

“The Call”
Os Guinness
Notes by Dave Kraft

The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wants me to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die (3) We have too much to live with and too little to live for (4) I was in danger of being drawn into a religious ghetto (5) Recognizing who we aren't is the 1st step toward knowing who we are...God's call has become a sure beacon ahead of me and a blazing fire within me (6) Some have said that Da Vinci would have been wiser to concentrate on a few gifts rather than the many that comprised his genius (9) The thought of being condemned to “perpetual wondering” rather than finding your niche, your calling (12) Even if we can do what we want, the question remains: What do we want (22) When it comes to will power, will is common but power is rare (23) The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for Jesus (42) Somehow we human beings are never happier than when we are expressing the deepest gifts that are truly us (45)

Instead of “you are what you do” calling says, “Do what you are.” (46) Watch out for using Gift tests to employ discovered gifts in the church and diverting people from their calling in secular life (47) Life is lived forward, but understood backward (53) It is time to move from small, cozy formulations of faith to knowing what it is to be called by him as the deepest, most stirring, and most consuming passion of our lives...2nd only to the joy of knowing him has been the sorrow at the condition of those of us today who name ourselves his followers...what we need is to have the truths of the gospel be fresh, compelling, explosive and consequential (60)

The Puritans lived as if they had swallowed gyroscopes; we modern Christians live as if we have swallowed Gallup polls...Winston Churchill described General Charles Gordon (Chinese Gordon, Gordon of Khartoum) as “a man careless alike of the frowns of men or the smiles of women, of life or comfort, wealth or fame” Gordon wrote,

"The more one feels, in order to keep from shipwreck, the necessity of steering by the Polar Star, i.e. in a word leave to Go alone, and never pay attention to the favors or smiles of man; if He smiles on you, neither the smile or frown of men can affect you."

It could be said of General Charles Gordon, "I live before the Audience of One. Before others I have nothing to prove, nothing to gain, nothing to lose (76,77) John 5:41NLT "Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me." You can choose between a big name or a big person.

The celebrity is someone for whom character is nothing, coverage is all (83) God's call begins by singling us out and ends with sending us out..."one repays a teacher badly if one always remains a pupil only."-Nietzsche (84,85) We are responsible because we are response-able (92) Today we must make responsibility real in the teeth of empty modern bombast and at a time when accountability is down and alibis are up (93)

"If there is one thing worse than the modern weakening of major morals, it is the modern strengthening of minor morals." G.K. Chesterton (103) Seen on an American T-shirt, "Jesus, save me from your followers." (107) "I am so amazed that God has altered me that I can never despair of anybody." Oswald Chambers (114)

PRIDE AND ENVY

The closeness between calling and conceit is easy to see (118) Churchill remarked regarding a proud Sir Stafford Crips, a Calvinist whose sense of the providence of God had seeped across into his own sense of self-importance, "There but for the grace of God, goes God."...One critic wrote of Milton, "Was it that Milton believed in God or that Milton believed in Milton (and believed that God did too)."(119) Beware of religious empire building (120) We need to wean ourselves from human audiences and live before the Audience of One (122) Do we feel the wonder of being called? It is all a gift and all of grace (123)

Envy is the one vice that its perpetrators never enjoy and rarely confess (129) Envy is "sorrow at another's good."-Thomas Aquinas...Dorothy Sayers notes that, "envy begins by asking why should I not enjoy what others enjoy and ends by asking, why should others enjoy what I may not?" ...envy corrupts calling by introducing the element of competition. Envy by its very nature is comparative and competitive. "Pride is essentially competitive...we say people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others." CS Lewis (130,131) We are always most vulnerable to envying those closest to our own gifts and callings (132)

If ever we are tempted to look around, compare notes, and use the progress of others to judge the success of our own calling, we will hear what Peter heard, "What is that to you? Follow me" Do you feel called into question by their achievements? Do you feel that their success is more than they deserve and yours somehow less? (133)

MATERIALISM

The myth that the making of money matters more than the meaning of money (135) Throughout history the most universal acknowledged problem with money is that its pursuit is insatiable...insatiability touches two areas-getting what we do not have and clutching on to what we do. Insatiability is commonly linked to being consumed (136, 137) We keep upping the ante. The horizon recedes as we approach...as Sam Walton wife said, "Sam, We're making a living, why go out, why expand so much more? After the 17th store, I realized there wasn't going to be any stopping it." (138) A Texas oil billionaire's colleague commented of him, "No matter how much money he had, he was always poor in his own mind." (139)

Mammon (Aramaic for wealthy). Either we serve God and use money, or we serve money and use God (140) there is no rest for anyone who god is anyone but God...we need a different style of operating that directly counters the market mentality. We do what we do in life because we are called to it rather than because we get paid for it. There are two economies, "a calling economy" as well as a "commercial economy." (141)

LAZINESS AND DILIGENCE

Calling is the best antidote to the deadly sin of sloth (146) "Work is not always required of a man. There is such a thing as sacred idleness, the cultivation of which is now fearfully neglected"-George McDonald...Sloth is inner despair at the worthwhileness of the worthwhile that finally slumps into an attitude of, who cares...What causes this "sloth-laziness?" Loss of faith in God, a lazy, I don't care culture, our own experience.

"The sin which believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for."-Dorothy Sayers...nothing is more ignominious than failing at something that was not worth doing in the 1st place. Sadly, studies show, a few people enjoy neither their work nor their personal life; more enjoy their work, but not their personal life and even less say they enjoy both (150)

Success may then flatter us on the outside as "significance" eludes us from the inside. The problem lies in work that is directed solely by career as opposed to work that is inspired by gifts and calling. Consideration of calling always has to precede considerations of career. Personally summoned by the Creator of the universe, we are given a meaning in what we do that flames over every second and inch of our lives. Challenged, inspired, rebuked, and encouraged by God's call, we cannot for a moment settle down to the comfortable, the mediocre, the banal, and the boring. The call is always to the higher, the deeper, and the further (151)

TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Secularization is simply restricting our ways of thinking to the world of the five senses (156) In short, the modern world quite literally "manages" without God. Whatever they say they believe, they show in practice that they function without practical recourse to the supernatural (157)

Spirituality for the follower of Christ is a matter of a different world, with a different reality, different energies, different possibilities, and different prospects. Unseen, spiritual reality is not unreal (158)

We see in the life of Jesus a rhythm of engagement and withdrawal, work and rest, dispensing and recharging, crowds and solitude, in the midst of one of the shortest, busiest public lives ever lived. The NT knows no monasteries or monks, only spiritually disciplined disciples in a demanding, everyday world. Solitude is vital for training us to stand against the excesses of our culture (159) Solitude becomes not so much a place as a state of heart. We worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship (160) Calling equalizes even the distinctions between clergy and laypeople. It is a matter of "everyone, everywhere, and in everything" living life in response to God's summons (163)

PRIVATIZATION-The process by which modernization produces a cleavage between the public and private spheres of life and reinforces the private sphere as the special arena for individual freedom, fulfillment-and faith (165) But in much of the normal working world, personal convictions (expressions of faith) along with hats and coats, are to be left at the door. An effort to make faith privately engaging, but socially irrelevant. (164,165)

POLITICIZATION- Making the expression and living of one's faith identical to the dogmas of a certain political party or state. The Christian faith lost in the political party or government. Christians are Republicans, or reformed party or greenpeace, etc. We will always be in tension with any political group at some point in their belief system. The death of the effectiveness of the church was when it became one with the Roman government

PILLARIZATION (ISOLATION) -The formation of Christian Ghettos, withdrawing from the world to do our thing

PLURALIZATION-The multiplying of endless choices, all of which are valid and equal none of which are to be criticized, judged or deemed "wrong." Choice is no longer just a state of mind. Choice has become a value, a priority, a right.

Privatization is a denial of the totality of faith, politicization is a denial of the tension of faith and Pillarization is a denial of the transforming power of faith. We need to be in the business of unfreezing God's frozen people and putting the spiritually unemployed back to work (169,170)

FOCUS

Capitan-General Ferdinand Magellan was one of the strongest-willed and most single minded humans who has ever lived (172) The call of Jesus provides the priorities and perspectives that are essential for a focused life in an overload age(174)

In the modern world there are simply too many choices, too many people to relate to, too much to do too much to see, too much to read, too much to catch up with and follow, too much to buy(176) Following Christ is not our initiative, merely our response. Once we have been called, we literally "have no choice." Is there a story line to our lives (177) "In accomplishing anything definite a man renounces everything else."-Harvard Philosopher George Santayana (178) But a sense of calling helps because it provides the bull's eye at the center of the widening concentric circles that are life's possibilities. Some focus on what Jesus didn't do: write a book, found a college, start a revolution (179) Someone described "like a racehorse harnessed to a cart "-calling and job not a good match; job responsibilities holding me back from what I was created and meant to be and do?(180) In 1941 T.S. Elliot wrote: "Can a lifetime represent a single motive?"

VISIONARIES AND DREAMERS WITH A BIAS FOR ACTION

David Lean has been described as "the poet of the far horizon" (182) "All men dream; but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find it was vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams

with open eyes, to make it possible. This I did."-T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Dreamers of the day respond to the gap between vision and reality by closing it (185) "Here lies one whose soul sometimes burned with great longings. To whom sometimes the curtain of the infinite was opened just a little, but who lacked the guts to make any use of it" from the early writings of Malcolm Muggeridge just after his days at Cambridge describing himself (186)

It is easy to abuse vision and make it serve as chaplain to our conceits or bellhop to our desires (187) Having a healthy anger at what is wrong and an aim for what is better, "Find me men with fire in their hearts and wings on their feet"- (passion and vision coupled with a bias for action). Morris West, *The shoes of the Fisherman* (188) Watch out, faith in God can become faith in faith for our own interest (190) "Every man is made to reach out beyond his grasp" Oswald Chambers. Does the here and now, the present and the accepted, form a prison cell for your thinking, or are you reaching for more than you have grasped (192,193)

WORKING FOR GOD NOT FOR MONEY

The concept of be reinvigorated for life by the sight of work well done (196) It was not what he was doing, but for whom he was doing it, that made the difference. Dorothy Sayers wrote in *Creed or Chaos*, that the Christian view directly opposes the modern tendency to identify work with gainful employment, and so to work to make money to do something else (199) . The fallacy is that work is not the expression of man's creative energy in the service of society, but only something he does in order to obtain money and leisure. For the called, work should be as close as possible to the fulfillment of our natures and the expression of our God-given creativeness (200) Jesus' idea for us is ordinary things when the footlights are switched off. We have to be exceptional in the ordinary things - Chambers (201, 202) "And only the Master shall praise us, and only the master shall blame; And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame; But each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star, Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They are? --Rudyard Kipling (203)

LET YOUR THINKS BE THANKS

“Organized forgetting. Ingratitude and forgetfulness are ultimately moral rather than mental-Milan Kundera (206) A modern world with no need of God produces modern people with no sense of gratitude. The modern world has transformed a sense of dependency into a sense of autonomy. We have gone from there is no God to there is no need of God, and transformed a sense of debt into a sense of rights and entitlement. (207)

Every thing of God and good in our lives without a single exception is all of Grace (209) “You have given so much to me. Give me one thing more-A grateful heart- George Herbert a 17th century Anglican poet ”

“The chief idea of my life is the practice of taking things with gratitude and not taking things for granted” G.K. Chesterton (211) “Let your last thinks be all thanks”-W.H. Auden. Nothing taken for granted; everything received with gratitude; everything passed on with grace (212)

BEING A SOLD OUT FOOL FOR JESUS

One biographer of Francis of Assisi wrote. “He won the greatest victory a man can win-the victory over oneself.” (214) The concept of “holy folly.” (217) There are three kinds of Martyrdom-Red-by blood, Green-by the exercise of the spiritual disciplines and White-by abandoning everything for the love of God. Discipleship therefore means a “white funeral”, the funeral of our own independence (218) In making a crucial decision where much was at stake for him and his soldiers, Julius Caesar said, “To refrain will bring me misfortune; but to move ahead will bring misfortune to all men.” (225) a statesman’s main task was “to listen until he hears the rustle of God’s robe, then leap up and grasp the hem of the garment.”-Count von Bismark, the creator of modern Germany (228)

We may retire from our jobs, but there is no retiring from our individual callings. He who thinks that he has finished is finished. Those who think they have arrived have lost their way. We need to be careful of confusing the termination of our occupations with the termination of our vocation-our calling (242)

"Why retire, there's nothing to be said for retiring from anything."--
Churchill (243) We may retire from our jobs, but never from our calling (244)