



Lessons for Leaders

Biblical Principles for Successful Leadership

MINISTERING TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE



Responding to the Callings of God

God wants to have a relationship with you and do great things in your life. How are you responding to His invitation?

If God has called you to Himself and to His service, it is because He has an important purpose for your life. To be spoken to or called by God in any way ought to be viewed as an extraordinary event worthy of our full attention. It means that He has something that He wants to accomplish in our lives and wants to communicate with us so that it can come to pass: *“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”* (Romans 11:29 KJV).

The word “calling” in the New Testament (Greek: “klesis”) means “an invitation.” Every “calling” of God is an invitation to a higher, holier and more heavenly life—a life that is more greatly blessed and eternally significant than we could otherwise hope to live. And it is our responses to these callings which largely determine the outcomes of our lives.

Our High, Holy and Heavenly Callings

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”
Philippians 3:14 (KJV).

“If God has called you to Himself and to His service, it is because He has an important purpose for your life.”

SCRIPTURES OF THE WEEK



“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

Ephesians 1:18 (NASB)

“Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for Your servant is listening.’”

I Samuel 3:10 (NASB)



New York Families

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“He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” II Timothy 1:9a (Holman).

“Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest” Hebrews 3:1 (NIV). The Expanded Translation of this verse reads: “Wherefore, brethren, set-apart ones for God and His service, participants in the effectual summons from Heaven into salvation, consider attentively and thoughtfully the Ambassador and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, who is faithful to the one who appointed Him, as also Moses was in his whole house.”

Jesus and Moses were examples of people who responded faithfully to their callings, and who were used in tremendous ways by God. But not everyone responds to God in this way. Many people shun or ignore God’s invitations because:

- They are more focused on earthly things than on discovering His plan for their lives;
- They fear what might happen to them if they fully surrender to their lives to God;
- They are so busy with day-to-day living that they don’t take the time to reach out to God; or
- They simply do not know how to develop a genuinely interactive relationship with Him.

The Tragedy of Rejecting or Ignoring God’s Callings

The Bible gives many examples of people who ignored, discounted, or did not respond positively to the invitations of God:

NOTES



“I called out to you and you refused to respond— I appealed, but no one paid attention” Proverbs 1:24 (ISV).

“I’m ready to pour out my spirit on you; I’m ready to tell you all I know. As it is, I’ve called, but you’ve turned a deaf ear; I’ve reached out to you, but you’ve ignored me” Proverbs 1:24 (The Message).

“The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ‘Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh... But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish’” Jonah 1:1-3 (NLT).

“Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries... [I] should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” Psalm 81:13-14, 16 (KJV).

“God would like to do much more for us, in us, and through us than most of us will ever let Him.”

The truth is that God would like to do much more for us, in us, and through us than most of us will ever let Him.

The Parable of the Great Banquet

Jesus illustrated this problem in His parable about the great banquet:

“A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come’” Luke 14:16-20 (ESV).

This parable exposes the unfortunate reality that while God calls many people to participate in the intimate life of His Kingdom and to feast upon spiritual things, most are too engrossed with earthly interests to respond.



Making the Great Decision to Answer God's Call

On the other hand, most of the Bible's greatest heroes were ordinary people who did respond to the call of God and lived extraordinary lives beyond their own natural abilities. Peter and Andrew were fishermen, but the Bible tells us: "Jesus called out to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!' And they left their nets at once and followed him" Matthew 4:19-20 (NLT).

Examining the Most Important Callings of God

(1) We are called to receive a life-transforming and destiny-determining salvation.

"And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified" Romans 8:30 (Holman).

(a) Many people believe in God, call themselves Christians and attend churches of various kinds, but do not understand Christ's salvation or receive Him as their Savior. The Bible teaches that just going to church or participating in religious activities does not make someone a Christian.

(b) A person becomes a Christian when he or she calls on the name of the Lord for forgiveness of sins (Romans 10:11) and trusts in Christ's sacrifice on the cross (not in good works) to save his or her soul. Though God calls His children to do good works, He offers His salvation to us as a free gift: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Question: Are you certain that you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, that your sins have been forgiven and that you are going to Heaven when you die? This is the first and most important of all of God's callings.

(2) We are called into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" I Corinthians 1:9 (NASB).

(a) Christianity is not just a set of doctrines or religious activities; it is a personal fellowship and relationship with Jesus Christ. The true Christian life is the most intimate relationship which we will ever have with anyone, because through it Christ actually lives within us.

(b) The salvation of Jesus Christ is an invitation to an intimate and interactive relationship with the Creator of the universe.

(c) Knowing Jesus Christ personally is the greatest privilege that any human being can ever have. He is the One who holds all things together, "upholding and maintaining and guiding... the universe by His mighty word of power" (Hebrews 1:3 Amplified), the Savior of mankind, the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16); nevertheless, He invites us into an intimate fellowship with Himself, makes our hearts His royal residence, and offers to lead us into a life of eternal purpose and value.

(d) Through this spiritual relationship, Christians come to know God in a life-changing and experiential way. A Christian's relationship with God is much like Christ's relationship with His disciples when He walked upon the Earth, but is even deeper; Christ becomes a believer's closest Friend, Master, Teacher and Guide.

"The salvation of Jesus Christ is an invitation to an intimate and interactive relationship with the Creator of the universe."

Question: Do you have a personal relationship and life-giving fellowship with Jesus Christ, or is He still just a historical figure to you? Do you treasure the fact that He has called you to walk with Him in an intimate friendship (see John 15:15)?

(3) We are called to be filled with God's Spirit.

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water"' John 7:37-38 (NASB).

(a) True Christianity is not merely a belief system; it is a spiritual rebirth and renewal (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5) in which the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence in our souls and we become partakers of the very life of God (II Peter 1:4).

(b) It is God's will for us to be "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18b KJV) so that we can know Him in an experiential way (I John 4:13), and be "strengthened with power in the inner man through His Spirit" (Ephesians 3:16 Holman). Ideally, we are to be "led by the Spirit" (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18 KJV) and to "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16a KJV), being "responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16a Amplified).



(c) In its essence, true Christianity is Jesus Christ living in us, working through us and expressing His life and His love through us.

Question: Are you conscious of the Holy Spirit working in your life? Do you know what it means to be filled with the Spirit and led by the Spirit in your daily life?

(4) We are called to a spiritual family.

“For He foreordained us (destined us, planned in love for us) to be adopted... as His own children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the purpose of His will” (Ephesians 1:5 Amplified).

(a) When we accept Jesus Christ, we become born into an eternal family which the Bible calls *“the whole family in heaven and earth”* (Ephesians 3:15 KJV). Ephesians 2:19 (GWT) says: *“You are no longer foreigners and outsiders but citizens together with God’s people and members of God’s family.”*

(b) The family of God is a real family. It is composed of all those who have walked with God in past ages and those who came to know Christ during this current age. We will eventually be united in Heaven with the “whole family of God” and all the saints from all the ages.

(c) While we live on this Earth, we are *“called in one body”* (Colossians 3:15 KJV). That Body is the Church. The Church is not a building or an organizational structure; rather, it consists of all persons who know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. It is God’s will for us to be active participants in the life and ministry of that body. It is impossible to live a full Christian life without finding our place and using our gifts in the Body of Christ.

(d) The Bible tells us that *“we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another,”* and therefore exhorts us: *“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them”* Romans 12:5-6 (ESV). God has given us specific gifts and talents which we are called to use in building up *“the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all”* (Ephesians 1:22-23 ESV).

Question: Have you found your place in the body of Christ? Do you belong to a local church in which you are using your gifts and being trained to serve God? Answering this call is a huge part of living a healthy and productive Christian life.

(5) We are also called into a spiritual kingdom.

“We encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” I Thessalonians 2:12 (Holman).

(a) Jesus spoke and taught more about the kingdom of God than He did about any other subject. His first actions after beginning His earthly ministry were to travel *“throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching everywhere the Good News about the kingdom”* (Matthew 4:23 NLT).

(b) The call of the gospel is an invitation to become a member of the kingdom of God. Jesus described His Salvation and the spiritual rebirth it produces within us as the means by which we become members of God’s kingdom: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”* John 3:5 (NASB).

(c) Almost all of Jesus’ parables deal with the kingdom of God and its central significance as God’s master plan for the human race. In Matthew 6:33 (KJV), He instructed His followers to make the kingdom of God the most important priority in their lives when He said, *“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* The word “first” (Greek: “protos”) means first in priority and order of importance.

(d) The kingdom of God is a very real kingdom headquartered in Heaven. It is composed of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the numberless holy angels, and the vast multitude of saints from all the ages who will ultimately rule with Christ over a renewed Earth. Daniel speaks about this when he prophesies: *“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him”* Daniel 7:27 (KJV).

(e) The kingdom of God has an actual citizenship. Philippians 3:20 (NASB) says: *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Ephesians 2:19 (NIV) refers to believers as *“no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people.”*

(f) The kingdom of God has its own laws, and the Sermon on the Mount is an attempt by Jesus to explain many of these laws to His followers. The entire Bible with its instructions for living is often referred to in Scripture as “the law” (see Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2; 19:7; Romans 7:12, etc.).



(g) The kingdom of God is God’s ultimate building project. It is the greatest enterprise in all of history. All things were created for God’s kingdom and Jesus gave His life for it. It exists in Heaven today in a most glorious form, and on the Earth in the hearts of those who know and serve Christ. One day, the kingdom of God will be fully established both spiritually and physically upon the Earth, replacing the “*kingdom of darkness*” (Colossians 1:13 NLT) and all the lesser kingdoms of man.

“Jesus instructed His followers to make the kingdom of God the most important priority in their lives.”

(h) Daniel described this time when he prophesied as follows: “*And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*” Daniel 7:27 (KJV).

(i) Revelation 11:15 (KJV) describes God’s coming kingdom in these words: “*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.’*” All of human history is heading relentlessly toward this one grand conclusion, and Christians are blessed more than we can ever understand to be a part of Christ’s Kingdom and its eternal glory.

(j) The Bible tells us not to “*love the world*” (I John 2:15) and focus all of our hopes on it, because everything in this world is only temporary. The Expanded Translation of this verse reads: “[*Stop*] *considering the world precious with the result that you love it, and the things in the world.*” Rather, we should focus on eternal things. I John 2:17 (ESV) says: “*And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*” I Corinthians 7:31 (ISV) tells us to be “*those who use the things in the world as though they were not dependent on them. For the world in its present form is passing away.*”

Question: Are you conscious of the fact that this current world system with all of its human glory is only a temporary state of affairs that is “passing away” and will eventually be replaced by God’s glorious and eternal kingdom? If so, are you making proper investments of your time, talents and treasure in things which are eternal?



PASTOR DALE WALKER, CHAPLAIN

Greetings!

As a pastor serving Members of the New York State Legislature, it is my desire to make the life-changing truths of the Bible available to the Members in as many ways as possible. One way to accomplish this is through weekly Members Only Bible Studies.

Another way that I share the truths of God’s Word with Members of the Legislature throughout the year is through the Facebook page entitled “New York State Legislative Bible Study,” where I regularly post a “Scripture for the Day” to help you start your day with inspiring spiritual truth. If you hit the “Like” button on the top right of the Facebook page beside the word “Message,” these scriptures and quotations will appear on your Facebook wall whenever they are posted. The Scripture for the Day may also be sent by email to those who email me requesting it.

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