

Accounting is a Calling, too!  
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Genesis 12:1-9 (NRSVue)

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot and all the possessions that they had gathered and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran, and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east, and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. 9 And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

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To be called...

To be called by God.

What exactly does it mean when we say, "I was called to \_\_\_," or "S/he was called to \_\_\_." Have any of you experienced "a call?" Whether it was for your occupation, your faith, a relationship, a hobby, anything about your life....would you say that you were called to it? If you wouldn't talk of it that way, why not?

What has to happen for us to deem an action or an event as "a call?" A call "by God?"

If you start Googling "a calling" or "to be called," you'll find that almost always, a call (at least in modern understanding) has to do with a plan by God for one's vocation.

We often use this phrase to infer that "It was meant by God that \_\_\_." (I be in ministry, he be an artist/write). We don't usually hear people say that they were called to be an accountant... why is that?

As a pastor, I'm often asked about "my call story or my calling." "Tell us about how you were called to ministry." When asked this, people anticipate a great story like that of Saul in the book of Acts;

- "I was struck blind and interrogated by God before realizing that God's call for me was to spread the gospel (instead of persecuting believers in Christ)."

Unfortunately, I guess, my "calling" wasn't that grand or exciting.

Is that what's expected when we speak of being called? For it to be "**from God,**" it must be grand? It has to be a cinematic moment with CGI-like visuals that are bigger than life!

Why CAN'T one be called to be an accountant?

Why MUST a call by God include thunderous voices and blinding light?

In Greek, the word for “call” is **keleo**. It was used as a verb to summon someone, as in “call the kids to supper,” or for naming, as with babies, “we will call her Emily.” Over the centuries, theologians and biblical scholars have determined that a calling, i.e. being called by God, in its truest essence, is when God calls, God is summoning people TO HIM. Regardless of **how** the call may manifest itself or to whatever task it might be, when we are called by God, it is because God wants you to go to Her. It’s a desire by God (the caller) to be in relationship with us (the called).

When God called Abram, God said, ““Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

This was a pretty big ask.

Remember that Abram was 75 years old at that time, Sarai was 65. God calls Abram to leave his home, his land, his family, his kindred, his country – everything. It's not the same if it were you or I being asked to leave our land and our family. We can be on the other side of the planet, and we can still remain in contact with our family. We can easily return and travel to see our family. Our land remains our land and we can control it and manage it from the other side of the planet, even if we never see it again. But that wasn't the case for Abram and Sarai. For them to go, meant truly giving up everything forever.

- How do you respond to a call like that?

And to where does God asks Abram to go? To a land that I will show you.

- Are we talking about a land that is a day’s walk from here or a month’s walk? Are we going north or south? Is it a cool place or warm? Mountainous or near the water? May I ask for a little more detail?
- Nope! God just says, “a land I will show you.”

Would you go? Remember, you’re 75 and your spouse is 65.

Would you say that that was a call from God and that you were going to obey and follow .... or might you try to explain it away as “a wild and crazy dream?”

***I know God says that if I go that She’ll make a great nation of me with lots of offspring and my name will be great. And did you hear about the power that comes with this? If someone curses me, they’ll be cursed! But if they bless me, they’ll be blessed! Crazy, right?!?! Should we do it? Should we go?***

It’s unlikely that Abram consulted Sarai, but I hope he did. Ultimately, they went. They heeded the call.

All of this happens within 4-5 verses: it *\*feels\** very quick, like Abram didn’t have a chance to think about God’s command and that may be true, but it leads us to believe that Abram was righteous and such a pinnacle, such an example of a great believer in God, that of course he respond in the affirmative. He didn’t hesitate, didn’t question, he didn’t NEED a chance to think about God’s command – he jumped right up and said, “all right, let’s go.”

Abram was a good man, but not a perfect man.

Abram responded, hearing God say, underneath it all, “Abram, come to me – I want to be closer to you. Do this.” At 75 years old, that’s amazing faith and courage – heck, it’s amazing at any age. Giving up EVERYTHING, with no perceivable safety net or guarantees, just a promise, because God has asked you to.

BUT... was Abram truly trusting of God? We’ll respond, “of course he was. He went, didn’t he?”

So why did Lot go with him, then?

If Abram was a pinnacle of faith as we like to see him and trusted God completely, why did Lot tag along? This is an interesting, but minor point in the story that doesn’t get explored as critically as it should – “and Lot went with him.”

Lot was Abram’s nephew. Lot could have stayed with his father, his siblings and his more immediately family, yet he goes with Abram – leaving behind his “everything,” also. Lot was trusting and obedient of his uncle (and likely his father also), but it suggests that by taking Lot with him, Abram was putting into place his own contingency plan, **just in case** God’s promise about the blessings of offspring, didn’t actually pan out.

Does this make Abram a bad person? Unfaithful? Less of an example for us – maybe... But God didn’t think so. I mean, why did God choose Abram in the first place? Was it because Abram was young and virile, able to traverse lands, have lots of kids and populate a future nation of people for God? WAS Abram righteous in the eyes of the Lord, having lived a spotless life that was pure? NO. Nothing indicates that Abram was special or even “worthy” of being called versus anyone else. From everything that we know, Abram wasn’t perfect and hadn’t **prepared** himself to be called by God for anything or any reason. God chose Abram simply because that’s what God wanted to do.

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As Christians, we recognize Jesus Christ as our Lord and teacher. In scripture Jesus called the disciples, just as God did.

Matt 9:9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And [Matthew] got up and followed him.

Mark 1:16-20 <sup>16</sup> As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” <sup>18</sup> And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup> As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Being called doesn’t require anything of us other than to listen and respond. The response can be immediate or it can take some time.

Those who answer God’s call embark on a new life or a new way of life. As Paul urged, we must seek to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called, with all humility... gentleness... patience..." (Eph 4:1-2). With God’s calling of Abram, with Jesus’ calling of the disciples, and with us - we choose to respond – to follow. Then our call manifests itself in our lives and the blessings can happen.

Our relationship with God, Jesus and Spirit informs everything we do, including how and what we do for work. We're not called to be perfect; we're called to follow and choose relationship.

We can continue to think of a calling or being called as only related to our vocations, but it's honestly too narrow of a definition or concept. Through Jesus' life we see that to be called by God is an elaborate and broad faith that permeates one's entire existence and has last effects for generations. When we believe that anything and everything that we say and/or do is "of God," and that it can bring us blessings or curses, we live, Godly. We speak, Godly. We drive, Godly; cook, Godly, clean, Godly, design, Godly. Godly becomes the adverb that describes everything we do.

Pastors can be called to their vocations. And the same is true for retail workers, I.T. managers and homemakers. It's possible to be called to accounting – just be a Godly accountant.

God is asking us to give up the land, the kindred, the country and everything. Give up everything that restricts you, that limits, restrains, and inhibits you from being in relationship with God. And instead of being rooted in that, heed the call and go! Go! Go to an unknown land. Take a risk journeying to a place without guarantees. Reject the idea of perfection. God is calling simply because God wants you to respond. God wants to be with you. That is a blessing. Will you answer?

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