resources to continue your exploration:

- Book: *Discerning Your Call to Ministry* by Jason Allen
- Article: www.csl.edu/2023/02/five-ways-to-discern-the-call-to-pastoral-ministry/
- Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKP7_b5QQZU

Chapter 6: Stories of the Called

One of the most powerful ways to understand calling is to see it in the lives of real people. The following examples span the sweep of church history and Scripture—each one illustrating a different dimension of how God shapes and calls His servants.

Moses: The Reluctant Leader

Moses spent the first forty years of his life learning to be a leader in Pharaoh’s court, and the next forty years learning to be nobody in the wilderness. Then, at eighty years old, God appeared to him in a burning bush and said, “I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” (Exod. 3:10)

Moses’ response? “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” (Exod. 3:11) He had five objections before he finally relented. And yet he became one of the greatest servants of God in the entire Old Testament.

The lesson: God does not call the equipped; He equips the called. Your sense of inadequacy is not disqualifying. It may in fact be the very thing that keeps you dependent on God as you go.

David: The Overlooked Shepherd

When Samuel came to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel, he looked at the eldest son Eliab and thought: “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.” (1 Sam. 16:6) But God said no.

Seven sons passed before Samuel, and God rejected them all. Finally, Samuel asked: “Are these all the sons you have?” Jesse’s reply: “There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.” (1 Sam. 16:11) He wasn’t even invited to the selection process. And yet David was the one God had chosen.

God’s famous explanation to Samuel: “The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:7) Calling is not determined by the criteria that impress human observers. It is determined by the One who sees the heart.

Priscilla and Aquila: Tentmakers and Teachers

Priscilla and Aquila were tentmakers—a trade they shared with the apostle Paul (Acts 18:1–3). But they were also deeply committed to spreading the gospel and instructing others in the faith. When they heard the gifted preacher Apollos speaking boldly but with incomplete understanding, they “invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.” (Acts 18:26)

Here is a beautiful picture: a married couple who worked a trade and also served as teachers of the faith. Their home was a place of discipleship. Their business was a platform for ministry. There was no separation between their Monday and their Sunday.

Your workplace and your home are ministry platforms. The question is whether you are using them as such.

William Wilberforce: Called to the Political Sphere

William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was an English politician who experienced a conversion to evangelical Christianity in 1785. Friends encouraged him to leave politics and enter full-time ministry. But through prayer, counsel, and a letter from John Newton (the author of “Amazing Grace”), he came to believe that God was calling him to change England from the inside—through the political process.

For nearly twenty years, he championed the abolition of the slave trade in Parliament, facing repeated defeats. Finally, in 1807, the Slave Trade Act was passed. Wilberforce continued fighting for full abolition of slavery—and just three days before his death in 1833, he learned that the Slavery Abolition Act had passed.

Wilberforce is a reminder that the calling to follow Christ can lead into the most unexpected spheres. Politics, business, medicine, law, the arts—these are not secular territories outside God’s concern. They are mission fields.

The Woman Who Stayed: A Fictional but Familiar Story

Not all callings are dramatic. Consider the woman who has faithfully served in the church nursery for thirty years. She never led a Bible study. She never went on a mission trip. But every Sunday for three decades, she was there—rocking babies, wiping tears, praying over children, loving young parents who needed support.

Some of those children grew up to become pastors, missionaries, and leaders. They would tell you, if you asked, that the faithfulness they saw in that woman’s eyes week after week was one of the first pictures of Christ they ever received.

She was shaped for service. And she served. That is the whole story.

Conclusion: The Voice That Called You by Name

There is a thread that runs through every story of calling in the Bible: God knows the people He calls. He doesn't call them because of their credentials or their competence. He calls them because He made them, and He made them for a specific purpose.

The God who said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you," is the same God who formed you. He knew you before you were born. He designed your gifts, your passions, your personality, and even your experiences with a purpose in mind. He has been shaping you your entire life, often without your awareness, for works He prepared for you in advance.

The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, 'Who is going to meet my needs?' and starts asking, 'Whose needs can I meet?'

— Rick Warren

You are not an accident. You are not a consumer of Christianity. You are a member of the body of Christ, and the body needs you—your particular gifts, your specific story, your unique shape—to be whole.

The question now is not whether you are called. You are. The question is how you will respond.

The servants in Jesus' parable who doubled their master's investment were commended with the same words, regardless of how much they started with: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:21, 23) The measure of success in God's kingdom is not size. It is faithfulness.

Begin where you are. Serve with what you have. Trust God with the rest.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

— Romans 12:1

This is the life of calling: offering yourself—all of yourself, your gifts and your wounds, your abilities and your personality, your history and your hope—as a living sacrifice to the God who shaped you for service.

He is calling. Will you answer?

Personal Reflection Guide

Use these questions for personal journaling, prayer, or discussion with a pastor or mentor.

Your Spiritual Gifts

- Which spiritual gifts appear most consistently when you review the biblical lists?
- Where have you served and experienced unusual effectiveness or deep satisfaction?
- What have others told you that you are gifted at within the church?
- If you were to ask three trusted believers what gifts they see in you, what do you think they would say?

Your Heart

- What injustices or needs in the world break your heart most deeply?
- What topics, causes, or types of people do you find yourself thinking about repeatedly?
- When do you lose track of time because you are so engaged in something you love?
- What would you do for God even if you were never recognized or paid for it?

Your Abilities

- What are you naturally good at, apart from any spiritual dimension?
- What have you spent significant time training for, studying, or developing?
- When do others come to you for help, advice, or expertise?
- How might your most developed abilities be used in ministry or service?

Your Personality

- Are you more energized by being around people or by solitude and reflection?
- Do you prefer structure and planning, or flexibility and spontaneity?
- In what kinds of environments do you feel most like yourself?
- What type of ministry context seems to fit your personality best?

Your Experiences

- What are the most significant events—positive or negative—that have shaped who you are?
- How has God brought redemption or growth through painful experiences in your life?
- What unique understanding or compassion do you carry because of what you have lived through?

- Is there a group of people whose struggles you uniquely understand from the inside?

Your Calling

- As you review your SHAPE, what patterns do you notice?
- Is there a form of ministry or service that keeps presenting itself to you—in your reading, your conversations, your prayers?
- If you knew you could not fail, what would you attempt for God?
- What is one concrete next step you can take this week toward living out your calling?