



Series: **The Call....**

A three session teaching series to lead into the Ministry Fair at St. John's on Sunday 19th September



Session	Date	Title
1	5 th September	Called to become....
2	12th	You have been gifted
3	19 th	Called to serve and grow together



SESSION 1: The Call (Part 1): Called to become...

References: 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Romans 1:7; Galatians 5:13; Mark 2:17; Mark 3:13-14; Ephesians 4:1, 11-13.

Background

When we hear the word “calling” we tend to think of particular people. People who are called to a special task, often a vocation to help others. But calling is not something that is reserved for special people. We are all called by God to be someone in Him and for Him. Created equal by God, we are all invited to become the men and women that God would like us to be and to share in his continuing work of building the kingdom of God today and tomorrow,

As we prepare for the Ministry Fair on September 19th, our three session sermon series will help us to consider God’s call on our lives and how we may grow in our relationship with Him with the help of the Holy Spirit so that we may become all that God invites us to be.

Introduction

As a child, do you remember what you aspired to be e.g. a teacher, a sportsperson etc? What did you want to be and why? Share your recollections.

Themes and Application

There are three dimensions to *God’s calling* on our life:

Firstly:

1. The Testament uses call language. *We are called not to do but to become.*
Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Romans 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:7 & Galatians 5:13. What type of person does God call us to become and why?
2. a) In scripture, God often expressed his call to become by giving a person a new name (e.g. Abram Genesis 17:5) as they accepted his call to serve him to build his kingdom. When Christ came, he continued what God the Father did. Jesus saw potential in people, called them and frequently gave them a new name (e.g. see John 1:42) as they entered his service. The disciples continued this practice (see Acts 4:36). Why do you think this was?
- 2.b) What new name do you see in others in the church and in you?



Secondly:

3. After God sees something in us and calls us to become the person that he desires us to be in Him, *we are called to belong*.

The Greeks had two words for “calling”. *Keleuo* was the word that was used when someone was to be given a command or direction. Interestingly, this is not the word that is used in the New Testament to describe God’s call on our lives. This word for calling, *kaleo*, was used to speak to a person to bring them nearer – either physically or relationally. This is the word that Jesus uses. **Read Mark 2:17.** Q) Why does this say to you?

As a very old man, John wrote (1 John 3:1a) *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!”*

Take a minute or two, to reflect and thank God for all that he saw in you and continues to see in you. Thank Him for calling you to belong to him, to his family (the church) and to become what we are not yet.

4. **Read Mark 3:13-14.** Jesus’ mission began when he called people to belong to a small group...a redemptive community... in which they would belong and grow. In community, they were shaped and helped to shape others to become all that God desired them to be.

What’s more this community of belonging was continually being extended. In Romans 1:6, Paul writes to the people of Rome who were a long, long way away *“And you also are among those who are being called to belong to Jesus Christ.”*

- q) Do we truly belong to Christ in the church of Burscough? It is in belonging that we are transformed individually and corporately by Christ to become all that God desires to become.
- q) Do we want this?
- q) How committed are we become all that God wants us to become? What are the barriers?

Thirdly:

5. Having been called by Christ to belong to Him, to belong to His community, to become all that he desires us to be in Him *we are called to serve*. We are called to enter God’s service and to do His work for His glory. We are all called to share in His work of bringing the kingdom of God from up there down here to Burscough....*“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..”* This is part of our calling.

Read Ephesians 4:1, 11-13. q) How do you believe God has called you to serve Him in St. John’s?



Action

Consider sharing how you have “grown” as a disciple through serving?

Pray for each other that as the series continues, we and the whole church may continue to grow deeper in Christ, closer together and share His love as every member understands and fulfils their calling.



COUNTDOWN :

2 weeks to the Ministry Fair @ St. Johns' on Sunday 19th September



SESSION 2: The Call (Part 2): You have been gifted

References: 1 Corinthians 12: 1, 4-11; Matthew 25: 14-30; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 12:3-9

Background

As Christ taught and demonstrated, there is a challenge to being a disciple. Christ was the servant king. Being a servant can be hard work. Indeed, the word “servant” is not a popular word for many today. Yet servanthood is at the heart of Christianity. Christ was the servant King and his followers, his disciples, are called to be his servants to continue his kingdom work in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The good news is that God has blessed everyone (see 1 Corinthians 12:7) with spiritual gifts to live out our calling – to be his servants through which he continues to build the kingdom of God. The spiritual gifts that God bestows upon us are complementary and are not bestowed according to merit – simply as God decides. What’s more no one has all the gifts. This is another reason why we are commanded to share together in the work of the kingdom (see 1 Corinthians 12:12).

Introduction

Take a few minute to think about what you are good at and how you feel and others are helped when you use these gifts and talents.

Themes and Application

As we look forward to the Ministry Fair at St. John’s on Sunday 19th September, in this study, we will consider spiritual gifts and how we discern and use our gifts together for the Lord in Burscough.

1. **Read the Parable of the Talents** (Matthew 25: 14-30). At the end of our life, God will ask us, what did you do with the gifts that I gave you? This passage tells us that we are to be able to reply: *We multiplied and used what you gave us.* Then we will hear these words from God: *Well done good and faithful servant.* (Matthew 25: 21 & 23).

From this passage and others (see Romans 12:3-9; 2 Timothy 1:6), we learn that we are called to discern our spiritual gifts, to use them humbly in the Lord’s service and to develop them!

God says that the church ought to be led by leaders; taught by teachers; administrated by administrators where pastoral care is offered by those with gifts of mercy; where hospitality is offered by people with those gifts. Wouldn’t the church be an irresistible force in our community, in our lives and in our world if everyone knew their spiritual gifts and used them fully together in his service!



To help us to discern our gifts, please **read 1 Corinthians 12: 1,4-11** and then discuss the characteristics of each of the spiritual gifts that are mentioned with each other.

To help, I attach some succinct pointers (which is not definitive). Please remember that all have been gifted by God and that all spiritual gifts are equally valuable. For the church to function as God desires, it is necessary for all members to discern their gifts and to seek to use and develop them within the church, under appropriate authority, for the glory of God,

1. **Spiritual Gift of Helps**

People with this gift have an ability to work alongside others and can attach spiritual value to the accomplishment of practical tasks.

People with this spiritual gift tend to use it through quiet service. They notice things that need to be done that other people don't see and they love to do those things. They free up and support the work of others who don't possess this gift - this is really important. Someone with the Spiritual Gift of Helps is someone whose joy rises to its highest level when they pitch in and help.

2. **Spiritual Gift of Hospitality**

This is the ability that some people have, because of the way they have been made by God that their first response in a given situation is to move towards people and provide a warm welcome. They communicate to people that this is what God would do if He were physically present in flesh and blood right now. Disciples with this gift are the people who love to set people at ease, to create safe environments and help to create community.

3. **Spiritual Gift of Mercy**

People with this gift are able to perceive the suffering of other people. They are able to sensitively comfort and minister with empathy and move alongside of people who are in need. They tend to have a concern about social issues and justice and things that oppress people. They are "compassion moved to action."

4. **Spiritual Gift of Faith**

This is the spiritual gift to recognize what it is that God wants accomplished and the stalwart belief that God will do it. Such people are like the oak tree when the rest of us are like little willow saplings, bobbing about in the wind. They are firm and act with complete confidence in God's ability to work. They can be relied upon to move forwards when others are standing still or moving backwards.



5. Spiritual Gift of Giving

This is a spiritual gift that sets some apart from other people because these disciples have a very different way of looking at time, talents and money than many others. They give out of their time, talents and material wealth freely and with great joy to further the work of God.

You don't have to be wealthy to have this gift. Disciples with this spiritual gift look at the amount of money they have each month and frequently think about how they can live on less in order to free up more to give. Such disciples tend to live sacrificially with great joy and delight in serving and providing others with humility.

6. Spiritual Gift of Intercession

Some disciples are wired up in such a way that their first response in any given situation is to pray. Disciples with this spiritual gift will move to pray consistently on behalf of and for other people.

7. Spiritual Gift of Creative Communication

The Bible says that God has wired some people to have the ability to communicate God's truths using a variety of art forms e.g. music, art, writing, flower arranging, needlework, design and decoration and technology. People with this gift tend to gravitate to the arts and tend to use variety and creativity as a way to engage people for Christ. Disciples with this spiritual gift challenge us in our perspectives of God and they share fresh ways to express the message of God.

8. Spiritual Gift of Evangelism

Christians with this spiritual gift have the ability to effectively communicate the Gospel to unbelievers in a way that causes them to respond in faith and grow under discipleship.

Scripture is clear that all of us are called to pray and all of us are called to be part of evangelism—to build relationships with people who don't know God and inviting them into our lives and to dinner, out to the pub or a film and to come to church with us. Having said that, as with prayer, there are people who are particularly gifted in the area of Evangelism. These disciples like to be around people who don't know God. In fact, after a while Christians can start to annoy those with the gift of evangelism as they would prefer to be around people that don't know God. They seek out opportunities to bring up spiritual matters in appropriate ways.

9. Spiritual Gift of Teaching

People blessed with this spiritual gift have the ability to understand how to clearly explain and apply the Word of God in a way that causes greater Christ-likeness in the listeners. Those with the gift of



Autumn Housegroup Study Notes: September 2010

teaching aren't really excited when people say "Great talk," but love it when somebody says, "Something you said today made a difference in my life, and I'm changing because of it." They love it when the light bulbs go on. Those with the gift of teaching communicate clearly and effectively and enjoy lovingly challenging people to grow as Christians.

10. **Spiritual Gift of Discernment**

This is a gift that God gives some people that gives them the ability to distinguish between Truth and Error, Good and Evil, Right and Wrong. Disciples with this spiritual gift experience an internal dissidence that develops and a restlessness in their spirit when they are engaging with somebody and they sense that there is deception or inconsistency in what they is being said or done.

11 & 12. The next two spiritual gifts, **Knowledge** and **Wisdom** are very similar so I want to summarise them together

Knowledge is the gift that God gives to some of His followers to give them an ability to bring Truth to the church, or to an individual, through revelation or a Biblical insight.

One of the reasons that we're considering all the spiritual gifts is so that you can work out what gifts God has blessed you with and help others so that the church can be built up. If you have the Spiritual Gift of Knowledge, you tend to find that you receive Truth in order to serve the Body of Christ—Truth that is consistent with Scripture. You are sometimes able to receive unusual insights or understanding, and you consistently point us to God's Truth.

The spiritual gift of Wisdom is very similar but it has a more practical and specific application. Disciples who are blessed with the gift of Wisdom have the ability to apply spiritual truth in a way that meets a need in a specific situation. They are the kind of person who can see the next steps that someone ought to take and are directional in nature. People with the Spiritual Gift of Wisdom seek Godly solutions in the midst of conflict and confusion and they often have the ability to apply spiritual truth to lovingly help other believers.

13. **Spiritual Gift of Prophecy**

This is not a foretelling of the future. In the Biblical sense, it is not used in this way. Believers with the spiritual gift of prophecy have an ability to reveal Truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner, in a way that people understand and are corrected and changed. People with the spiritual gift of prophecy have the ability to expose sin, to teach for conviction, to read the signs of the times and to call for change or repentance. Additionally, the spiritual gift of prophecy is demonstrated in the receipt and communication of words of knowledge, pictures and scripture.

I think one of the challenges in the churches today is for each of us to ask the question. "When was the last time that I humbly allowed somebody with the gift of prophecy to speak Truth in my life?"



14. **Spiritual Gift of Apostleship**

Paul refers to this as the gift that God gives to some people the ability to start, or to oversee the development of new churches or new ministries within a church. Sometimes people with the gift of Apostleship are missionaries or church planters; sometimes they're entrepreneurs in our own church with eyes to see what holes we have in a church, and where new things need to be started. They are pioneers and love to establish new things. Such people tend to have great energy when things are new and fresh.

15. **Spiritual Gift of Leadership**

This is a gift that gives Christians' the ability to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God for his glory. Disciples blessed with this spiritual gift love to provide direction for people or ministry. They tend to be able to cast vision, develop strategy and motivate others to perform to the best of their abilities for the kingdom.

16. The gift that follows is often mistaken for Leadership but it is quite different. This is the **Spiritual Gift of Administration.**

The Bible teaches that God has blessed some people to have the ability to understand what makes an organization function and the ability to plan and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of ministry. Those who are blessed with the gift of administration enjoy getting things done. Administrators are able to organize them and move everything forward. They manage and co-ordinate and organize people and they break things down so that movement toward goals happens.

One of the things that can happen in a church is that we can over-spiritualize one gift like prayer and under-spiritualize another gift like administration. We can say that when we "plan," that's not of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. God has gifted some of us to have our first response to fall to our knees and urgently pray for a situation; God has gifted others to have a first response to say, "What can we do? How can we plan and organize?"

17. **Spiritual gift of Shepherding or Pastoring.**

Those with this spiritual gift possess the ability to nurture and care for and guide people towards ongoing spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness. Disciples with this gift love to nurture the whole person, to provide guidance and oversight to a whole group of people, and enjoy ongoing relationships with people. Disciples with this spiritual gift make great Home Group leaders.

18. **Spiritual Gift of Encouragement or Counselling**

This is the ability to present truth in a way that strengthens people, comforts them or urges them into action when they're discouraged or wavering. If you have this gift, probably people will have told you what a great encourager you are. If you don't have this gift, you probably have someone in your mind that you know has used this gift in your life. It's unmistakable. Disciples with this spiritual gift



Autumn Housegroup Study Notes: September 2010

encourage people to keep going. Encouragers listen and strike up a conversation, offer a cup of coffee, write a note, an email, or a phone call. They motivate us to grow and not give up. Encouragers motivate us to persevere. They remind us that there is Truth and Hope in the promises of God. If you have the spiritual gift of encouragement, you breathe hope into those that are wavering and floundering.

And finally..... Why are we studying spiritual gifts?

It is not just to understanding ourselves, although this important.

It really is about the vision of what a church can be—about the kind of magnetic and vibrant, authentic, irresistible force in the world that was God’s dream and plan for the church. To the degree to which we match that is the degree to which we’re being the kind of church that God has called us to be, beyond what a church can be.

There are few things that will help you better understand who God uniquely meant you to be and how to live out of being that person than understanding what your Gift is and serving God out of it.

On several occasions, I have been asked, “When I understand my Spiritual Gift, is it to be used for the work place or for the church?”

My answer is “Yes. Yes.” To live out of who God made you to be—to endeavour to align our career, our season in life with that—to try to live our service in the church out of that—to live wholly out of the giftedness God has given you is the way to enjoy the fullness of life as God intends you to live it.

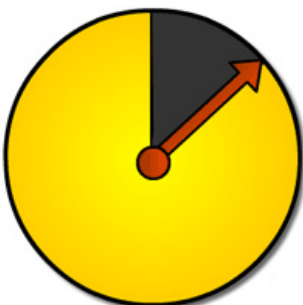
Finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, to understand Spiritual Gifts is one of the most profound ways that we can understand who it is that God is: the gratuitous nature of His love, His amazing breathtaking Grace and His power.

Action

Consider writing all the names of members of your housegroup on a blank sheet of A4 paper. Take one of these sheets and then, after a time of prayer and reflection inspired by the Holy Spirit, write down the spiritual gifts that you discern in that person and share some words of encouragement.

When you have finished, discreetly give the sheet to the person and conclude with a time of prayer.

Begin to pray as to how you may use your spiritual gifts fully for the Lord in His service as we look forward to the Ministry Fair.



COUNTDOWN :

1 week to the Ministry Fair @ St. Johns' on Sunday 19th September



SESSION 3: The Call (Part 3): Called to serve and grow together

References: Matthew 20: 20-27

Background

In his ministry, Jesus had one consistent message. His good news, the gospel, was that the Kingdom—life in God’s presence and God’s power was now available to anybody who wanted to receive it through accepting Him as Lord and Saviour (see Mark 1:14-15). Jesus taught about this all the time and said it was the most important thing in the entire world: *“Don’t worry about what you will eat and drink and wear, for people who don’t know God run after these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness—His way of life”*. (Matthew 6:31-33)

Everything else is secondary to life in the kingdom. Jesus sent out His twelve closest followers on a mission. *“When Jesus had called the Twelve together...He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God...”* (Luke 9:1-2). After this in the next chapter of Luke we read, *“The Lord appointed seventy-two others, and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go...“When you enter a town,” he said, “...tell them the kingdom of God is near you.”* (Luke 10: 1, 5-9) .

After His death and resurrection, we read in the Book of Acts that *“He appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days and spoke to them about the kingdom of God.”* (Acts 1:3). Moving on the last glimpse we have of this church, the last verse in the last chapter of the Book of Acts, reads, *“Boldly and without hindrance, he (Paul) (Paul) proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ “(Acts 28:31)*

Jesus had one Gospel (good news) and his Gospel was/is: The Kingdom is here. It looked very different from what people thought it would look like. *“It’s come through Me...through My life, in My teachings”*, Jesus revealed. And deep, deep at the heart of “Kingdom of God” is the idea of Servanthood. If we’re honest many struggle with it. The Kingdom of the Earth always has struggled with it.

As Jesus was the servant king, we are called to be servants of God and continue his ongoing work of being and building the kingdom of God in our life. We are called to be servants of God in community with him and his people and to invite others into his new community. To achieve this, we need to discern and use our spiritual gifts in his service.

Introduction

Consider and share examples of when, how and why sharing life with others is a good thing?



Themes and Application (see end of section for Helpful Hints...)

As we study this passage, we'll learn how the disciples failed to grasp the nature of the kingdom of God and learn what Jesus taught about serving him. This is to encourage us in our walk with him and to help us as we attend the ministry fair at St. John's on Sunday 19th September.

1. a) **Read Matthew 20:20.** What did the mother of James and John want from Jesus?
b) What did this reveal about their understanding of community that Jesus was building – the kingdom of God?
2. **Read Matthew 20: 24-28.** What was the response of the ten disciples to the request made by the mother of James and John? Why do you think they were angry?
3. What was Jesus response (verse 26)?
4. a) How do we and can we serve others?
b) For those who serve, share some of your observations and reflections with the group? How have you developed as a Christian as you serve?

Action

Having considered Christ's calling for every disciple to serve him in the church, ask the Lord (and other friends) to help you to discern how to you use your spiritual gifts for the kingdom.

Please pray and commit to attending the Ministry Fair to be held at St. John's on Sunday 19th September.

COUNTDOWN :



Today - the Ministry Fair @ St. Johns' on Sunday 19th September



Helpful Hints

Question

1. a) She wanted her sons to sit next to Jesus in heaven. To enjoy the place of honour.
b) That many had failed to understand the nature of the kingdom of God. It is not about honour and status. It is about serving others as Christ has served us. It is about directing glory to God not ourselves. Our joy is in being known, loved and being in relationship with God through Christ and helping others to receive and grow in their relationship with him.
2. The other disciples were angry by the request because they were also concerned by where they were in the pecking order. It would appear that they also did not fully understand the nature of the kingdom of God.
3. Jesus replied (verse 26) "*Not so with you...*" Not so with you, St. John's, Burscough. Not so with you...in your home, in your work, in your street, in your church, in your family...not so with you.

Jesus abolishes the pecking order. He is calling for the creation of an alternative culture that expresses and incarnates the Kingdom of God. Up There is coming Down Here now. Heaven is coming to earth now. So Jesus tells stories about what the Kingdom is like, and we have to work out how to retell them in our day in ways that people will understand:

The Kingdom of God is like an airline where there is no First Class and no Economy Class and everybody is all together at the same table.

Better still, the Kingdom of God is where people who have money buy the most expensive tickets and get the best seats and then give them to people who don't have any money at all. And where people who have power, instead of complaining about the service and how their tastes are not being catered to become Flight Attendants and walk around to people who don't have much power and say, "May I help you? May I serve you?"

And this is because God, the One who owns the airline and is the Pilot of the flight is walking around with a moist towel and a basin, washing people's feet. He's saying, "Now, in what I'm doing, I've set an example for you." There is nothing like the Kingdom of God!



Autumn Housegroup Study Notes: September 2010