

The Call of God to Leadership

A Call to the Heart

The call of God is a call to the heart. Every leader who receives God's call is called have a shepherd's heart (to compassion and caring). Leadership in God's flock is a heart issue. Regardless of their gifts or functions, leaders are called to care for the needs of God's flock; to feed the flock the Word, and to lead them safely through the perils of life. A leader is to serve those she or he leads without selfish or self-serving motives, to willingly serve them with the heart of a shepherd!

Shepherd or Hireling?

Jesus made the contrast very clear between those called to care for the flock and others who were in that position but were either not called or misused the call.

God's leaders are called to a high level of dedication and faithfulness. Their rewards come from pleasing God and seeing their people blessed. Regardless of personal recognition or acclaim, they sacrificially serve to please God!



(John 10:11-13 NKJV) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. {12} But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. {13} The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep."

(2 Corinthians 5:9 NKJV) "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him."

The Call to Leadership – What is it?

1. The call of God is never a burden, but a distinction.

Though it may cause times of physical weariness and require sacrifice, the call of God is never burdensome! It is a call to distinction, to a particular function or place within the body. It has its own joys and satisfactions that only come with service in the church.

2. The call of God is a stamp on your life – for life!

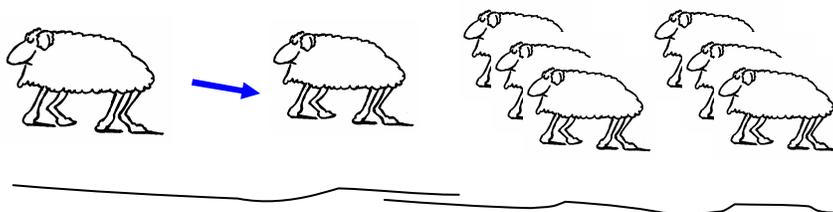
It marks you to serve God's purposes. The mark to serve will never go away, even if you choose to reject or ignore it. The call came to you before you were born. It is part of the Master's original and unique design for you.

(Jeremiah 1:5 NKJV) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

(Galatians 1:15 NKJV) "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,"

3. The call of God is always a call to "followership" before it is a call to leadership.

Every leader is to be a follower, even while leading.



4. "Followership" fosters humility and accountability.

Two clear Biblical examples of this are the relationship between Elijah and Elisha, and relationship between the Apostle Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ. So we follow others and we follow God. In First Corinthians 11:1, Paul said, *"Imitate me just as I imitate Christ."* We are responsible as leaders to be imitators of Christ and to submit to those in authority over us who imitate Christ.

Understand the rewards that come with servant-leadership. In Second Kings 2:9, Elijah cried, *"Double portion!"* He obtained it because of his faithfulness to the call, and his faithfulness to the man he was called to serve.

Elisha's example of a Response to the Call

(1 Kings 19:19-21 NKJV) "So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. {20} And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" {21} So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant."

How do you respond to the Call?

First: Yield to the Call

It is a divine interruption.

Imagine how it must have felt for Elisha to be plowing in the field, doing his every-day job and suddenly, the mantle of the prophet is flung across his back. It was a divine interruption! God picked this ordinary person and called him.

The first thing Elisha did was to sacrifice to the Lord. When he killed his oxen, it was symbolic of his decision to leave the past and move into the future. (There was an orderly, but prompt transition. He did not ignore his family!) Elisha acted on his call. He yielded fully to God, not really knowing what lay ahead! He responded in obedience and trust. *The Bible says that Elisha "arose and followed Elijah became his servant."*

Second: Count the Cost

It cost Elisha to answer the call.

1. **He left home and family.** That is not always required. Obviously, many of us are called to stay where we are and serve in the local church.
2. **He subordinated his plans and dreams to the service of God.** People (non-five fold ministry) who answer the call to serve in the local church are not normally required to alter their professions or give up their daily tasks. However, there is a definite cost. The call asked them to alter their lifestyles and adjust their schedules, giving priority to God. They previously could do whatever they wanted.
3. **When God calls, we need to get a revelation of who it is we represent.** Elisha knew he would represent Elijah. He also knew he would be a representative of Jehovah God. He counted the cost. It would require him to press into a lifestyle of holiness and prayer. He would have to hear from God to do his task properly before the Lord. He would have to represent God to those he served and to those outside the people of God. **It would not always be easy or convenient. He would have to become a man of no compromise.**

Third: Pursue the Call

Scripture does not say much in the First Kings about Elisha's daily pursuit of his call. We know that he must have been faithful in it. He must have done those things that nobody noticed. He must have faithfully pursued his call and must have served Elijah well. Otherwise, Second Kings would not have unfolded the way it did.

(2 Kings 2:1-2 NKJV) "And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. {2} Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel."

In Second Kings 2:4 and again in verse 6, Elijah tests Elisha's faithfulness to the call. Elisha responds again and again,

***"As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives,
I will not leave you!"***

We could paraphrase Elisha's words as follows,

"Master, as long as you are living on this earth, I will be faithful to my call. I will answer my call.. I will serve you."

When we are called to serve in the church, we are to pursue our task until it is completed and God releases us. **The release** may be to a number of different paths. **Here are four.**

1. Like Elisha, it may be that we take on the mantle of the one we served. or... we may have a different mantle to wear.
2. It may be that we are sent elsewhere to serve.
3. It may be that we are promoted to serve where we are.
4. It may be that we are given a season of rest from our service.

All four paths result from our faithfulness to pursue what God has called us to until it is finished.

The Proper Way to Pursue your Dreams

The proper way to pursue your dreams is to answer the call for the season of "right now." You may have dreams and visions for ministry that you have no training or experience in. Your

opportunity within the call of God will be to serve where you will learn what you will one day need to know. God will not call you unless He makes a way to prepare you. Elisha was not called to kill his oxen and become a prophet. He was called to walk through his door of opportunity so that he could pursue Elijah until his time came to take up the mantle. He was Elijah's disciple until God's timing came to pass. He wore humility and servanthood until God dressed him in his mantle of prophet!

Fourth: Press through the Resistance

Notice how there was resistance from Elijah, even to the end of their earthly relationship. It was a test of Elisha's resolve to be faithful to his mentor. His test became a testimony.

(2 Kings 2:2 NKJV) "Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel" But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel."

(2 Kings 2:4 NKJV) "Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho."

(2 Kings 2:6 NKJV) "Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on."

Measured Resistance

A good leader will always offer measured resistance to his followers. The test of a good follower is whether he or she will take offense, decide it is not worth the effort, or simply not have enough fire inside to pursue. Elijah knew the Lord was going to take him and he was preparing his disciple to take his mantle.

Testing will always precede promotion!

Fifth: When the door opens, let the Fire fall and fill you.

Do what you have been trained to do! Expect God to anoint you to what He has appointed you to do!

(2 Kings 2:7-14 NKJV) "And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. {8} Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up,

and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. {9} And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” {10} So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” {11} Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. {12} And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. {13} He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. {14} Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.”

It was always in Elijah’s heart to prepare Elisha for what God called him to do.

Elijah was faithful to reproduce himself in Elisha. When the time came, he released Elisha into his own ministry. Elisha then experienced an even greater ministry than his mentor had. He walked in the fullness of what Elijah taught him, and God multiplied it!

The Key to Success

The key to success in ministry lies in the faithfulness and character that we see in Elisha. When leaders in the church understand what an awesome privilege it is to be called by God, they will walk in gratitude, faith, enthusiasm and power. They will become dangerous to the devil! They will have the favor and grace of God. They will be anointed for what they are appointed to. They will be people of power, and when the time comes, they will take up the mantle, and there will be a response from heaven. He is the same God Elijah served, and the same God who responded when Elisha said,

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah.”

He is waiting on the other side of your faithful obedience!