

Determining the Call of God for Our Lives

By Dr. David A. DeWitt

- *What does it mean to be “called”?*
- *What are some things to avoid in determining a walk worthy of our calling?*
- *How can we walk worthy of our calling?*

Defining a Call of God

The Apostle Paul wrote ... *whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified* (Romans 8:29-30). So the call of God is the predetermination of our salvation.

The call of God deals with our salvation, not our service

Os Guinness put it this way, “There is not a single instance in the New Testament of God’s special call to anyone into a paid occupation or into the role of a religious professional” (“The Call,” p. 52).

The only call of God to a position of service in the New Testament was to the original apostles (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1). The apostles were given unique miraculous power by the Holy Spirit to bring the gospel to the world to start the church (Matthew 16:19; Acts 1:8; 5:1-11; Romans 15:15-19). But after Paul told the Corinthians he was called to be an apostle, he wrote, *to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours* (1 Corinthians 1:2). He went on to say, *God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord* (1:9). So Paul was called to be an apostle, but the church was called to a position of fellowship with Christ.

The exhortation Paul gave the church for service was not to look for a “call” of God but to pursue a **worthy walk** with God. He said, *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called* (Ephesians 4:1).

So the question we should be asking is not, “What is our calling?” but “How can we walk worthy of our calling?”

How Not to Determine the Worthy Walk of God

There are two prominent **misconceptions** about determining the call of God, namely, that it is done **mystically** or **circumstantially**.

[Since we have learned that we should be determining not our “call” but how to **walk worthy** of that call, we shall put it in those terms.]

1. A worthy walk should not be determined by mysticism.

Many have claimed a mystical call of God via dreams, voices, visions, angelic encounters, magic writing, etc. None of these are likely methods. The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles did have a supernatural call of God. That’s what the Bible is, a record of the supernatural revelation of God. You and I are not patriarchs, prophets, or apostles, who are called to add to the Bible (Revelation 22:18).

Christian leadership throughout history consisted of people like Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Spurgeon, Moody, C. S. Lewis (and the list could go on and on). These people clearly walked worthy of their calling. Yet they did not

focus on mystical voices, dreams, visions, etc. And doesn't it seem a bit odd that those who claim such things are usually a bit odd?

2. A worthy walk should not be determined circumstantially.

There is no biblical directive for using circumstances to determine God's call. [See the *Concepts'* Short Topic "Determining God's Will for Your Life."] Circumstantial determination of the call of God (to be, say, a missionary, a pastor, a teacher, etc.) will always be done apart from the Bible. Obviously, the Bible does not give me any personal instructions about my occupation. When I look to circumstantial coincidences, there is no way to distinguish leading as a call of God or Satan or wishful thinking, for that matter.

How to Walk in a Manner Worthy of the Call of God

Here are 12 ideas:

1. A worthy walk will always be in a direction which conforms us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

For example, a worthy walk will never include sex outside of marriage, divorce, cheating on your taxes, being a woman elder or homosexuality.

2. A worthy walk will always be in the direction of building the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

For example, a worthy walk will not build something which is based upon pride.

3. A worthy walk is framed by our physical situation (1 Samuel 2:6-8).

That includes things like our race, parental background, physical size, strength, age, culture, and wealth. For example, my worthy walk will not include being an Olympic athlete. Walking worthy for me requires physical exercise but not athletic competition.

4. A worthy walk is blooming where we are planted (1 Corinthians 8:20, 24).

Not that we will always stay where we currently live, but our walk begins in our own Jerusalem, then extends to our Judea, Samaria, and remotest part of our world (Acts 1:8).

5. A worthy walk is tuned to our personality (Daniel 1:3-4).

That means our intellect, emotions, and will. My worthy walk will not be as a salesman, a surgeon, or an actor. Your worthy walk might be those occupations, but they don't fit my personality. Personalities can be developed, but they also have real limits. We are defined, in part, by our limitations.

6. A worthy walk considers our talents (Exodus 36:1-2).

We are also defined by our assets. We all have certain natural abilities we were born with. Those are usually determined by (a) what comes easiest to us and (b) what motivates us. For example, I am a teacher, not a musician.

7. A worthy walk considers our spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8).

All believers also have spiritual abilities we receive at our spiritual rebirth. These are not always obvious to a new believer and cannot be located with some personality test. These become evident as we walk worthy of our call to salvation (Ephesians 4:1; Romans 12:1-2).

8. A worthy walk includes our Godly desires (1 Corinthians 9:23).

Don't overlook the crucial question, "What do you **want** to do?" Even the apostles were men who did what they wanted to do (John 21:15-17; Acts 15:35-37; 16:3).

9. A worthy walk is outlined by our opportunities (Genesis 41:39-44; 50:20).

God gave each of us certain life situations, not available to others. For example, I was invited to teach the Bible in Eastern Europe and Russia beginning in 1983. I could have never created those opportunities.

10. A worthy walk is expanded by our convictions (Nehemiah 1:4-11).

This develops our walk beyond "blooming where we are planted." This takes us from our personal Jerusalem to the remotest parts of our earth. As we observe the state of the church around us, we feel convicted to address certain issues. For example, in 1981, I was convicted of the need to disciple men.

11. A worthy walk is sensitive to what is going on in our own generation (Acts 13:36).

Each generation is to focus on reaching its own. We can learn from the past. When we die, we hand off the baton to the next generation. But neither of those are our assignment. We are called to be used of Christ as He builds His church now.

12. A worthy walk looks for opportunities to serve God (Isaiah 6:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8; 3 John 5-6).

We should not be waiting around for God to call us into service. We should look for ways to serve God in our present roles and life situations.

Questions and Answers

Q: *What does it mean to be “called”?*

A: All believers are called of God. The call of God is our salvation in Christ. The question is, “How can I walk worthy of that calling?”

Q: *What are some things to avoid in determining a walk worthy of our calling?*

A: Avoid (1) mysticism--looking to visions and voices and (2) circumstances-- looking for coincidences that we decide are the voice of God.

Q: *How can we walk worthy of our calling?*

A: Assessing realistically where God has planted us, who we are, and how we can best use that for His kingdom and His glory.