



“I’m Getting a Call...”

Sharing one’s own call story

Focus: By sharing one’s own experience with calling, this introduces the concept of calling as an invitation to follow God in everyday life at home, at work, at church, and in the world.

General Comments:

- This sermon can be used as a “standalone” sermon to introduce *calling* to your congregation, or, it can be a foundational message on which the other “I’m Getting a Call...” sermons are based.
- Use this as an opportunity to share your own “call story,” which likely includes a heavy focus on your call to vocational/pastoral ministry. *Take care not to overly emphasize ordained/formal/credentialed ministry as being elevated over any other type of call.*
- Consider prayer walking through the sanctuary/worship space before the service starts, as a way of preparing yourself to preach this sermon. As you move through the sanctuary, ask God to speak to the people who will be in that space. Pay attention to any Holy Spirit “nudges” as you dedicate and pray for the space.
- At the heart of this sermon series is an invitation to discipleship. The focus is not on you, your story, or even the thing to which you were called. The focus is as a testimony and model of saying “yes” to God’s call (even if it was a winding or twisty road that took you there!).
- Consider including the teaching points from the Proclamation section in the bulletin for further reflection.

Scripture Selection:

- Do you have a scripture that is a part of your “call story”? Consider using your preferred text as the basis for the sermon for this week. If you plan to use other sermons in this series, look ahead to the other texts being used:
 - “I’m Getting a Call...But Who’s On the Other End?” 1 Samuel 3:1-10
 - “I’m Getting a Call...But What if I Don’t Want to Answer?” Genesis 12:1-9
 - “I’m Getting a Call...But What if I’m Happy Where I Am?” Luke 5:1-11
 - “I’m Getting a Call...What’s the Next Step?” Esther 4:1-14
 - Or, consider one of the following texts:
 - Elijah in the Cave story (1 Kings 19:1-18—or maybe 9-18)
 - Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-12)
 - Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-25)

Outline:

The following sermon has been structured to have the flow of an **AGAPE** sermon. For more on this, check out the model in the book [That'll Preach: 5 Simple Steps to Your Best Sermon Ever](#) by Charley Reeb. The five steps are: (AGAPE) Anticipation—Gospel—Answer—Proclamation—Explosion. An outline is provided that includes research and preaching “helps.” However, it is heavily dependent upon the preacher bringing their own experience to the sermon.

- **Anticipation** (Introduction/Hook)
 - Identify the question that was emerging for you in the season of life about which you’re sharing. For example:
 - Might God be calling me to ministry?
 - Is God’s will different than I expected?
 - What will my yes mean to my family?
 - Paint a picture of your life circumstances BEFORE you had this call from God; allow the “before” to build anticipation. You will connect with scripture and then provide an answer below.
- **Gospel** (Scripture)
 - Spend some time studying/contemplating/researching your selected text. Or, consider the following questions:
 - What do you notice about this text?
 - What questions arise from what you notice?
 - What are some possible interpretations from this text?
 - Connect the scripture with your own life.
- **Answer**
 - How did you resolve the question you identified in the Introduction? How did the scripture clarify/embolden/give focus to you?
- **Proclamation**
 - What is the “big takeaway” that you want to communicate to your hearers?
 - Include some general instruction about Calling: (You could share these points in your bulletin, use some of it on your Facebook, or share in other avenues as well):
 - Before we can focus on what God is calling us to DO, we are invited to consider WHO we are called to be.
 - Identity precedes a particular call, job, or circumstance
 - Our calling to specific things comes after our primary calling to live in Christ

- Our identify is rooted in the knowledge that we are loved by God—always. (And so is everyone else)
- Our heart/character grows in maturity to look more like Jesus as we do what Jesus did (engaging acts of piety/acts of mercy)
- Myths and Truths:
 - Some “myths” or partial truths about calling:
 - God calls all of us to figure out what our ONE BIG PURPOSE is in life; and once we figure IT out, we should do it!
 - Our callings never change—once we figure them out, we will know what to do with the rest of our lives.
 - There are some callings that are more faithful than others.
 - *These myths add pressure or place expectations that we have to do certain things to know or do God’s will.*
 - Truths about Calling:
 - God’s call is for all of us to follow the ways and the person of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we follow Jesus, we can sometimes find a big “overarching” purpose with how we spend our days, but mostly we become people who say yes to big and little things that God calls us to each day.
 - Callings sometimes develop over time, through different—and sometimes even difficult—life experiences.
 - No “calling” (such as to be a pastor or “full-time” minister) is better than another. God’s call to each person is to be faithful in our daily lives, in little and big ways.
 - *These truths invite us into the dynamic relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit where God’s will becomes clearer as we live it out.*
- **Explosion (Closing)**
 - This section is an opportunity to appeal to their emotions through an impactful/meaningful story or illustration. Consider the quotes below that could illustrate your experience in calling.
 - “God’s Holy Spirit reveals his will to those who are seeking his mind and his heart. God’s Spirit will do this through four avenues: prayer, Scripture, other believers, and circumstances.” Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God*.

- “All moments are key moments.” Frederick Buechner
- “Vocation is the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.” Frederick Buechner
- “Calling—the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism is lived out as a response to his summons and service.” Os Guinness, *The Call*
- “Vocation at its deepest level is, ‘This is something I can’t not do, for reasons I’m unable to explain to anyone else and don’t fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling.’” Parker Palmer
- “Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and go and do that. Because what the world needs is more people who have come alive.” Howard Thurman
- “Nothing short of God can satisfy the soul.” John Wesley
- Invitation: **Pray. Seek. Go.**
 - [Handouts—bookmarks, cards, etc.] We have a limited number available at this time. Some will be available at Orders and Fellowship or Annual Conference, or perhaps through your District Superintendent’s office. Or, email called@greatplainsumc.org. Reference resources on this website: <https://www.greatplainsumc.org/HowisGodCalling> or <https://www.greatplainsumc.org/5-cups-of-coffee>
 - **Pray:** Invite your people to ask God to help them see, hear, or know what God’s voice sounds like. Encourage them to use whatever words they might have for prayer. “God, will you help me to hear your voice?”
 - **Seek:** Pay attention to possibilities that open up or scripture that reveals what God might be saying to you. “I am paying attention to God’s words for me by..”
 - **Go:** Reach out to a pastor, mentor, or trusted friend to consider what God may be calling you to do. “I think God might be...”