

RETHINKING OUR CALL

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As Jeremiah (1.4-5) and Paul (Rom 1.1) were called to ministry, so we have been called. At the beginning of a new year and a new semester, we need to reflect on our call, so that we can better serve God. When I responded to God's call to ministry, I had three assumptions:

1. I had been called to *do* ministry—whether to preach, teach, lead, evangelize, or disciple. So I needed to be trained and equipped with the required skills and competencies.
2. I needed to find a good *position* in order to do ministry.
3. Most of my ministry would be *church-related*.

Many ministers and students hold these assumptions. They may be partially or mostly correct, but taken as complete truth, they lead to limited impact, frustration, and failure. A more accurate understanding would be:

1. Our doing must arise from our becoming.

For the first half of my ministry I ministered out of emotional unhealthiness and relational immaturity. What I do in ministry must arise from how God's Spirit is transforming me to be more like Jesus: Self-giving love means relational wholeness. Joy and peace mean emotional health. While developing needed competencies, we must also allow God's Spirit to produce his fruit in us, so that we can produce healthy fruit for him.

2. We may be called to position, but always to mission.

We identify a position of ministry with security and safety—salary, benefits, title, respect, resources, and volunteers. When one does not materialize, we question God, “Why didn't you provide for me?” Jesus and Paul never had positions as we know them, rather they had a mission. A position may not always be available to us, but as long as there are lost people, undisciplined believers, and needy individuals, we have opportunity for mission. We don't just need people filling positions. We need bold men and women to go forth in mission in the power of God's Spirit! Sometimes God calls us to position; always, he calls us to mission.

3. We are called to engage the world.

Jesus did not simply say, “Your job is to maintain the saints and try to attract the world to come to church.” Rather, he said, “Go into all the world...” We are called to engage people where they live and to meet their real needs. Nearly half of unchurched

young adults have a negative view of evangelical Christians. They perceive that we are inwardly focused instead of caring about the needs of their community and world. Our call is not simply to minister in churches. Our call is to engage the world and win them for Christ.