



Lesson 4: Your Calling
Your Calling, Ministries, & The Local Church

There is a time for everything, and a season for
every activity under the heavens

- Ecclesiastes 3:1 -

YOUR PLACE – CLASS FOUR

Lesson 4: Your Calling

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I. WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CLASS

- Lifetime Callings versus Seasons of Serving
- Principles that Affect Every Minister and Ministry
- The Local Church

II. LIFE CALLINGS VERSUS SEASONS OF SERVING

It is important to distinguish between a lifetime *calling and a season of service*. Over the course of time, individual ministries, church ministries, periods of service and unique visitations of the Holy Spirit do come to an end.

It is important to distinguish that there are _____ of life to ministry service just as there are cycles of seasons. Ecclesiastes 3 speaks of times that begin and end. It is a common mistake to interpret a particular area of ministry as an indication that ministry will continue on forever.

Note however, Paul's very successful and anointed ministry in Ephesus. There were many "not the ordinary" miracles. Many people were coming to the Lord. The Gospel message was reaching the entire Roman province of Asia.

One would think and hope (and even pray!) that this marvelous period of Gospel advance would not ever end. Surely this great "season" of ministry in those days would continue until Jesus came back! And yet, the scriptures clearly state that one day the season ended.

*So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. **After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.***
Acts 19:20–21 (emphasis added)

The end of this ministry season in Ephesus did not mean that Paul's *life calling* came to an end. His life calling was to serve the Lord as an apostle and to preach the Gospel. He purposed to continue on in his calling by preaching the Gospel in other cities.

He was called to many other nations also:

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name... Romans 1:1

We are all called to be servants and witnesses for Christ, as was Paul.

Yet, we are not all called to the same ministry office, nor do we all have the same giftings as did Paul.

Note Two Differing “Callings:”

1. A calling for an _____.

Paul had a calling as an apostle – to live his life calling in the “office” of one of the “five fold” ministries as in Ephesians 4:11 – apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher.

2. A calling for a “season of time”

Timothy, Paul’s spiritual son in the faith, followed Paul and ministered and learned as a student/disciple serving on Paul’s missionary church planting team. But this was only for a season of time – as time progressed, Timothy became the pastor of the church in Ephesus.

A High Tolerance for Experimentation

At Golden Triangle Church on the Rock, we have purposely adopted a “high tolerance for experimentation.” What this means is that we are willing to launch out into new areas and types of ministry in order to accomplish more of the purpose and plan of God, even if it means taking a risk, or costs financially.

While using and maintaining wisdom and godly counsel, we realize that not everything that we attempt to do for God may be successful, nor be something we will *always* and *continually maintain* for the entire life of the church. We also realize that ministries may last only for a season.

A case in point:

In our church history, we have had numerous periods when we had multiple services and service times and days.

Through the years we have introduced Saturday night services, three services on a Sunday morning, our current two services on a Sunday morning schedule, an additional “Café” church in another building, and a number of other formats.

Each worship service opportunity was formulated to help meet the needs and demands of the many people that were attending.

They were and are all good attempts at reaching out to different people groups with a varied service format.

While many of these services were successful in their “season,” we were not afraid to make changes as the “season” changed, the needs of the people change, the target demographic changes, or simply, and most importantly, at the Lord’s confirming direction.

Applied personally, effective ministers and ministries must remain flexible and adaptable – like a supple wineskin.

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse.” “Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9:16, 17

One of the concepts we garner from the above text is that a newer, and thus flexible wineskin or structure is necessary to hold the “new” effervescent (and thus ever changing) wine of a newly implemented concept or ministry.

Ministers and churches must remain flexible, able to change, and willing to embrace change and growth.

III. PRINCIPLES THAT AFFECT EVERY MINISTER AND MINISTRY

A. _____ or Church growth?

Pastor Hammonds writes, “Church growth should be a by-product of a church’s vision and not the vision itself. We should keep our focus on Kingdom expansion, instead of church growth, remembering it may cost your church to accomplish God’s will. When you look at the vision God has for your life, for your church, keep in mind that observable growth is secondary to God-approved growth, and that is sometimes difficult if not impossible to measure with the natural mind and eyes.”

(This excerpt is from the November 17th page from the plain truth 12:10, a devotional book by Dr. R. L. Hammonds offering facilitation of daily prayer, Bible reading, and meditation on principles from the Word of God.)

It is important to value Kingdom increase over temporary growth or success.

B. We are a _____ not a party cruise ship.

This concept speaks to your motivation for leading and your desire to be used by God. We are tasked as leaders, as gifted servants who show up to work for the Lord on a fishing vessel. The purpose for using our gifts and graces is not so that we can merely enjoy the trip, treating the work of God as if it were a vacation. Those who are on a cruise ship do so for

vacation and fun to spend time simply enjoying each other's company and pleasure. But God's fishing vessel employs hard working crew members who are willing to sacrifice, work hard, and bring in the harvest of fish through casting the nets, mending the nets, and cleaning the nets of the fishers of men.

C. It's probably _____ about you.

A very important principle for anyone serving the Lord in and through the local church is to keep reminding yourself that the work of God is bigger than you and larger than only your particular area of service. Our emotional state, who we work alongside, and whether or not we get "our" own way are all secondary.

If we keep our eyes on the larger purposes of God, then we will not get caught up in the petty things that begin to stop the progress of the Kingdom of God.

The next time you are tempted to get your feelings hurt or you feel like quitting, just say, "It's not about me" and keep your heart focused on loving God and loving people as you fulfill God's will and purpose. Remember that the Lord can use difficult people and circumstances to prepare us for our greatest day.

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. Psalms 119:165

D. Gifting and calling is _____ than appearance, charisma or ability.

It is possible for even unholy and unprincipled people to be caught up in worship and the moving of the Spirit without then afterwards exhibiting any character change at all. This happened to King Saul as recorded in 1 Samuel 10:11, but his nature did not change.

Simon, who practiced sorcery in the region of the Samaritans, exhibited outwardly that he believed in Jesus and was even baptized, but later was rebuked by Peter and told he was "full of bitterness and captive to sin" (Acts 8:23). He was trying to buy the gift of imparting the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

Appearance, ability or personality do not qualify a person for leadership. The character of Christ, a teachable spirit, and a servant's heart with humility demonstrated are much better qualifications.

IV. THE LOCAL CHURCH

A. Additional Concepts to Consider

- Church _____ is not the same as church _____.
- We should not treat the church like a restaurant. We only attend because we like the food and the service. Leaders are chefs and wait staff, not “consumer–customers.”
- Think about how you react when you are told “no.”
- Think about how you deal with difficult people as a *leader*.
- Where do I give my tithes and offerings? As a leader and example, am I being a financial supporter of God’s work?
- We’re a team – Yielding and submitting your vision, calling and gifts to the rest of the leadership team to be used as they feel directed is a humbling and necessary element.
- Protecting the time, talent, treasure and energy of our church families is a key concept that all GTCOTR leaders should keep in the forefront of all activities and ministries. Leaders should value other people’s time as much as they value their own.
- The gospel is the answer, not politics or multi level marketing.
- Keep the grape vine positive. Every institution – even the local church – has a “grapevine” of communication. It will function whether it delivers good news or bad news. Effective leaders constantly inject positive, faith filled life into the grapevine. Jesus is working and moving, and people need to know!
- Have you heard my latest, greatest revelation? From time to time, a leader may decide that a particular small group or other ministry opportunity is the place to share their particular “slant” on a Biblical truth or principle. Leaders need to submit their teaching to more senior leadership for evaluation and guidance, and to teach the materials provided for a specific class. All ministry events, classes, and small groups at GTCOTR are automatically under the guidance of senior leadership, whether present or not, and are not the time and place to develop new and different doctrines, or one’s own following.

B. Seven Ways Church Leaders Think Differently

Church leaders will not normally:

- Raise money for their own vision, even if it is a good cause without permission from their pastor and church leadership.
- Build their own business with the sheep God has given their pastor.
- Start a Bible study or promote their own ministry without pastoral knowledge or approval.
- Campaign for a certain political candidate or cause in church.
- Abuse alcohol.

- Curse or use foul language.
- Spend time alone with the opposite sex, or in a potentially compromising or perceived ethical violation. Leaders should always follow the Biblical injunctions to “Flee sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18) and “flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22) and “avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

C. In the Early Church, Leaders of Churches:

- Sent letters of recommendation to other churches on behalf of traveling Christian workers (Acts 18:24–28; Romans 16:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:1).
- Held local gatherings of believers that had designated leaders.
- Qualified future leadership by requiring a long-term association in a close personal relationship (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5).
- Evaluated the behavior of members and exercised church discipline (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2).

D. Find Joy in Your Place of Service:

- Joy is knowing that God is in control. If you really believe that, then you will not speak or feel discontent. Happiness can be impatient. Joy is longsuffering. Waiting is a gift of God to enjoy the future.
- You aren’t ready for your future or you would be there already. God has already gone ahead. Don’t get side tracked from the plan of God or you’ll miss His provision.

E. Have a Goal to Build, Bigger and Better, the Particular Areas of the Church In Which You Labor:

- Ask yourself, “What is the first thing that we need to do to make the ministry bigger and better?” “How can we make it more effective for the families, students, and children, thus enlarging the overall ministry of the church?”

F. Leadership Expectations

- Learn to be “Natural” or “normal”
- Be faithful and consistent in:
 - Church attendance
 - Bible reading
 - Prayer time
 - Tithing and giving
 - Live a holy, clean, moral life
 - Be responsible in your church leadership and ministry position
 - Paying attention in church, not texting and talking in church

Have a heart that says “yes” and remains open even to the quieter leadership directions you are given...take the softer “nudges” to change something, do something different, add something, etc. from leadership as more than suggestions.

Be close enough to the leader to know the longing of his heart.

Spiritual ‘orders’ given in kind ways or that seem like suggestions are still orders.

The natural will make room for the supernatural – beyond our natural ability and wisdom. The supernatural is what God does. Salvations, answered prayer, miracles and the like are all in the realm of God’s work.

On one level, all of the work is God’s work.

On another level, God’s work is accomplished by and through His people. The supernatural element of God’s work does not absolve us from preparation, planning, education, and prudent use of resources in the natural realm.

The disciples go and preach, and the Lord works *with* them.

“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his worked by the signs that accompanied it.”
Mark 16:20

Answers:

Pg. 30 – cycles

Pg. 31 – Office

Pg. 32 – Kingdom Expansion, fishing vessel

Pg. 33 – not, more

Pg. 34 – membership, attendance