

DID GOD CALL ME INTO MINISTRY?

Called or NOT Called by God is what we have to come to terms with in this day and age.

To understand our calling, we must first understand the meaning of the two words: **Calling** and **ministry**.

First, “Call, Calling”

This prominent biblical term is used with particular theological significance in three ways: in connection with worship, with election, and with vocation. I will go straight to “vocation.” It is the notion of appointment to office. Example, Isaiah in the O.T. and Paul in the N.T. When Paul was “called by grace,” it meant not just his conversion but also his appointment as apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15). He is therefore “called to be an apostle” (Rom. 1:1 ; 1 Cor. 1:1). It is clear from Scriptures that **GOD CALLS** people into ministry as pastors/teachers and evangelists.

Can anyone get up one morning and assume the title “pastor?” What does the Bible say?

There are churches in almost every corner and in every street with men and women being called “pastor.” How did they become pastors? Where did they study? When did they qualify? Why did they choose to be pastors? Most importantly, **did God call them to become pastors?**

At one time vacant buildings were occupied overnight by Chinese businessmen and women. Today, we find new churches opening overnight and mostly by foreigners or by locals in association with foreign ministries.

Surprisingly, the churches are packed with people and the pastors are living in luxury. I’ve been hearing reports of how foreign pastors can raise thousands of rands in a Sunday morning service. In recent years, churches in South Africa have been inviting foreigners from the third world countries to grace their pulpits and some chose to affiliate to their ministries. **The glamour and the glitz seem to be the attraction:** Attendance at meetings, Buildings that can seat thousands and the Cash that comes into the offerings and not forgetting the flashy cars.

On the contrary, there have been reports of occultism, immorality, fraud, corruption and even death.

On 11 November 2016, I received a message on my WhatsApp from a pastor who made this confession, *“I can’t really say if I have a call or not.”* He adds, *“In 1999 I was led to start a church, but from the experiences I gathered now I cannot say I was actually led by the Holy Spirit to start the church.”*

Briefly, this is his story. He discussed the state of his church with the overseer of a church that started long after his church and grew to 11,000 people in a Sunday service. He promised to help him grow his church but it would cost him a huge sum of money.

The desperate pastor paid him the money and they left together to Lagos. In Lagos, he went through some rituals which included strange language, communication with spirits and intercourse with virgins. He was given a few bottles of oils by the

occult woman who said the oils would produce these results:

One would make his members to do whatever he tells them. Another was called the “all-seeing” oil which would enable him to see deep into people’s secrets. He also received oil for slaying (people falling or “slain in the spirit”), then one was for crowd pulling and then the touch and follow (to attract virgins for intercourse).

She then bound him with an **oath of secrecy**. When he returned to his church, everything worked as told for six years but then he got uncomfortable with everything. He spoke to the overseer about quitting and the overseer replied that “it’s too late” and if he does quit, “he would die a mysterious death”.

Finally, when he did quit, he had four accidents, his two children were killed and he too died in a car crash.

(The pastor sent the message to a pastor friend pleading for prayer. When the pastor received the message, he called his number and the wife answered confirming that he died a day before in a car crash.).

I tried to get more information to see if the story was a true reflection of what is actually taking place today and it turns out that IT IS TRUE.

Here's the latest from The Times (22 Nov.2016 front page). Roxanne Henderson reports:

Hearken unto the Prophet of Doom.

First there was the snake and rat-eating church, then congregants munching on grass.

But now South Africa has the Prophet of Doom. A Limpopo "man of God," uses unconventional methods to heal his congregants. He sprays his congregants with pesticide doom, places a large loudspeaker on the head of a congregant to solve her problems, and used insect killing doom, petrol and fire to glorify God.(I Intentionally avoided mentioning his name).

Do I believe these stories? We are living in the last days and anything is possible. There would be more and more of such so called man-invented "signs and wonders" in the end times. The devil would subtly place his ignorant, untrained, ill-equipped, self-glorifying men and women to lead churches. How we need discernment to know

WHO God calls to do His work today! There is no doubt that people who are NOT CALLED BY GOD would operate under foreign powers. They would allow people living in open sin to lead, preach, play instruments and participate in the sacraments. They don't care about holiness; all they care about is the A.B.C. –Attendance, Buildings and Cash.

Zechariah 4:6 reminds us *“It is not by power, nor by might, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts.”* There's only ONE WAY to do God's work – By HIS SPIRIT.

I see and hear of things happening and messages preached in churches that are in contradiction to Scriptures. It is frightening and I wonder at times if the pastor is truly called by God. People get slain in the “spirit” not once but ALL THE TIME...Is this God? Is it possible that foreign spirits are in operation? In my own ministry I saw people fall when I prayed for them, but that was only for a short period of revival in our church. I NEVER go to minister expecting people to fall. Some pastors have “catchers with aprons” in every service because they **know** what would happen. The devil would give you his counterfeit miracles and

sensations. When God is in control of our church services and evangelistic meetings, WE DON'T KNOW what He would do next. The Spirit of God must be in-charge. I have disassociated myself and my college from certain "pastors" who walk after the flesh.

The main aim for this book is to challenge you (the reader) to prayerfully consider IF you are called to ministry.

To be called by God means that God chose you to be in ministry before you were born like Jeremiah and Paul (Jer.1:5; Ga. 1:15). It is not a career and it is not another means to earn an income or gain status.

Second, "*Ministry*"

The predominant word for ministry in the New Testament is *diakoneo* (the noun form of which is *diakonia*). From this root, the term, deacon, (in Greek, *diakonos*) is derived. One of many possible expressions, it most accurately conveys the New Testament function of ministry. Our Lord and the

apostles employed *diakoneo* to invest ministry with a meaning to both the Jews, and the Greeks.

Ephesians 4:11 lists the office into which God calls us today.

Apostles- called by Christ Himself to write the New Testament Scriptures.

Prophets- called by God to write the prophecies (Old Testament).

Evangelists- called by God to spread the Good news of salvation.

Pastors and teachers- called by Christ to care for the “sheep.”

Today there is much emphasis on these gifts and everyone wants to be called “pastor” “apostle” or “prophet.” Few prefer to be called servant or elder. In fact the word “pastor” appears only ONCE in the New Testament. Metaphorically, it is an Old Testament word for “shepherd.” Pastors are shepherds who ought to “*feed the sheep*” (John 21:15-17).

The word "servant," "service, "and "serve, "in various forms, occur well over 1,100 times in the

New International Version. People are servants of other human beings or servants of God.

Another common New Testament term, *diakonos* [*diavkono*], derives from a verb meaning "to wait at table," "to serve." As the Son of man, Jesus "*did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45)¹

Anyone who desires to be in ministry MUST learn from the one who calls us - Christ our Lord. He came to SERVE and not to be SERVED. We must understand that it is about SERVING God and humanity and not about being SERVED with a fat cheque, a mansion and the best vehicle. It is also not about status. God help us that none of us have entered ministry for personal gain and fame.

I take the liberty to share my own experience of how I **KNOW** that God called me into ministry.

¹ Walter A.Elwell.ed.1996 *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA.

God's Call to Salvation

Conversion always precedes calling. Augustine² was converted first before he became a theologian. Paul too was converted first, before God called him to preach (Acts 9). Clowney writes, *"There is no call to the ministry that is not first a call to Christ."*³

In 1963 I was 17, when I was converted by reading John chapter 1 verse 12. Two years later I believe God was calling me to ministry as I read Jeremiah 1 verse 5. In 1966 I enrolled at the Johannesburg Bible Institute and graduated in 1968.

While I was at college, I had no one supporting me financially. My family did what they could but I had to trust God for everything. God miraculously provided right up to a day before my graduation. God's provision in itself was proof that God called me to ministry.

² Augustine St. 2011. *Confessions*. Peabody, Massachusetts. Hendrickson.

³ Edmund P. Clowney 1964:5. *Called to the Ministry*. Philisburg NJ, Presbyterian & Reformed publishing Co.

But I learned that graduating from college did not make me a pastor. God has to provide me with His place of service. I cannot be a pastor without a pastorate just as one cannot be a shepherd without sheep. God has to give me a call.

God's Call to Service

In my final year of studies, I received three calls, two from Durban and one from Lenasia, Gauteng. I struggled to know which of the three to accept but with the help of my dad who was present at my graduation and the Holy Spirit's guidance I chose the church with the ECSA in Lenasia.

Although I believe God called me to ministry, I often asked the Lord for re-assurance. I resigned several times from the ministry and went into secular work or business. When I got comfortable with my work or business God opened new doors and called me back into fulltime ministry. I knew it was God because I never lost the desire to serve God and the Holy Spirit kept prompting me..

One of my strong disciplines in life is to NEVER rush into anything. Deep inside me and from

Scriptures I had the witness of God. The other fact is that whenever God called me to ministry; I was resisting and fighting it. I was like Jonah, trying to avoid it. When God sets His heart on a person, regardless of what the world thinks, He will not stop until THAT person submits to His call. He will NOT choose someone else to replace the person of His choice. It is for that very reason He warns, *“Touch not the Lord’s anointed”* (1Chron.16:22; Ps.105:15).

When I resigned from my very first church, I had to extend my work permit to stay longer in Johannesburg as I had secular exams to write in that year. I was refused an extension unless I found a job with another church. Although I did receive a call from another denomination in Lenasia, I turned it down for doctrinal reasons but mainly because I needed time to seek God’s plan for my life. I told the gentleman at the Home Affairs that I needed my permit extended to complete my exams and that I cannot go into ministry hastily.

I was about to leave the office when the gentleman asked me, “Don’t you want to be a postmaster?”

He actually offered me a job as a trainee postmaster. I accepted the offer and the very next day I was working at the Newclare Post office as a trainee postmaster. God's ways are unique.

I learned that when we know God called us to ministry, we must be patient for His leading and placement. As Pastors we resign from one church and open our own church without first hearing from God. This may not apply to all. Sometimes carnal leaders and congregants actually get rid of their pastors so that they could have their own ways or fill the post themselves. Doctrinal differences or the type of structures can also make pastors to resign. Whatever the reasons may be, as pastors we ought to avoid dividing the church. There were times when I also felt I was "booted" out from a church unfairly but only later I realized I was NOT booted out from my **calling**. It is God who calls us and NOT the church. Therefore, as pastors our focus must be on the CALLER and not the church.

When a pastor opens his own church, it may look successful with a huge attendance, beautiful buildings and lots of money from tithes, offerings

and donations (some call this the ABC- Attendance, Buildings and Cash). They may even have the favour of the unsaved or some businessman. But, only at the Bema of Christ the truth would be revealed...Was it **His** church or my church? **His** vision or my vision. **His** glory or my glory.

Each time I resigned, I waited for God to open another door to serve Him. I did not make applications or coerce anyone. God opened the doors for service. By THIS I knew God called me. Unless, a pastor can honestly admit he planted a new church with new converts, there is doubt IF God is really pleased with his decision to divide the church and open another. Usually a pastor who opens a new church, he will accept believers from other churches. He tends to compromise by condoning sin just so that he could have more members. Paul discouraged divisions in the church (1Cor.1:11-17).

The truly called are never in a hurry – they will be absolutely certain that it is God who is speaking and not people. They will NEVER split a church

(Christ's bride) to ensure they have an on-going ministry and income. I'm also aware that some church - splits are unavoidable. But the fact is that our Lord calls the church His bride. Would the Bridegroom Himself call me to defile or divide His bride? The called never get desperate for a job or worry about their bills and grocery. When God calls a person, HE WILL PROVIDE (*Jehovah Jireh*).

I can write volumes on how God provided for us each time we had to resign from the churches we served. I never made an application to any church since I graduated. God Himself opened the doors. If we are CALLED then we don't complete an application form for ministry. The disciples never did it nor did Paul or the Old Testament prophets. THEY WERE CALLED. I pray that denominations would scrap the secular and worldly methods of advertising a ministerial post and follow the biblical way. Let God do His work to CALL the man or the woman for the job. I receive phone calls and emails from churches looking for pastors or people looking for a church to pastor. Paul mentored and raised elders whom he appointed over churches. But I do know that GOD CALLS men and women

into the work He has prepared for them. I don't know of anyone in the Bible choosing to be in ministry – but I do know they were **called and chosen by God or the Church.**

Advertising a secretarial post or a vacancy for a teacher is different from finding the person that God appointed to a church as pastor/teacher or evangelist. The Biblical is by fasting and unceasing prayer. The gift of discernment and the witness of the Holy Spirit are vital in decision making. Denominations and churches are TOO BUSY with business meetings instead of fasting and praying for God to send the right person to fill the pastoral position. They spend more time in interviews than in prayer. The irony is that so often we send a one minute prayer to heaven and expect God to answer. Satan has a good laugh at the hasty appointments we make for ministry. Spurgeon puts it well, “An ambassador unsent would be a laughing stock.”⁴

⁴ C.H.Spurgeon 1976:24. *Lectures to my students*. London.MM&S

How often I hear non-Christians make jokes about certain people who suddenly use the title “pastor.” If the heathen would laugh about it, imagine how loud Satan laughs when he succeeds in placing his kind of “pastors” in churches.

I have come before God many times and even weeping, asking Him to confirm my calling to ministry. Did He Call me or was it my choosing. I don't want to occupy the position that God planned for someone else.

When God calls us we will NOT relax and do nothing. He will show us the **next thing**. It could be anything and it is not necessarily a paid ministry. As pastors, some think it is humiliating to do secular work and provide for our families.

Martin Luther⁵ regarded all jobs to be a calling. If we can see it with his eyes and take what God puts before us, then He will call us back into ministry at the right time and in the right place.

⁵ Wingren Gustaf 2004 *Luther on Vocation*. Eugene Oregon. Wipf & Stock

Too often there are those who possess no skills or adequate education to find a job that pays well. So they opt for ministry. The buzz word today is ‘regulating churches’ and a lack of any such regulators men and women conveniently take up ministry. It is now viewed as a GET RICH QUICKLY JOB.

Working at the Newclare Post Office gave me new opportunities for ministry. But on the first day at the Post office, the post master asked me with real concern, “James, why did you give up the ministry? Once again, the Lord was reminding me that I am called. Anyway, God used me to speak to my colleagues and there were days when they would weep as I witnessed to them. Mr.Terblanche, the postmaster was very touched by what he witnessed and challenged me about going back into ministry. I felt guilty each time a student or a pastor walked into the post office. Mr Terblanche said that if ever I want to go back into ministry, he would arrange my termination even if they do not find a replacement immediately. A short while later, I received a call to ministry again. As promised, he

did the rest and I was released from my job without any difficulty.

I believe, the job at the post office was God's temporary arrangement. His call to ministry was more important. All I had to do was to make myself available for **whatever** He planned for me to do in the interim. As stated already, Luther regarded all types of jobs as a calling of God. The post office was my interim pulpit.

My dad taught me two words: **Work Hard**. When I resigned from my last church, I had serious financial trouble. I requested financial assistance from 30 churches but not one responded. I regretted doing this and it was my first and last time ever to ask for help. Only a dear friend, late Francesco the clown called me from Johannesburg and said, "God gave me a word for you this morning. He said, "**Work hard.**" That was confirmation and that is just what I have been doing ever since. I have been self-supported since 1996 and the Lord NEVER FAILED US.

Here's a true experience few probably know about.

I quit being a successful Life underwriter and did two years of tent evangelism in the rural areas of Zululand by faith. Later we received some financial help from an Australian couple working at the Mseleni Mission hospital. When the tent was damaged by storm, the Lord helped me open a general dealer business in Stanger. When all was going so well, I received an invitation from the late Geoff Langton to pastor a small group of believers at White City in Port Shepstone. By this time the business was established and we were absolutely comfortable so I turned down Brother Geoff's offer.

At about the same time, my Australian friends stayed with us and they tried to convince us to go back into ministry. Deep inside me I had the desire to serve God fulltime but at the same time I was afraid of being hurt again. I was hurt too many times and refused to go that way again. But late brother Geoff Langton somehow persuaded me to spend a few days on his farm at Oribi Gorge. So I decided to take my family for a short holiday to his

farm. Brother Geoff was indeed a Man of God in the true sense of the word. He never presented himself as superior or as a ‘white’ man. He became one of us regardless of colour. *I am yet to meet someone like him among ministers and missionaries.*

When we got to his home, his wife Maida showed us our room and we settled in. She then showed my wife around and the children went to play. I remained in the bedroom and my eyes fell on a Restoration magazine which was left on the bed.

As I was browsing through, I read about an attorney whom God called to ministry He left his practice and entered ministry. In that story I came across the text Jeremiah 29:11. I opened my Bible and read, *“for I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (NIV).* I knew this was for me – I felt God speaking to me. But I tried to push it aside. The thought of fulltime ministry made me restless, challenged and at the same time afraid. I was hurt twice by “white” ministers and twice by Church leaders.

The next day, we went with the church to Geoff's game ranch. At the ranch was a stream that was good for swimming and also fishing. Our Australian friends were also there. Everyone went swimming but I sat reading a book. After lunch, they went swimming again. My wife and children were having a great time. Then Geoff persuaded me to join them. I put the book aside and stepped into the shallow water and as I was making my way across to the deep end where they were swimming, I was drowning. I panicked and screamed for help. My Australian friend observed I was in some trouble. He came in haste, picked me up and placed me on a rock and told me to relax. At that precise moment, I sensed the Lord saying, "*I could take your life, if I wanted to.*" Then Jeremiah 29:11 flashed across my mind once again. This time, I knew it was God speaking to me. I realized, I have to stop resisting God's calling.

I could not believe I was drowning in shallow water. But, that was God's way of dealing with my reluctance and resistance.

On our way back to the farm, I related the experience to my wife and she said, "I'm willing to if you are." We spoke to Geoff who called the elders the same evening and we announced our decision to accept the call. At the same time, I had a prospective buyer for my business. Everything worked so perfectly.

Within a week, we commenced ministry in White City with about ten families. As I look back at my nine years at White City, I am still convinced God called me to do what He planned for me to complete in the nine years. Sometimes we fail to see God in our circumstances but only long afterwards when God turns on the light, we see His plans clearly. Our disappointments are His appointments.

God works in mysterious ways. I fought against getting back into ministry but God would not let go of me. Not because I was anyone special ...NO...It is because HE CHOSE ME for ministry. He appointed me to the churches I served and He removed me according to His plan, unknown to me at the time. Many have remarked that IF I stayed

on at White City, would I be where I am today. God knows when to remove us from our pastoral office or from a church. If we are CALLED then He is in control. Many carnal leaders think they succeeded in firing pastors or getting rid of them. That is incorrect. Only God can call a person to ministry and only God can remove someone from ministry. If we are called, that call cannot be terminated by any church or by retirement.

As I look back at every church I served, God used me in special ways to see sinners come to Christ, equip the saints and train leaders. Most of my successors were my leaders at the time. Today, I'm glad that I am still alive to witness their commitment to Christ and their involvement in ministry.

Was I the best and brightest? No! Did I make mistakes? Yes ...and many! But that did not disqualify my CALLING. Like Peter, I repented and am still pressing on (Phil.3:14).

Why am I telling you about myself? It is to let you know that I had to be 101% certain that God called

me. Even if I failed, I am still called. Those who are truly called by God would repent, get restored and return to the battle field. Metaphorically, we are soldiers and there's a war out there and God sends us into battle for Him.

How often Christians limit the GRACE OF GOD. They give us an imagery of a God wearing heavy boots kicking men and women out of ministry for their mistakes. Scriptures speak clearly that He forgives and forgets. Someone said, "Repentance walks but forgiveness runs." There are some who allude by their attitude that God picks those who are perfect. Is there a man or a woman who is perfect? In every dispensation man failed God. God calls men like David, Peter, Jonah, Moses, and Paul who were messed up so badly so that He could show us the true meaning of forgiveness. .Ryle said, "*Great ministers may make great mistakes.*"⁶ I wish to add, that those great ministers have a Great God who will forgive their mistakes when they repent and He will place them back on the battlefield. The war is not over yet! **Servants of**

⁶ J.C.Ryle 1996:92 from Baxter's Explore the Book. Grand Rapids,Michigan.Zondervan.

God arise from your failures and listen to your Commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ and fight till the war is over.

If He called you, He will also re-instate you. Only make sure that you are CALLED!

I am ever grateful to God for His Grace. Like Newton I could say, *“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.”* I am so convinced that God called me to ministry on His terms – *Sola Gratia* by Grace Alone!

Each time I resigned or had to quit ministry, I asked myself the question, *did God Call me?* I struggled within myself. If I am called by God then why am I accused falsely, why do the carnal leaders always succeed with their plotting? Why do people believe the rumours and ignore the truth? Why do even some pastors get sucked into believing lies?

Then the Lord taught me to say: ***God knows the truth and I know the truth and that settles it.***

It is impossible to convince anyone who prefers to believe rumours and lies. Sometimes churches ignore and undermine pastors who had problems in ministry. They would go by what they **heard** and not by what they **witnessed** themselves. They would not invite them to preach or even pray in their meetings. I know all about it...I've been there. Very often, what they heard was false because they heard it from carnal Christians, the *“persecutors of pastors.”*

If God treated every fallen pastor like the way churches do, would ANYONE qualify to be a minister?

Therefore, ALL who are in ministry ought to make sure they are **called by God**. The attitudes of men, the laws of the churches and criticisms and accusations that are made against the called do not matter. What matters is that GOD CALLED ME and I must obey Him at all cost. In my devotions this morning (24/11/2016) I read how Jesus was accused falsely. As ministers, expect the same.

We are living in times when anyone can become an *apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher* (Eph.4:11).

I am left speechless when I hear that certain businessmen, professionals in some other field and believers with no training or experience suddenly pop up being called “pastor.” Some have their own congregation and others none. Pastors are springing up every day in every corner, with or without any qualifications. How can one be a pastor without any “sheep?” It’s ironical.

My doctoral dissertation is on *The Biblical Perspectives of the Call to Ministry*. **Who is called** is what I am writing about. The hypothesis is that *only those who are called by God can be in ministry*. By “called” is meant that God would give a person the desire to serve Him (paid or unpaid), confirm it from Scriptures by His Spirit, give affirmation when the Church recognizes that calling of God and equips the person with adequate training and then releases the person into ministry.

Scriptures give a warning: *Do not lay hands on anyone hastily* (1Tim.5:22 NKJV).—this command refers primarily to the solemn laying on of hands at the ordination of presbyters and deacons. How often, we become so careless in appointing people to the pastorate or leadership with NO direction from the Lord?

Today, visiting preachers confer titles on pastors. The gullible, egocentric pastors proudly use the titles and discard even the use of “pastor.” The Church is full of “doctors” “Apostles” and “prophets” but there are more believers who are sick physically and spiritually.

There is a power struggle among pastors in the present times.

*When Jesus washed the disciples' feet (John 13) It was to teach them one of the most important lessons for ministry. It is called **HUMILITY**.*

Those who are truly called by God would be humble. They would call themselves “servants” and refuse to be called by titles conferred to them by man. Even the title “pastor” or “Reverend” is

used inaccurately. The word “pastor” (Gr.*poimen*) means shepherd.

Pastors are looking for “instant degrees” without studying and others can’t wait to be ordained.

I recall attending a pastors’ conference at Kwa Sizabantu Mission. The speaker asked the question “*If God tells you to stop being a pastor, would you obey?*” Ever since, I think less and less of the title and focus more on doing God’s Will.

Churches are carelessly placing people into the pastoral office. What’s worse is that sometimes the church looks past **the called** and selects the **not called**. Instead they appoint one of their own who lacks training, experience and in most cases – is not called by God.

Today the new practice is to pass on the “pastoral” office to the spouse or children. Some emotional preachers would speak “prophetically” and tell the widow that God has placed her as the pastor on the demise of her husband. How misleading when the wife is NOT CALLED to that office. Where is

the discernment, the wisdom and integrity? Why place an added burden on the widow?

Let Christ build His Church according to His own plan. He knows WHO ought to take that office and in time He will place His chosen vessel to lead His people.

Spurgeon is justified in his comment on “ill occupied pulpits”⁷ Someone said, we have ‘puppets” in the pulpits instead of “prophets.” Spurgeon was right when he said, “an ambassador unsent would be a laughing –stock.”⁸

There are three types of pastors today:

S.A.P - Self –appointed pastors. Individuals who give themselves the title.

M.A.P - Man-appointed pastors (jobs for family and friends). It’s the norm in the world but is also true among God’s people.

G.A.P – God appointed pastors. They are called by God like the prophets and the apostles. They are chosen by God before they were even born

⁷ C.H.Spurgeon, 1976:25 *Lectures to my students*. London. MMS.

⁸ Ibid pg.25

(Jer.1:5). They have no ulterior motives and seek no fame or fortune in ministry. John was “sent” by God. The Father “sent” His Son Jesus. Late Pastor Vasin Gounder once remarked, “Some were sent, others just went.” How true, people enter ministry even though God NEVER CALLED THEM.

Too many preachers want to be **RIGHT UP** instead of **UPRIGHT**. Let us who are called by God be upright before God. God always looks for the man or woman who is upright. Speaking about the called, Spurgeon said, “If he has not been called to holiness, he has certainly not been called to ministry.⁹”

Those who are God appointed would obey Paul’s instructions. This is what Paul says:

Study the Scriptures.

Paul instructs young Timothy to Study the Scriptures. It reads:

⁹ Ibid pg. 9

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim.2:15 KJV).

The NIV reads, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

According to Paul, anyone entering ministry ought to first **STUDY**. To study means a disciplined systematic study of the Scriptures through a recognized college. The studies one undertakes must be worth the time and money spent.

When children enrol at school or college they become students. They have to follow a syllabus and complete the required subjects or modules to be awarded the certificate or degree. The same applies to studying for ministry. Paul is writing about **systematic** study. He is NOT suggesting attending a conference conducted by our favourite speaker with his own theological persuasion or ideology that satisfies the itching ears (2Tim.4:3).

The disciples spent **three years** studying at the feet of Jesus before they were sent out to preach. Therefore they were called *disciples* meaning a *learner or student*. The Scriptures emphasize *apostles doctrines* (Acts 2:42). Today we teach OUR doctrines or the doctrines required by our denominations or Christian ministry. The early church was engrossed in the doctrines taught by the Apostles. Today we walk, talk and sleep what Calvin taught or what some modern preacher is teaching. While we appreciate the contributions made by Augustine, Luther, Calvin or Barth, we must go with what the Apostles wrote. They are our primary source. Our best teacher and commentary is the Holy Spirit.

Only the Bible is authentic! No other book or preacher/teacher can be equated with God's infallible, inerrant Word. **STUDY THE SCRIPTURES** and not some famous preacher or author.

Today we have pastors preaching and teaching who NEVER completed theological studies from a recognized college or studied under a well-qualified, experienced, Bible-based teacher. Alexander Pope says it well, “*A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So is a lot.*” When we think we know too much, then God cannot teach us. We that are in ministry must be teachable. Luther said, “*God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.*”

Paul studied under the best learned professor, Gamaliel and he also made time to learn from the Apostles. He was well schooled in the Law but still felt the need to study. All who claim that God called them to ministry MUST go through a systematic study of Scriptures regardless of whether they are professors, medical practioners or authors. Those who think their secular qualifications are adequate preparation for ministry are misled. Paul makes it clear that there’s a difference between the “wisdom of this world” and “the wisdom of God.”

Piper writes in *Desiring God*, *So let's look at 1Corinthians 2:1-5. Paul had spent about 18 months in Corinth on his first visit there. Now he writes his first letter to warn the believers against basing their faith on the wisdom of men instead of God's power.* ¹⁰ Paul living in times when the Philosophers were highly influential, writes, "I...did not come with excellency of speech or wisdom (1Cor.2:1)" ...And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (v.4)."

Piper cites Dr Criswell..." When a man comes to church, actually what he is saying to you is this, 'Preacher, I know what the TV commentator has to say; I hear him every day. I know what the editorial writer has to say; I read it every day. I know what the magazines have to say; I read them every week. Preacher, what I want to know is, does God have anything to say? If God has anything to say, tell us what it is.'

.

If we do not study the Scriptures we would remain ignorant of what God is saying to His church. If

¹⁰ John Piper 1980. Desiringgod.com.

pastors themselves lack true and sound knowledge then what do we expect from the congregation? Therefore Paul instructs Timothy to STUDY THE SCRIPTURES and teach SOUND DOCTRINE. Not any man's doctrine or the doctrines of one's denomination or leader but SOUND (correct, right) doctrine. Lots of doctrine may sound good but they are not necessarily sound.

Recently our Government and The Department of Education closed down a few non-accredited colleges and scrapped degrees that were not accredited.

On Thursday 20 August 2015, the CRL¹¹ launched an investigative study into commercialization of religion. Chairwoman Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva said, "Churches must be regulated."¹²

Peter W. Marty writes, "Of the three historic professions- law, medicine, and ministry – ministry

¹¹ Commission for Rights of Cultural, Religious & Linguistic Communities (CRL)

¹² Soweton

is the only one that functions without a regulatory body overseeing its practitioners.

Primary care physicians practicing for over 35 years still have to pass certification exams every seven years to stay in business, attorneys must meet mandatory continuing education and certifying requirements each year and report to the State Supreme Court commission. Pastors of congregations are in a different league. They are not required to have a licence to perform or retain their position. No federal or state examiners drop in for site visits. No certification exams are required. Continuing education is recommended but typically optional. A pastor can even obtain an ordination certificate online.¹³

Pastors who ought to be people of integrity are deceiving their own congregation with false qualifications, false prophecies, unbiblical “signs and wonders.” I believe that pastors who are CALLED by God would obey God and do what is Biblical. Pastors have doctorates and titles that they NEVER earned. Colleges are offering

¹³ Christian Century July 22, 2015

degrees that are not worth the paper. Christians ought to check IF those qualifications are accredited or recognized in South Africa.

But sadly many are GULLIBLE! The definition of the word gullible is “*easily deceived or tricked.*” Christians would believe pastors and hence they believe anything they say. Jeremiah warns against such pastors (shepherds): *Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD (23:1). My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray (50:6).*

It seems we have a few pastors whose names should appear in the Guinness Book of Records for achieving their doctorates and titles overnight without studying. Shakespeare did say “*Some are born great, some achieve greatness and others have greatness thrust upon them.*”¹⁴ He certainly did not refer to those who use titles that do not belong to them. I believe **where there is no integrity; there is no calling from God.**

¹⁴ Shakespeare Twelfth Night → Act 2, Scene 5, Page 7

The mere fact that pastors prefer titles is a sure sign of self-elevation and pride. My appeal to the Called of God is that we would repent from seeking glory to ourselves and be willing to decrease (like John) and let Christ increase. **STOP using titles that do not belong to you!**

I was present at a graduation ceremony when the pastor and his elder received doctorates. Neither of them have a primary degree and neither of them studied. But, Christians would address the pastor as “Dr”.... How sad that God’s people are being deceived by the very men and women who say they are called to be “pastors.” There is a call for **integrity** among those in ministry. Christians are bewitched or mesmerized by pastors who claim to be called by God.

The dictionary says that integrity is the quality of being undivided. Or to put it another way, it is *the quality of being true to one's ethical standards*. Its synonyms are honesty, sincerity, incorruptibility. It refers to or describes a person who is without any hypocrisy, without any duplicity, someone who is completely in every aspect of life consistent with

his or her stated convictions. Really, it is the opposite of a hypocrite. A person who lacks integrity, a person who says one thing and does another is called a hypocrite.

I have a B.A., a Master's degree in Theology and am completing my Doctor of Theology. All are from accredited universities in S.A. The accepted norm is that I can only teach students up to undergraduates but to teach postgraduates I must be in possession of a degree higher than the undergraduate degree. With God's help, we have been careful in our choice of lecturers at COTESA.¹⁵

Yet, there are so many who conduct Bible schools with no proper qualifications, no syllabus, and no well-organized study material and if they do have any, it is borrowed from someone else or used without permission. If I am not qualified enough to teach or conduct a Bible school, I would refrain from it and allow those who have the gift of teaching to fulfil their calling (Eph.4:11). I cringe when I hear how Scriptures are taught or

¹⁵ COTESA-College of Theological Education,S.A.

interpreted by some pastors. How about us obeying God's Call and do what He instructs us –

To Study the Scriptures.

My association with educational bodies in South Africa keeps me informed of the norms and standards. My own school which is registered with the DOE¹⁶ also keeps me informed. How often I hear them mention certain Bible Schools that are handing out degrees that are not accredited and worse still their study material is not good enough for the qualifications they offer. Would those who are CALLED BY GOD deceive the people of God? We have disappointed students who come to us with degrees from certain non-accredited colleges that cost them huge sum of money but is not recognized in South Africa. A college based in Pietermaritzburg by one so called "Dr" is handing out post graduate degrees to students. He was never a pastor, has no qualifications in S.A. but claims he has a doctorate from abroad.

I did challenge him on what he was doing mostly to the innocent rural believers and those in third world

¹⁶ Department of Education, E.C.

countries but he would not stop because it is his ONLY way to get rich quickly.

When I was employed as the tutorial administrator for UNISA, I was instructed to employ ONLY those with honours or postgraduate degrees to tutor the undergraduates.

That is normative worldwide with accredited institutions.

Those whom God called would do His work honestly by the book- The Bible.

Then there are some who are deceived by the devil that there's no need to study. The devil wins as long as he can keep God's people ignorant of the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). It is worse when "pastors" ignore Paul's instructions to study. In actual fact, they are disobeying God!

It is good to attend conferences and seminars but if we depend on being equipped for ministry by conference attendance, we would end up having a "fruit-basket" theology. David Wilkerson made this statement in South Africa, that, some pastors

attend conference after conference that they are “conferenced to death.”

The more training preachers get, the better says Clint Archer.

What we need is a proper, systematic study of Scriptures from those who have the gift to “teach” (Eph. 4:11). Many talk about the five-fold ministry and yet refuse to be taught by the person or persons, who possess the fifth gift, the gift of TEACHING (Eph.4:11). Instead they would choose to be taught by those who lack the proper qualifications and experience.

Ministry is God’s work and it requires the best training which comes with disciplined study through a recognized bible-based college or in one’s private time with the aid of the Holy Spirit. A few great men of God never went to a Bible college but they were so unique in that through personal studies God prepared them and raised them to become world renowned preachers/teachers. We have no excuse today because we have accredited colleges at our doorsteps or we could study online. Either way, we still require the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

After five years in doctoral studies and 48 years in ministry and at age 70, I still struggle with what I read in Scriptures. Unless I spend quality time in study, I cannot help anyone. But, I am convinced that as long as God spares me a sound mind, I will keep studying His Word. Prof. Arthur Song who supervised my Master of Theology studies once told me: *“As long you don’t know when you will die, keep studying.”*

Everyone who claims to be called of God ought to be a student of the Scriptures! It is NOT an option.

Murray comments:¹⁷

Many a young man since, as well as before his time, of narrow views and crude knowledge, has rushed into the pastoral office with scarcely any of that furniture which enables the shepherd of souls ‘rightly to divide the word of truth’; but Jonathan Edwards, with a mind of superior grasp and penetration, and with attainments already greater than common, did not think three full years of diligent professional study enough to prepare him for this arduous charge, until, after his collegiate

¹⁷ Murray (1987:56)

graduation, he had devoted six years to close and appropriate study.

Amos 8:11 sends a warning of the famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

The text does not stop with Study, but says ***“approved unto God.”***

Why do most people study? The truth be told – to become a pastor and earn an income. Paul says we study to be “approved *unto God.*” Many may be approved by the church, the family or even by the community but there is the possibility they may not be approved by God. Graduating with a diploma or degree does not make one a pastor. God must hand pick them for His service like He selected Moses, Jeremiah, the disciples and Paul. The S.A.P. and M.A.P. could face the rebuke from the Lord *“I never knew you”* (Matt.7:21-23). Motives for ministry must be kept in check or tested at all times. Some of us may start of in ministry with pure motives but change as time passes by. As pastors we are to walk, talk, and live in the Spirit 24/7.

O.S.Hawkins mentions an important principle. He says there is a difference in an *achieved ministry* and a *received ministry*.¹⁸ Paul speaks about “the ministry which I *received* from the Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:24). What Paul implies is that we do not have a ministry, it belongs to the Lord. I cringe when I see Bibles with the names of famous preachers printed on the cover. Also ministries named after the preacher or his family.

The name of any church or ministry should flow with the vision of that church or ministry. Hawkins says there are stark differences between an “achieved ministry” and a “received ministry.” An achieved ministry seeks the applause and the amen of men. A received ministry seeks the applause and amen of God. An achieved ministry may “succeed” even though it fails. A received ministry may fail (**in** the eyes of men) even though it “succeeds” (**in** the eyes of God.). Did God call me into ministry...if yes, then I must serve Him for His glory alone.

¹⁸ O.S.Hawkins.2006:17 *The Pastor's Primer*.Guidestone.

Next Paul instructs us to study to be a ***workman/workwoman*** for God. I do not believe that Paul's use of the word *workman* refers only to the male gender. The word means "a skilled worker such as a carpenter or electrician." Unless we train we cannot have the skills to do the job assigned to us. When believers study the Scriptures systematically and consistently, they develop their skills of Christian service. Training to become a teacher, nurse, attorney, accountant or doctor takes between 4-7 years. The whole purpose of the training is to develop the necessary skills for the job. Why should it be any different when it comes to ministry?

Churches that employ untrained people into the office of pastor are contradicting God's Word and are disobeying God's command (1Tim.3). No wonder we have so many "shirkers" and few "workers" among ministers today.

People who are God appointed would serve the Lord, paid or unpaid, recognized or scrutinized, accepted or rejected, respected or ridiculed, complemented or criticized, commended or condemned, significant or insignificant. They would

focus on their calling to be a “co-worker with God” (1Cor.6:1). A co-worker with God is one who is bound together with God. When God works, he works.

Often the Lord gets me up at 2a.m. or 4a.m. I wake up and read God’s Word, meditate and pray. My daily discipline is to remain in my study until 10a.m. I have the letters “DDD” after my name - *Dixon’s daily discipline*. It is the time I spend with God preparing myself to do His Work. If it was my work, I doubt I would need that discipline. If I want to do my Father’s work, I must spend time with my Father to learn and listen how to do His work. When we do that, Paul’s next instruction is easy, “*that we may not be ashamed.*”

Ashamed can mean *embarrassed or guilty, reluctant, unwilling, hesitant.*

When we do not study for an exam, we are not comfortable and hesitate to even write the exam. Most of the times we are reluctant or hesitant to do God’s bidding. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16). He had a personal experience with the Lord and he also studied the

Scriptures. Can we honestly say that we are well equipped to provide the biblical answers to life's problems and needs? Could we boldly stand up like the apologists and defend the faith? Do we KNOW the Scriptures or do we know what some favourite preacher/teacher is promoting?

I am amused when I listen to some pastors who are merely an **ECHO**:

Whatever they preach or teach or impart is what they heard from their leader or at a conference. It is NOT what they discovered by digging deep into the Scriptures. They are what I call "Parrot preachers." Pastors ought to SEARCH the Scriptures for themselves. Instead we depend on knowledge from the teachings on DVD's, in books and commentaries. Thank God for resource material BUT if we make the Scriptures our secondary source, we are terribly misled. There are many who have the gift of oratory while others have the *gift of the gab*. If you have the **gift of the gab**, you have the natural ability to talk in a way that people find entertaining or persuasive and want to believe you. Unfortunately much of this is happening in ministry today.

I studied Art at University and also had classes from a fine arts graduate. One of them said that to reproduce someone else's painting is like taking a photograph. Art is what I can produce from my own inspiration and imagination. Preaching/teaching for the called pastor/teacher ought to be original (in a sense). It is what we glean from our meditation and study of the Scriptures. It is called “: digging deep” or “inductive Bible study.”

At the time of writing this book, the Lord opened my spiritual eyes by revealing hidden truths in several texts for the first time. I did not use any commentaries and nor did I hear it from any other preacher. It was divine and fresh from the Holy Spirit. What I am writing in this book is also fresh from the Lord. He got me up at 4a.m. with fresh thoughts that I had to call on His name for confirmation and only then I commenced typing.

I am not in any way displaying a superior spirituality or implying I arrived. My intention is to send this message out as a fresh reminder that we affirm God's Call once again. We must be certain that God called us into ministry and that it is NOT

our own choice and certainly not for the wrong reasons.

The final word is ***rightly dividing the Word*** or correctly interpreting the Scriptures.

If any man or woman is NOT a student of God's Word, he or she CANNOT CORRECTLY INTERPRET GOD'S WORD.

Spurgeon speaks out strongly to such people "*Do not enter the ministry*"¹⁹ He says a professor without conversion is the same as a pastor without calling. Both only have a name or title and nothing more.

One of the subjects we teach at our college is called Hermeneutics. It is the science of interpreting Scriptures. I prefer to teach this course personally to ensure my students understand how to interpret Scriptures.

It is vitally important for the called pastors to KNOW how to correctly interpret the Scriptures and AVOID depending on the interpretations of

¹⁹ C.H.Spurgeon 1954 reprined (1976:26). Lectures to my students.London.Marshall,Morgan & Scott.

others including your denomination or movement. Pastors who are lazy to study the Scriptures would be engrossed in how only certain experts or preachers interpret certain texts. But, if we learn to become STUDENTS (not followers or listeners) then the Holy Spirit would give us illumination and we will discover hidden and precious GEM that no human intelligence can discover.

Paul says “rightly interpreting” not reasoning if it’s right or wrong. Much of the preaching and teaching today is man’s reasoning and very little of correct interpreting. That’s exactly what the Philosophers did in Paul’s time. Much error has been promoted because of a simple failure to apply good hermeneutics (the science of interpreting Scripture). Taking a verse out of its immediate context can do great damage to the intent of the verse. Ignoring the wider context of the chapter and book, or failing to understand the historical/cultural context will also lead to problems. If interpreting Scriptures was important to Paul, then, it should be important to us in ministry. In order to correctly interpret Scriptures, we must STUDY the Scriptures.

Let us *Study to show ourselves approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Tim.2:15 paraphrased).

If we are called by God, we ought to STUDY the Scriptures. We cannot equate the study of Scriptures with any other qualifications.

If pastors are Called to salvation and Called to serve, they would also be Called to SEEK OUT SINNERS.

How often we hear Christians say, we are “saved to serve.” In some churches they have aprons with “saved to serve” printed. The only time they wear the aprons is when they serve meals or teas after a meeting. Is that what it means? I’m afraid, that’s what it turned out to be in practice among Christians. If that be so, then, we lost sight of its true meaning and have gone back to the principle of good works.

It means more than that.

When I was converted in 1963, the Lord laid His burden upon my heart to win the lost beginning

with my own family and friends. As I look back today, God was faithful and He saved my entire family and many of my closest friends.

With the passion for souls I prayed for them unceasingly and as the Holy Spirit would lead, I witnessed to them of God's saving grace of which I was an example. I never gave up till they were won to Christ.

If God called me, He would give me a passion for souls.

Looking back to the 48 years in ministry, I can mention names of people who came to know Christ through my preaching and witnessing. Some of the converts have become fulltime Christian workers. Did I do enough...NEVER! There are still untold millions to be saved. Anyone that is called by God to ministry ought to make soul winning the number one priority. It was our Lord's number one priority (Lk.19:10)..."*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost.*"

Today it is about MORE CHURCHES instead of MORE CONVERTS. Denominations and pastors brag about how many churches they have planted

but they fail to speak about how many NEW CONVERTS filled the church. Usually the new churches are occupied by believers in the community or people who leave one church to try another. Read the reports or listen and note the exaggeration, the lies and then the appeal for more funds to build another church. Even preachers are deceived. Take a closer look, do some investigation and you will discover for yourself THERE ARE NO CONVERTS.

Tent Crusades, Missions and various other so called “Evangelistic projects”: are simply smokescreens (ruse designed to disguise someone's real intentions or activities.)

We have BUILDINGS AND BELIEVERS but NO CONVERTS!

The emphasis today is MISSIONS instead of **THE MISSION**. We are called to do our FATHER'S business – His mission. Jesus came to “Seek and to Save those who are lost” (Luke 19:10) which is The Primary Mission.

Every time I listen to Christians who've been on Missions, they always speak about building churches, schools, feeding the poor, handing out food parcels, clothing and Bibles. Rarely do I hear them share their experience of leading a soul to Christ. Saving the lost at any cost should be our number one priority.

We have Tent Crusades without speaking to a single heathen about the love of Jesus. Instead, we sell books, T/Shirts, novelty items, and refreshments. Some even sell bottled water, oil and prayer cloth alluding there is healing power in them. Then why lay hands on people if the water or cloth can do the healing? It's a smokescreen to raise funds for one's own vision. Those who are called by God would be careful to HEAR from God and obey Him at all times.

O the tragedy when we stand before the Lord and tell Him that we prophesied in His name, drove out demons and performed miracles and the Lord would reply ***'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*** Matt.7:23 NIV

'I never knew you. Get away from me, you

who break God's laws.' NLT

Matthew and Luke write about the tragedy of being rejected by Christ even though our works on earth were great and admired by many. Holiness in our ministry, our churches, our homes and our daily life style is what God desires.

Spurgeon says, to prove a man's call, he must see a measure of conversion- work going on under his efforts. He states further quoting Jeremiah 23:21, 22 that it is a marvel how men continue at ease in preaching year after year without conversions.²⁰

One of the qualifications to look for in a candidate who is entering ministry should be based on when was the last time he/she brought a soul to Christ. Preachers Called of God and win no souls are like prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds. Can such be God's men? Would God call us to be like the fig tree - barren?

²⁰ Spurgeon C.H. 1976:32, 33. Lectures to my students. London. MMS

Spurgeon believes that if there are no signs following our preaching then vain are our talents, our philosophy, our rhetoric and our orthodoxy. He says it would be better to be a mud-raker, or a chimneysweep, than to stand in the ministry as an utterly barren tree. In fact he goes on to say “Brethren, if the Lord gives you no zeal for souls, keep to the lapstone²¹ or the trowel, but avoid the pulpit as you value your heart’s peace and your future salvation.”²²

Unfortunately, the people in the pews think evangelism is the role of the pastor while the pastors think only sheep give birth to sheep. With such ungodly thoughts little or no evangelism is taking place today. What Christians refer to as evangelism has turned out into “glorified” tent meetings packed with churches, emotional worship and praise and the so called “famous” preachers BUT with no unsaved in the tent. The hosting church puts out a few posters, sends letters to the churches, places an advert in the local papers and expect to attract the unsaved.

²¹ a shoemaker's stone held in the lap and used to beat leather on.

²² Spurgeon C.H. 1976:32. Lectures to my students. London. MMS

God's word to Zerubbabel and Ezra is "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit*" (Zech.4:6). Evangelism today is about the preacher, the offerings each night and how the worship team performs. Souls are of least importance. If we ask "amiss" we get nothing (James 4:3).

Those who say they are called by God ought to target the unsaved or unconverted. Preachers have lost the passion for souls. We are too comfortable preaching on Sundays, relaxing from Monday to Saturday, collect a fat cheque at month end and go through the motions day after day, week after week and month after month and year after year.

Our Bible has enough record of conversions from Jesus ministry and from His disciples including Paul.

Let us look at our diaries CALLED OF GOD and see how many entries we have of conversions. Let us go a little further and see how many times we witnessed to an unsaved person. Let us not hide behind Calvin's "saved elect" and make excuses for not evangelizing the lost souls. The Bible

commands us to win souls for Christ. Christ the Word is superior to Calvin or any other theologian. Let us obey Christ not Calvin!

We sometimes brag about our baptisms. But who are we baptizing – new converts or Christians from Christian families? Brethren, let us not deceive ourselves and seek the praises of men by reporting how many people were baptized in the year. Rather, let us “preach the gospel” to every lost soul and win them to Christ. Baptize **new converts** – that would please our Father in heaven. Be a God pleaser and not a “church” pleaser.

We have to ask God again, did you really call me to ministry? If God did, then we ought to have a passion for souls.

We hear lots of complaints about “sheep-stealing” but very little commendation for soul winning. Those who win souls have no reason to complain about sheep stealing. Acts 2:46 reminds us that “*God will add to the church DAILY those **who should be saved.***”

If we are called by God, we would be busy “bringing in the sheaves.”

If I am called by God to ministry then I would be converted, I would be called to carry out God’s mission, I would study His Word so that He can give me direction, I would be a soul winner for God’s glory.

I have answered my own question, DID GOD CALL ME TO MINISTRY?

Now it is your turn – **the Reader**, DID GOD CALL YOU INTO MINISTRY?

If you cannot honestly answer “Yes” then take Spurgeon’s advice and “**leave the ministry at once**” and let God bring IN His man or woman to do His work. He states further “it is a fearful calamity to a man to miss his calling, and to the church upon whom he imposes himself.”

How could you know whether you are called by God?

John Calvin and most men of God write about the Inward call and External call. The inward call is

God speaking from His Word through the Holy Spirit. The external call is the recognition of the person's call by the congregants and the Christian community. Albert Mohler alludes that Baptists believe that God uses the congregation to "call out the called" to ministry. John Newton remarked, "None but He who made the world can make a minister of the Gospel.' The great reformer Martin Luther described the inward call as "God's voice heard by faith."

Charles Spurgeon identified the first sign of God's call to the ministry as "an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work."

Calvin maintains that when a man has been endowed by God with the necessary gifts, he has in fact been called by God²³. He also states that not every pastor so scrupulously sought to be a *biblical* pastor. Thus, he affirms, "*Woe then to the slothfulness of those who do not peruse the oracles of the Holy Spirit by day and night, in order to learn from them how to discharge their office!*"

²³ *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 18, on John 20:22). "When men are called by God," he says, "God endows them with gifts" (*Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 21, on Eph. 4:11-14).

Spurgeon also mentions:²⁴.

an aptness to teach and some measure of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor; a measure of conversion-work going on under his efforts and his preaching should be acceptable to the people of God.

Dr.Elmar Towns says that, a man knows he is called because of the burden God gives him to reach the lost. He knows God has given him a desire to preach. He has the inner assurance that he is to serve God. Just as he knows that fire is hot and up is up, so he knows God has called him to preach the gospel and build a church. He responds as did Isaiah, “Here am I, send me.” Michael Patton ²⁵ asks the question, Do you have an unrelenting passion? He also cites Spurgeon,” If there is anything else that you can do, anything, do it. But if ministry is the only option that will satisfy you then consider it.”

²⁴ C.H.Spurgeon 1976:25-32. *Lectures to my Students*. London.MM&S

²⁵ Michael Patton. 2010:26. Called Into Ministry:5 Questions to ask yourself.<http://credohouse.org>.

Sometimes, pastors are normally not qualified for anything else so they have a fear of being removed from ministry.

Here's solid advice from a man whose ministry touched so many thousands worldwide- **John Piper**²⁶ on the topic of *Knowing God's Will*.

How can I discern the specific calling of God on my life?

The Bible expects us to walk in the good works that God has prepared beforehand for us Ephesians 2:10 and Romans 12:2. says, "Be renewed in your mind so that you can prove what the will of God is"—His will, I believe, for *you*—"what is good, acceptable and perfect."

First, I suggest that you give yourself to the word of God. Immerse yourself in God's assessment of you and the world, so that you see things through God's eyes.

Secondly, get a realistic view of yourself—your gifts, weaknesses and strengths—and let others help you by participating in the Body of Christ and

²⁶ John Piper (@JohnPiper)

having them comment on what things they see in you.

Third, look at the situation in the world, either in your immediate vicinity or in some distant place, and get a burden for the world.

I believe that when these three things happen—saturation with the Bible, a true understanding of yourself, and a clear vision of the needs of the world—and you begin to stir them together with the stirring spoon of prayer, I believe that what will emerge is an aroma of what the clear calling of God is on your life.

You'll know which way to follow God and use your gifts for him, whatever the particular specifics are.

I have written with much passion because it is an area of great concern for most pastors and churches. In fact it is such a huge problem that our Government is calling for regulatory methods in place. The non -Christians speak with ridicule and mockery at the rapid growth of new churches and self-appointed pastors. **It is a problem!**

God help us to be honest with ourselves, with our congregants and with the world and LEAVE THE MINISTRY if we are NOT CALLED **but** STAY and BE FRUITFUL if we are called.

Throughout the Epistles Paul begins with, *“Paul, called to be an apostle by the will of God.”* The book of Galatians (1:1) begins with *“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father)”*

Can we say the same about our calling to ministry?

A story is told about a young man who saw in a vision the letters GPC and believed God was calling him to “Go Preach Christ.” After he addressed the congregation, an old man approached him and said, “Son, what if God was saying *“Go Plant Corn?”*”

Don't get misled... Be honest with yourself and answer the question:

Did God Call Me into Ministry?

