



CALLING LAB

TRIANGULATING YOUR PLACE IN THE KINGDOM



MISSION & CALLING STUDY (OPTIONAL)

setting the tone for the lab

Calling, as with every human endeavor, requires fresh alignment with biblical wisdom. Our desires to be known, significant, or make a mark, open us to hear a calling, but all of this must be tested with biblical data and submission. Our ideas of calling must “die” when they meet the better, more comprehensive and eternal calling Jesus has for our lives. We wanted to prime the Calling Lab with a sample of scriptures so our hearts will be tuned properly to the purposes of God as we discern what He is calling us into.

CREATION - GENESIS 1

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

God says he created mankind in his "image." Write down or discuss some ways in which God and humanity as a whole share a similar "image."

What was mankind's "calling" when God created them? Why would the Earth need to be tended before the fall?

God has given humanity a task. But, if He is all-powerful and ever-present, he does not necessarily need us to take care of the Earth for him. Given this reality, why does he still want us to work with him?

Our calling as humans involves work within the context of confusion and chaos. Creation was good, but needed to be ordered. Adam and Eve were tasked with - given the purpose of - creating order within creation. Labor, sweat, and dirty hands are pre-fall realities for the purposes God has for us. God always calls us to co-create with him, to work alongside him in bringing order to chaos. Now, post-fall, the nature of chaos looks different. Chaos reigns inside of us, around us, and even within the systems and societies we build. But our call remains consistent: return to your first call and bring divine order to the chaos.

ISRAEL - GENESIS 12

1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation,

and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,

and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,

and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth

will be blessed through you."

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

God made a sort of a trade with Abram. What did Abram leave behind? What would he gain? Is it worth it?

God was essentially promising to give Abram something impossible. There were too many obstacles in the way to reasonably imagine Abram ever achieving an outcome that big. Similarly, our calling as God's people sets us up to do things we cannot reasonably expect ourselves to accomplish. What is your gut reaction to God promising impossible things?

What would you be willing to give up/change your life for?

God raises up for himself a people, starting with one person. In calling Abram, God births a nation out of insignificance and weakness. God always chooses the weak things of this world to advance his agenda. As we continue to hear from him, do not be surprised if you are not entirely qualified to accomplish his purposes.

When we investigate the text, we observe God delivering two things: a calling to go and promises to those He has called. As for Abram, he must obey and go to a particular place and people. Calling, no matter how general it begins, always lands on specific places and people. To get to "those people over there" you must leave "these people here". To whoever God calls you, there is always a leaving involved. We have to move and lose something (our status, wealth, comfort, relationships, identity, sexuality, etc.). We can only infer Abram also had to grieve. The answering of God's call into his mission is traumatic and it is okay as faithful disciples to honestly name and confess the pain of that obedience. Missionaries must grieve the loss of their former lives so they can be free to receive the promises of the new one.

JESUS - JOHN 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

A theme of this passage is "purpose." Each person mentioned has a role or a goal and it all points back to God. List all the major players in this passage, and their roles.

Although Jesus (the Word) was sent from the Father directly, notice how it is also written that “there was a man sent from God whose name was John.” Why would that language be used to describe John’s ministry? What does that say about him?

This chapter of John’s gospel uses grand descriptions of Jesus’ ministry (bringing light into darkness, creating the world, being full of glory, grace, and truth). Looking at Jesus’ life, how did his lifestyle run counter to these ideas? How was it unexpected? Why was it effective?

God has always been a missionary God. The Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit, and the Spirit sends His church. As we receive a calling from God, we must cross boundaries, visible and invisible, and the way we cross those fences must reflect the One who sent us. We see Jesus enter his mission field through four lenses: Proximity, Presence, Powerlessness, and Proclamation. As we creatively obey the calling God gives us, our mission must be shaped by the way Jesus entered into his mission.

Proximity - We must get close and draw near to those Jesus is calling us to love.

Presence - We must give our lives and emotions and be present with people. Not just “on mission.”

Powerlessness - We must be real and authentic, removing the masks of our perfection. This means being honest when we are in need ourselves.

Proclamation - We must share the good news of the kingdom, giving context to the radical lives of love we live.

CHURCH - ACTS 2

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This is the church in its purest form. Clearly, there was a kind of power and effectiveness in how they lived. The Lord added to their number daily. What were they doing?

The believers met daily, ate daily, and loved their time together. Why do you think they met so often?

Their relationships with each other were different from non-Christians relationships with each other. What does being a believer have to do with why they had glad and sincere hearts for each other? How should our belief in Jesus impact our relationships?

We hear our calling in terms of whom we are sent to, but our ability to live into those purposes also hinges on with whom we are called to go. Every believer is called to be the church (not just go to church) for the purposes of Jesus. This necessitates we have a team, a community, a band of misfits we enter our callings with. God is ushering His kingdom through His church and those witnessing communities engage the world around them in His mission. Your calling cannot be disembodied from other brothers and sisters. Together, we maximize our potency.

FUTURE HOPE - REVELATION 19 & 21

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

King of kings and Lord of lords

...

1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

What is challenging about what the voice from throne says? What is encouraging?

Why is it that we are called to usher in the Kingdom when the Kingdom will never be fully on Earth until Jesus returns? What does that say about the definition of success in mission?

Think back to Genesis 1 where God creates and takes care of creation but wants us to create as well. Similarly, God is the only one truly capable of restoring the Earth, but asks us to do it with him. Why does God want us involved if he could do it so much better? Is it a waste of time?

The purposes of God are a privilege to join. Jesus graciously invites us into his work and together, as his church, we run to see the full kingdom here on earth as in heaven. But Revelation is a gut check for any of us who think obedience to our calling will bring eternal transformation. We co-create but cannot accomplish anything without him. Jesus must return to judge the earth, set things right, and bring his justice, mercy and wisdom. We are heralds, shadows of that future hope. But we are not hope itself. We labor and go into foreign territory, in the way of Jesus, to be witnessing communities to the coming of the King. Let those who have ears hear his call to join him. Run to him once you have heard, and pray for his swift return so his kingdom can come and his will may be done.