

## The Gospel at Work part 4 – The Gospel and Your calling

Colossians 1:9-10

### Introduction

#### What is calling?

The Bible talks about calling all the time

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

We've been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9)

We've been called out of sin to God, actually set apart to God now for his service.

Vocation – it's the specific sense that this is what you were made to do

Selfish approach to finding your calling – find a job that will make all your dreams come true.

- A job that gives you a sense of self worth (never hear someone claim God's called them to be a janitor)
- Occupation doesn't really matter, just need to make a lot of money to be happy
- A lot of us just want a job (that we don't hate) that will guarantee a certain level of security so we never have to worry about anything.

There's actually a Christianized version of the selfish approach – it's where we're still selfish but we try to use God to help us make all of our dreams come true.

I'll pray, I'll be on God's team and hopefully God will serve as my Genie in a bottle to make all my dreams come true.

For the believer, finding our vocation is not about serving and loving ourselves, it's about loving God with all our hearts and serving others.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

So what is your calling? We each have different areas of our lives that God has called us to serve...

I'm called to be a husband

I'm called to be a father

I'm called to work for a furniture company

I'm called to work as a pastor

In each one of these callings God has assigned me specific responsibilities serving him and others.

Over time my calling may change. God's purpose for you may change over time.

#### How do you find your calling?

How do you and I find our calling? This can feel really tricky. As believers, we desperately want to know God's will for us.

Our prayer for God's will is the same as Paul's prayer, we want to be filled with the knowledge of his will so we can walk in a way fully pleasing to him.

So, if right now you're in high school or college dreaming about God's will for your future... Or if you're middle aged wondering if God is calling you to a different kind of work.

The question is, "How do we discover God's will for us?"

Let me rephrase that question a little bit...

“How does God expect us to seek his will for our lives?”

I want to talk to you about two ways Christians sometimes approach finding God’s will, one of which I don’t recommend at all.

First the way I don’t recommend. I’ll call this the sign method. Throughout history, in a very limited number of instances, God has very specifically spoken to a few number of individuals and very clearly told them what he was calling them to do (Moses and the burning bush, Paul and the road to Damascus).

I’ve got to admit... I wish this is the way it worked all the time, and lot’s of very sincere Christians think this is how it’s supposed to always work.

I have a big decision (who or when to get married, when and where to buy a house, which job or occupation to choose). We all really want God to make it easy for us and just put it on a billboard so it will be clear.

So, I pray to God for guidance.

Then, I look for God to answer me through signs.

Why do we want God to lead us in his will this way?

- We sincerely want to know God’s will and please him...
- We have this mistaken notion that if we can find God’s perfect will for our lives then everything will go good for us. If we’re in his will, then everything will go right for us and we’ll avoid pain and suffering. (The problem with that...)
- We want the quick and easy way of discovering God’s will. We don’t want to think deeply through our decisions and then have the responsibility for them.
- We’re scared we’ll miss God’s perfect will for our lives.
  - Sometimes we actually mistakenly view the way God’s will works in our lives. Sometimes we think life is a highway and God’s will for us is an exit ramp. And we’re afraid that if we miss our exit,

What’s wrong with seeking God’s will by the sign method?

Two main problems I see with the sign method.

1. Signs are unreliable – Signs are tricky because how are you ever going to really know if you’re interpreting a sign from God correctly?

- How can you ever know for sure if an open door isn’t a trap from Satan?
- How can you be sure a closed door isn’t God testing your resolve?
- How could you ever be certain that voices inside your head actually come from God?
- Are you sure you’re not mistaking peace over your decision with the desire you already have to do it?

The reasons signs are such a poor way for discovering God’s will is because of our own imperfections mean we can never be sure that something is or isn’t truly a sign from God. And even if God was sending us signs we could never be sure that we’re interpreting them correctly.

Honestly a lot of Christians suffer needlessly trying to discern God’s will always in limbo, always second guessing, always a bit unsure if God is really directing by unsure signs.

I don’t think God has set us up to seek his will in such a way that is so unreliable and so unsure.

2. The second main problem is that God never commands us to seek his will in this way in the Bible. Just because God is able, and just because he has in a limited number of circumstances spoken audibly from heaven doesn’t mean that he expects us to wait for these kinds of signs to chart the courses of our lives. In fact the Bible is very clear in how God expects us to seek his will

3 Quick passages

Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

What these passages show us is that God expects us to base our lives and our decisions on what the Scriptures teach.

Now listen, If God speaks from Heaven or sends us a sign, none of us are going to stop him. But if you think God's sending you a sign, or even if you hear an audible voice or if you're hearing voices in your head, those things must be examined in the light of Scripture.

So let me lay out what I think would be a biblical approach to deciding on a career (and this would work for any major decision).

1. You have a desire to do some type of work... become a fireman or a librarian

2. Set a period of time to pray about it. Ask God for his guidance.

3. Ask questions about yourself –

Why do I desire this kind of work?

Do I have any selfish motives?

Am I qualified for this kind of work? (you might have desire but it doesn't mean God's calling)

4. Ask question about this line of work.

Can I pursue this career and obey Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?"

Will this career allow me to love God with all my heart and serve others?

Will my work in this field lead me to disobey Scripture in any way?

Being a bartender in a casino is probably going to intrinsically lead you into sin multiple times a day.

Certain government positions may become unwise choices for Christians. If you're a magistrate judge and the law requires you to perform gay weddings...

If a job is going to lead you to disobey Scripture then God is not calling you to take that job. And no, you're not a special case. There aren't special circumstances where God is ever calling you to sin against him.

5. Seek the counsel of others.

When you really want something it's so hard to be objective. I hope you have a network of trusted spiritual minded people that you can count on for biblical advice. You don't need people who will just tell you whatever you want to hear. We all need godly people in our lives who can be honest with us and help us examine ourselves in big decisions.

Young people – what are your parents thoughts about this decision?

Married people – what is your spouse's opinion about this career move?

If your spouse isn't in agreement you need to slow down.

Believer – have you sought insight from your pastor and other believers close to you before making this decision.

If godly people who know you and are close to you don't think it's a good decision, that ought to at least make you stop long and hard to think through before deciding.

6. Do you have a persistent desire over time for this work? Sometimes we have fleeting desires that don't last.

The bottom line is this

if you are actively seeking to make Christ the greatest priority of your life

if you're greatest desire is to obey him and please him

if you're actively in the Word seeking to apply it to all of life

Then you are free to choose whatever you want.

Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

The main point is that if Christ is the greatest treasure of your life, then your desires and your decisions will naturally coincide with God's will.

It is liberating to know that God is fulfilling his will in us, not by giving us short cuts to know his will, or giving us the answers to the problems without having to do the math on them. But he's actually fulfilling his will through our decisions based on what he has revealed to us in Scripture.

***Where do we get the motivation to seek and fulfill God's calling for our lives?***

***Jesus –***

Jesus obeyed the calling of his Father on his life by humbling himself and coming to earth in the form of a servant. And he perfectly fulfilled the purpose of God in the work he was called to perform.

***the banner over his life –***

*Psalms 40:8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."*

*Even Jesus*

*John 6:38-40 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

Have you looked to the Son and believe on him? Only when you come to faith in Christ and you see him in his beauty at his work in your redemption, will you see the beauty and power of the work he has called you to do. The gospel gives our work both great meaning and great power. Because Jesus loved us enough to redeem us, even our most menial tasks take on great significance. And in his love poured out for you, there is strength for you to fulfill all that he has called you to.