

CALLING TO MINISTRY

The Bible has so much to say about this, it's hard to know where to begin.

Certainly, I think we can say that it will be a clear call in which we either hear God's voice (either audibly or in our minds) or see a vision. An example of hearing God's voice (probably in the mind since Eli didn't hear) is the call of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-10) and an example of the second is the calling of Paul (Acts 9:1-18). These calls are always clear and often (usually) costly – e.g. Acts 9:16.

An example of clarity is the call of Wilbur Smith a 20th century preacher and lecturer: “Then circumstances arose so that one morning when I was standing in my bedroom on the third floor of our home, the Lord suddenly hit me. I wasn't praying, I wasn't weeping for my sins; I was rather perplexed as to what I should do, and the Lord just suddenly said to me, ‘You are to go into the Christian ministry.’ I can't explain it; it was just overwhelming, and it was from the Lord.”

Of course, God's call may be mediated through a man – e.g. Mathias mediated through the apostles (Acts 1:23-26) or Timothy mediated through Paul (2 Timothy 1:6).

When we follow God's clear call we will normally meet with success (Isaiah 41:2 – or Paul's ministry). We are also given authority (Mark 6:7). We will act in accordance with the Christian faith to glorify Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11) and we will be faithful to our calling (Hebrews 3:1-13). We will be welcomed into God's kingdom (2 Peter 1:10-11).

I think we can also learn from Acts that different people are called to different ministries and different kinds of ministries, which are all of equal importance – although these may overlap and will usually include some element of mission. Thus some of those called to be deacons in Acts 6 are later found teaching – e.g. Phillip in Acts 8.