

# Equipping Thoughts for Leaders



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## Helping God's People Focus on What is Certain in Uncertain Times

With all the challenges of the continuing pandemic, the hostile election cycle, and continuing racial hostilities, we have all faced disruptions and disorientation in our lives. Uncertain futures tend to foster a sense of an uncertain present. Social media, political, and cultural prognosticators aid in this uncertainty by their simplistic, partisan spin on just about every piece of news that hits the airwaves.

**The nature of the spiritual life is that we are certain in our uncertainty. – Oswald Chambers**

Because of all of this uncertainty it is important for leaders to remind ourselves and others about what is certain, His call on our lives. While there is great unease about our futures that seem to change weekly, we can be very firm and help others walk with certainty in the various aspects of His clear calling.

- *1Corinthians 1:26-27 For consider your calling, brethren.*
- *Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling.*

- *Philippians 3:12-15 I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus...(15) Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude.*

Biblical leaders are to be like shepherds in the Bible as they lovingly connect with, care for, and guide people towards His call. Jesus described these important features of leadership.

- *John 10:2-3 The shepherd enters the door of the sheepfold and calls the sheep forth by name. He goes before them and they follow him because they know his voice (Psalms 23, Micah 2:12-13, 1 Peter 5:1-6).*

## **Misunderstandings of Calling**

Many leaders are good at connecting with and caring for God's people but not so good at the issue of guiding them into His call. Part of this is the challenge of "The wisdom of this world" when it comes to the idea of calling (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Western culture has been influenced by Greek and Roman philosophy. Greek/Roman spirituality believed in a variety of deities. They live a life-giving sacrifice and burning incense to please the capricious gods. The prevailing ethic was "give the gods what they want and they give us what we want. Do just enough to please them then they will give us the life we desire."

Socrates said that the foundation of a good life is "Know Thyself." This means we are on a personal quest for happiness and self-fulfillment and if we somehow placate the gods in a right way, they will help us obtain it. Sounds like much of western Christianity with our transactional relationship with God to bless our pursuits, rather than a loving personal relationship in which we follow His calling out of a deep debt of gratitude.

This self-help individualized philosophy is what many Christians have carried over into the idea of calling. We want to escape hell through Jesus and have Him be on our side to bless our pursuits that will make us happy and successful.

In our western history with the rise of the industrial era we saw an astounding escalation in the quality and longevity of life, enabling more and more people to become consumers in pursuit of personal dreams. The postmodern era doubled down on such individualism with existential pursuits of elusive things that brings a sense of fulfillment. Now with the prevailing pragmatic philosophies whatever works for our personal happiness is what must be our calling.

The unfortunate thing with this individualized and idealized version of calling is that it tends to oppose the clear calls Jesus made to people in the Gospels. Twenty-five times Jesus called people to “follow Me” and “lay down your life for My sake.” The word sake means His purpose and calling.

- *Luke 9:23-25 If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (24) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.*

Instead of the individualized calling “Do what you love, and love what you do” it is more about what is “His sake.” As we walk with God, “He equips and works in us that which is pleasing in His sight through Jesus” (Hebrews 13;20-21).

### **The Three Clear Aspects of Our Calling**

I was recently on a call with leaders from an African nation that due to the pandemic and political changes has around 80% unemployment right now. God’s people there were not as concerned about “Doing what you love and loving what you do.” They are trying to survive. It was refreshing however that even in the midst of economic and future uncertainty they were still clearly leading God’s people towards His calling. His calling on everyone remains certain whether in a good or bad economy.

When we look at the word of God there are three clear aspects of God’s calling on everyone that are essential. Whether good times or bad, these three things about our calling remain sure. They are unwavering aspects of God’s call on everyone that western self-help/self-fulfillment approaches miss.

If these three things aren’t foundational in our lives, we will tend to pursue a Western version of calling that has little connection to God’s eternal purpose revealed in His word. This will lead to a life that the writer of Ecclesiastes called “Vanity of vanities” which means “futile, useless, or of no purpose” (Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:11-26, 3:19, 4:4-16, 5:10, 6:11, 11:8-10, 12:8). Remember this was written by the wisest, richest, and most successful person on the face of the earth at that time.

These three elements are what Bible scholars have historically referred to as our “Primary Calling.” I like to call these three things the “egg of God’s calling.” They are distinct parts that are connected together under the umbrella of His primary calling on all our lives which we need to pursue, no matter what season our culture is in.

## **1. To follow Jesus as a disciple with others who are making progress by learning to put His word into practice in every area of their lives.**

This was the original great commission. Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to put into practice all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” As we become followers and “doers of His word” (James 1:22) we make progress in maturity and His eternal purpose (Hebrews 6:1).

## **2. Become responsible family members in His house who contribute their abilities/gifts to see His family (local churches) become all He intends them to be.**

- *Ephesians 1:22-23 MSG... The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.*

Each person when they come into Christ are called to become fellow members of Christ’s body (the church). Each member is to actively take their place to see the church become all God intends her to be.

- *Ephesians 2:19-20 ..you are the children of the city of the holy ones, with all the rights as family members of the household of God...built on Jesus and built together with each other His temple is rising (1Corinthians 12:18; Romans 12:1-5).*
- *Ephesians 4:1, 15-16 Walk in God’s calling...Every member has been given gifts to contribute to the body of Christ being built up, so let everyone do their part. (Colossians 2:19).*

It is important to remember that there are only 5 places in the New Testament where there is instruction about identifying our gifts and how to function in them (Romans 12:1-15; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Corinthians 12; 14; and 1 Peter 4:1-10). In each of these places the goal of moving in our gifts and abilities God gives us is “building up His church/family” (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:5-26; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:7-12; 1 Peter 4:10-11). The goal of gifts was never the success or advancement of the individual but the moving in gifts as a sacrifice to build up God’s family.



There are clear Biblical vehicles through which we contribute to the building up of His people. Our gifts and abilities are to be carried through these vehicles into the lives of others. They are referred to as the “one another’s.” Everyone can easily practice some of them daily and it will build up His people. There are 59 of them you download here <https://c2cfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/59-one-anothers-in-the-NT-1.pdf>.

### **3. Sent on His mission every day, everywhere, all the time as His family of ambassadors for Christ.**

- *John 17:18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world (John 20:21 as the Father has sent Me, I also send you).*
- *2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

**The word “ambassador” means,** “to represent one royal court to another.” We are representing God and His ways to the world around us all the time in hope to see them reconciled to God.

One great misunderstanding of missions is that it is something for a few select individuals who go to faraway lands with unusual people. This wasn’t how Jesus did it. Missions was His everyday life. Most Bible scholars indicate that Jesus never traveled much over 100 miles from the place He was born. Yet every day He was on mission with the twelve disciples to see His Father’s Kingdom manifested among the people He encountered.

We are sent on a mission’s trip every day to a world who needs Him. Every day when we get up and go to work, to the campus, our workplace, or to the marketplace, we go as ambassadors of Christ on a mission to reveal the glory of God and see mankind reconciled to Him.

In this great time of uncertainty, we can be certain. We can follow, and help others follow the three aspects of God’s clear calling on all our lives no matter what the external season we find ourselves in.

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