

THE CALL TO MINISTRY

Georgia District Nazarene

A Call From God

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired and followed him (Mark 1:16-20, NIV).

Throughout the Bible, God has called men and women to follow Him into a life of full-time ministry. God's call goes back as far as Abraham and Moses and continues into the New Testament with Jesus' disciples and Paul. Still today, God is calling people into ministry.

The reason you are reading this excerpt from the *Handbook of Ministry* is because you have a sense that God now has His call on your life. A lot of different emotions go along with a call to full-time ministry: excitement, joy, and passion as well as disbelief, fear, and unworthiness. You may already be experiencing all of these emotions at one time or another.

What Is The Call To Ministry?

God calls every Christian to full-time ministry.

The Church of the Nazarene believes all Christians are called to minister. God's call to ministry is not limited to a few saintly Christians who are deeply committed to pray, sacrifice, and serve while others live "normal" lives in a secular society. Whatever vocation God calls you to - carpenter, doctor, farmer, teacher, missionary, or homemaker - becomes the arena for your ministry.

While not everyone will earn their living through full-time ministry, every Christian must choose a vocation and carry out ministry as God directs. Everything you do must be for His glory. God expects full-time Christian service from you.

God's call comes to people in different ways.

Biblical accounts of God's call vary greatly. It would be so much easier if God would speak His will in a clear, audible voice or send an engraved invitation. It would require less faith if He called us all in the same predictable way. Instead, He expects us to be sensitive and obedient to His direction as He leads us step by step.

God equips us and helps us fulfill His call.

God is the source of the gifts and graces that equip us to fulfill his call. Your call will take advantage of your strengths - an important indication of God's will for you. You may not be aware of those qualities and abilities before He calls you. The advice and help of other Christians will guide and affirm you as you seek to develop and to use your God-given potential for Him.

God calls some Christians to specific kinds of ministry.

Some Christians will be called to specific ministries, such as pastor, missionary, Christian education, or other ministries, in response and in obedience to the call of God. These callings carry with them such responsibility that the church provides special educational preparation for them. Approval to serve in these areas includes careful examination and nurture before endorsement is given, credentials are granted, and appointments are made.

God calls us through other Christians.

Fellow Christians have an important role in confirming or correcting your perception of God's call. Because everyone will not understand your response to God's call, you should prayerfully listen to fellow believers who encourage or question your pursuit of a particular ministry. God may be speaking through them.

How Do I Know For Sure?

Maybe the most important (and most difficult) part of responding to God's call is making sure you are, in fact, called! How can you know such a thing for certain?

There is no simple, one-two-three formula to help know for sure if you are specifically called to the ministry. No one can tell you that for certain. It is something you ultimately have to work out between you and God.

But at the same time, you need to know with certainty your call from God to full-time ministry is without a doubt the most important decision of your life. Many times in your ministry, the certainty of your call will be the only thing holding you steady in difficult times.

But you are also wondering about and trying to pray about another issue: if God is calling me into the ministry, to what kind of ministry is He calling me?

How To Pray About Your Call

You need to be aware there are at least two distinct kinds of prayers going on in your heart as you try to discern both the certainty and the clarity of your call.

First of all, you need to know whether you are called or not. Then, a different prayer should ask God for direction as to what specific kind of ministry He is calling you to. Just because God has not shown what kind of ministry you will do in the future, that should not cause you to doubt He has truly called you into ministry.

You should not be surprised to find your understanding growing as you learn more about God's call and your ministry. Some people have started out just helping out with the teens in their local church and ended up with a clear call to full-time youth ministry. Some students have entered college thinking they knew exactly what God was calling them to, but then discovered new ministry options and opportunities that caused uncertainty as to where they were going to serve. Others start out with a clear call to ministry but a fuzzy destination and finally find their place in ministry through a process of elimination.

Finding Your Place In Ministry

In God's big church there is room for many different kinds of people doing many different kinds of ministry. In the months and years ahead, you will learn more about yourself and the gifts and talents you have to offer in ministry.

The following descriptions are not exhaustive; God may be calling you to these or other types of ministry.

Pastoral Ministry: proclaiming the Word of God, teaching, counseling, and creating centers of compassion as an administrator, friend, guide, and co-laborer within a community of believers

Children and Youth Ministry: shaping tomorrow's world by helping children and teens make the right choices, in an era full of dissolving families and relaxed moral attitudes

Campus Ministry: guiding students from secular and denominational schools through the big decisions of life directly affecting their entire future

Compassionate Ministry: addressing some of society's most critical problems: hunger, homelessness, unemployment, at-risk children and youth, and AIDS, through Compassionate Ministry Centers, Good Samaritan Churches, and Nazarene Disaster Response

Chaplaincy: serving others through the role of chaplain in corporate businesses, the armed forces, jails, prisons, hospitals, and other institutions

Christian Counseling: providing competent guidance to those struggling with stress and instability to the point of complete physical, mental, and/or spiritual collapse

Christian Education: planning, organizing, and administering an effective local church education ministry; writing, planning, and organizing denominational education programs; teaching and administering at various colleges and seminaries around the world

Communications: creative minds and skilled hands transforming sophisticated hardware into meaningful tools for ministry and communicating the gospel locally and globally

Evangelism: spontaneous birthing of spiritual movements that extend the Kingdom of God; starting new churches as the most effective means of evangelism today; personally sharing the life-changing message of Christ with an unsaved friend

Missions: representing the Church of the Nazarene in world areas, in assignments ranging from medicine, education, and agriculture to pastoral ministry and administration.

If you don't feel clear about a ministry role, you're not alone. Many people are uncertain about the role God wants them to fulfill. Write a paragraph or two about the most appealing ministry roles and why they appeal to you. In every case commit yourself to God's guidance and the church's suggestions regarding the ministry role you should fulfill at various stages of your ministry journey.

Owning Your Call To Ministry

During the first few years of your ministry, you will be asked to describe your call to various representatives of the church. In the difficult times, your call will serve as an anchor point. To help establish your confidence in your calling, write a description of God's call to this point, including the date or period of time and the experience(s) that lead you to think, or at least suspect, that God is calling you to Christian ministry. What is your response to God's call? With whom have you discussed this? What was said?

Your Pastor - Your Mentor

Return to your Pastor for discussion and counsel.

Strengths & Gifts Survey

Christians earnestly seek to understand God's will for their lives. Young Christians especially often find it difficult to know God's direction for their vocation. The gifts and talents God has given us can be one good indication of God's will. This survey is designed to help you think about the ways God has equipped and used you.

For each of the following statements please circle the number at the left which best represents your reaction to the statement. As the headings indicate, you will circle "5" if the statement describes you very well, or "1" if the statement does not describe you well at all, or whichever other number best fits.

1. This statement does not describe me well at all.
2. This statement does not describe me well.
3. This statement more or less describes me.
4. This statement describes me well.
5. This statement describes me very well.

1 *In the first section, please think about times when you have been part of a group responsible for some task or activity. If you have not actually experienced something addressed in a statement, please answer as you think you would act or be in that situation.*

- 1 2 3 4 5 #1. I am able to help other people understand where we are going.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #2. I have joined school groups because they supported values I hold as a Christian.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #3. When I talk to groups, my message is usually full of hope.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #4. When I am in charge, I like to make the important decisions on my own.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #5. When I lead a group, I like to involve the group in making important decisions together.
- 1 2 3 4 & #6. I have trouble convincing group members to work together as a team.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #7. I like to talk to groups about good things that are possible in their future.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #8. When I choose leaders for a group, I am probably more comfortable with people who tell me what I want to hear.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #9. When I am responsible for a group, I want people around me with strong moral qualities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #10. When I choose leaders for a group, I want people who can really make a difference.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #11. I find ways to strengthen relationships with the people who work with me.

2 *Now please think about times when you have been responsible for some task or activity. How well does each of the following statements describe you'?*

- 1 2 3 4 5 #12. When I am trying to get something done, I often get distracted.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #13. I usually deal with interruptions quickly and return to my task.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #14. When I am responsible for doing something, I usually can focus on doing the things that really matter.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #15. When I am responsible for doing something, I find it difficult to eliminate distractions.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #16. When I am responsible for doing something, I can quickly eliminate most interruptions.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #17. I have trouble sticking with decisions about how to do things.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #18. I find it easy to set good goals.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #19. I am a good storyteller.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #20. I like to create celebrations.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #21. I have very little imagination for creating a good party.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #22. I can usually figure out how to get things done.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #23. When I am responsible for getting something done, I am pretty good at organizing the necessary equipment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #24. When I am responsible for getting something done, I am pretty good at planning.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #25. In worship situations, I am uncomfortable trying to lead people for whom I have responsibility.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #26. When I am responsible for a meeting, I have a great need to control things.

3 Now please think about your personal characteristics. How well do the following statements describe you?

- 1 2 3 4 5 #27. I find great satisfaction in helping other people come to know Christ.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #28. I have a driving need to be successful.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #29. I seem to concentrate better than most people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #30. I am often frustrated by a weak self-concept.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #31. I am often frustrated by my weaknesses.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #32. I know the areas in which I have special talents.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #33. I am comfortable with the fact that I am talented in some areas and not in others.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #34. I rarely win any awards.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #35. Looking back, I would say I usually do not have the willpower to accomplish great things.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #36. I am generally an optimistic person.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #37. I wish we could go back to the "good old days."
- 1 2 3 4 5 #38. I find satisfaction in organizing things.

4 Think now about your relationships with other people. How well do the following statements describe you?

- 1 2 3 4 5 #39. I have a need to do things better than anyone has done before.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #40. I seem to have a "sixth sense" that tells me when people need help.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #41. When I sense that someone is hurting, I find it easy to give them comfort.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #42. Even when I recognize that someone is in pain, I find it difficult to know how to help them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #43. People tell me they can see I really care about their pain.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #44. When I see someone who needs compassion, I usually try to help them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #45. I think I understand people because I really listen to them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #46. When I am with someone who is suffering, I suffer along with them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #47. I try to listen to people, but I am not very good at it.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #48. In Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, I would probably be like the priest who walked on by.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #49. In Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, I find it difficult to imagine how anyone could have gone by the man in need.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #50. I believe I must show others that I am worthy of their trust.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #51. I find it difficult to relate to new people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #52. Honestly, I would describe myself as a loner.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #53. I don't think you can help people much if they don't know and trust you.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #54. People who know me best know I am a shy person.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #55. I spend time getting to know people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #56. I am usually able to stay calm when I am under pressure.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #57. I am able to handle stressful relationships.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #58. I like the fact that people are so unique.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #59. I am sensitive to people who are under stress.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #60. I like helping people improve themselves.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #61. I often ask people, "How can I help you?"
- 1 2 3 4 5 #62. When I am listening to someone's description of a problem, I often interrupt them to make sure I really understand.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #63. When I am listening to someone's description of a problem, I often interrupt them to tell them what I think they should do.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #64. My interest in people depends on their response to me.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #65. I like people for who they are.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #66. I care most for those people who can do things I like.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #67. I find it difficult to show people that I care.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #68. I think it is important to show people that you really care about their needs.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #69. I like to help people feel good about themselves.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #70. I find ways to brag on people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #71. I really enjoy meeting new people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 #72. I am not very assertive.

- 1 2 3 4 5 #73. I usually have the courage to say what I believe even when mine isn't the popular view.
1 2 3 4 5 #74. I have trouble standing up for my convictions.
1 2 3 4 5 #75. When I am trying to convince someone about something, I am usually able to change my approach to fit the situation.
1 2 3 4 5 #76. I take strong stands on important issues.
1 2 3 4 5 #77. I enjoy the challenge of convincing someone to change their mind.
1 2 3 4 5 #78. It is important to me that people would see things my way.
1 2 3 4 5 #79. I need to be more tactful.
1 2 3 4 5 #80. I like to have strong, talented people around me.
1 2 3 4 5 #81. I know I need friends who will tell me the truth even when I don't like to hear it.
1 2 3 4 5 #82. I like to appear stronger than the people around me.

5 *Think now about your relationship with the church. How well do the following statements describe you?*

- 1 2 3 4 5 #83. I am a loyal member of the Church of the Nazarene (or my denomination).
1 2 3 4 5 #84. During the last year I have been very faithful in my church attendance.
1 2 3 4 5 #85. It is important to me that people can see evidence of the holy life in me.
1 2 3 4 5 #86. People tell me they are attracted to Christ because they see faith at work in my life.
1 2 3 4 5 #87. I think the Church of the Nazarene has an important mission.
1 2 3 4 5 #88. I am happy to be part of the Church of the Nazarene.
1 2 3 4 5 #89. I have a hard time living a Christian life.
1 2 3 4 5 #90. The people around me know what I believe.
1 2 3 4 5 #91. The people around me know my convictions.

6 *Finally, please think about your personal goals. How well do the following statements describe you?*

- 1 2 3 4 5 #92. Whatever the future holds, I think bringing Christ to others will be important for me.
1 2 3 4 5 #93. I like to set new records.
1 2 3 4 5 #94. I want to be recognized as a very successful person.
1 2 3 4 5 #95. I want to be the best in my field.
1 2 3 4 5 #96. I am very goal-oriented.
1 2 3 4 5 #97. I do not like to set goals.
1 2 3 4 5 #98. I like to take risks in order to reach worthy goals.
1 2 3 4 5 #99. It is important to invest in future goals.
1 2 3 4 5 #100. Sound financial policies are very important to the success of organizations.

We pray this exercise has helped you think about the ways God has equipped and used you. Return this to your Pastor for discussion.