

THE SHEPHERD'S CALL

I. THE NEED FOR A CALL

1. What is *personal* ministry? (John 20:21-23; 1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 5:16; Mark 16:15)

John 20:21-23 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Personal ministry is the ministry that God calls each Christian to do as one of His chosen people. This is a ministry that we conduct in our homes, in our workplaces, on the soccer fields, etc. It is a ministry of sharing our faith, Christian counseling, forgiving our children, letting our light shine, etc.

2. What is the *public* ministry? (Philippians 2:19-23; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7)

Philippians 2:19-23 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.²⁰ I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.²¹ For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.²² But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

The public ministry is a pastor or teacher or missionary who serves the needs of others. The teacher's public ministry may be to teach God's Word in the classroom, along with all the other subjects. The missionary's public ministry is to share God's Word in places that we cannot go. The pastor's public ministry is to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments for a congregation. (Also talk about how members may baptize their infant in the hospital in an emergency or visit our shut-in members for a devotion. Those are fine personal ministries, but the pastor has been called by the congregation to oversee and administer the Means of Grace.)

3. What are some forms of the public ministry?

Pastor, teacher, principal, dean, missionary, staff minister, chaplain, etc.

4. While every Christian has the call to proclaim Christ to the world, how does a Christian receive a call into the public ministry? (1 Corinthians 14:40; Romans 10:15)

1 Corinthians 14:40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Romans 10:15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

A congregation provides a list of needs for a pastor to the District President. The DP then creates a call list of 4-6 candidates. The congregation votes to call one of those men on the call list to serve as their pastor. Also, tell the story of first call to Radcliff, KY. Then call to Epiphany.

5. Should a pastor preach, teach, or administer the sacraments if he does not have the call to do so? Our Lutheran Confessions assert: "Our churches teach that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called." (A.C. XIV)

The pastor should not preach, teach, or administer the sacraments without a divine call from a church. We keep everything in a fitting and orderly manner.

Martin Luther states emphatically: "I dare not preach without a call. I must not go to Leipzig or to Magdeburg for the purpose of preaching there, for I have neither the call nor the office to take me to those places. Yes, even if I heard that nothing but heresy was rampant in the pulpit at Leipzig, I would have to let it go on." By saying this, was Luther approving of allowing false preaching to continue?

No. But, he was saying that he has not been called by the saints in Leipzig to fix their doctrine. He was called to serve where God had placed him.

6. How were the prophets and apostles called?

The prophets and apostles received a direct call from the Lord.

7. According to 1 Timothy 3:1, can a person preach if he feels he has a so-called "inner call" to do so?

1 Timothy 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

It is a noble task for someone to wish to serve as a pastor. However, in order to have a correct understanding of the doctrines of God's Word, to learn how to rightly divide Law and Gospel, and to learn how to translate the Scriptures from the original languages, he should receive training. After that training, he can then receive a divine call from a group of Christians.

8. If the Lord doesn't call Christians into the public ministry through an immediate inner call or through a direct assignment from Him, how, then, does the Lord call public ministers today? (Acts 6:1-7; Titus 1:5)

Acts 6:1-7 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables."³ Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

The Lord calls public ministers today through a calling body – most likely a congregation or synod.

9. Is a call through the church less divine since the call did not come directly from the Lord? (Matthew 18:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:28)

Matthew 18:19-20 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."²⁰ For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Ephesians 4:11-13 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may

be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

It is not a lesser call. It is still a divine call through the church of God. Where two or three are gathered together in a voters meeting, there they can make a divine call.

II. THE CHURCH THAT CALLS

1. Who has the right to extend a call for the public ministry?

In our synod, a rightly called voters meeting is allowed to extend a call. The voters meeting must be announced two Sundays prior to the meeting. (Talk about how Epiphany used to call the WLS Lower School teachers and First Evan called the Middle School teachers. This felt like two separate schools. With the Joint Operating Agreement, both churches meet for a Joint Voters Meeting. We jointly call a teacher through the IPSC.)

2. How is a particular person chosen to receive a divine call by a congregation?

Explain the call process: The congregation creates a list of what they are looking for in a pastor. (Read St. Peter's list.) They give those needs to the District President. He creates a list of 4-6 names. The voters look over those names, discuss them, and vote on them.

3. What is the difference between a *contract* and a *call*? (1 Peter 5:1-4)

1 Peter 5:1-4 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

The pastor is not hired by the congregation. He has received a divine call. They can't get tired of him and look for someone better. The pastor is there until he retires, takes another call, or dies in the ministry. It is a commitment to work together by both pastor and members.

I've had members tell me that they are afraid to talk to me about their sins or come to see me for counseling. They are afraid that I'll think less of them. I gently, but firmly, tell them that I am not called to be their friend. I am called to be their pastor.

The pastor is often seen as the leader of the church – the shepherd. But he is still the under-shepherd of the Good Shepherd. He is also serving at the will of the sheep.

4. Usually a *permanent* call is extended for people into the public ministry. However, there are examples in our Synod where a *temporary* call is needed. Can you think of some examples?

I have a permanent call. Pastor Peters has a temporary call to serve at Epiphany. It is set up that if we want to terminate the call for any reason – finances, calling a full-time pastor, etc. - or if he wants to terminate it because he has a full-time job or receives a permanent call into the public ministry. Other examples?

5. What is the difference between the office seeking out the man and the man seeking out the office?

This is very different from the business world. My sister, as a Division I basketball coach might look for a better coaching job. She can seek out a job. In the ministry, we don't do that. Instead, the job – the call – seeks out the

man. I did not seek out a call to Weyauwega. It sought me out. Also, it isn't a promotion to go to a bigger church. It is just different ministry.

III. ACCEPTING OR DECLINING A CALL

1. Who has the final decision on whether he should accept or decline a call?

The pastor decides.

2. Who will the pastor consult when considering a call?

The pastor will consult his spouse, his children, his congregation, other called workers, the other congregation to which he is called. He will consult the Lord as he examines his present and possible future ministry.

3. Upon what will the pastor base his decision of whether he should accept or decline a call?

He will base his decision on where he best feels his gifts can serve the Lord's kingdom.

Small group: What kinds of things might the pastor consider while he is holding the call?

He will consider salary, location, parsonage, selling/buying a home, evangelism ministry vs. maintenance ministry, mood of the congregation, problems in a congregation, school for his children, other service to the Lord, family, soccer, needs of congregations around him, etc.

4. (What does the pastoral call to St. Peter in Weyauwega entail? What do you feel needs to be done at Epiphany and WLS in Racine?) What are some benefits to receiving a call? How might ministry at a place be different after a call has been returned?

IV. DELIBERATING A DIVINE CALL:

The late district president, Ray Wiechmann, said there are four reasons for God the Holy Spirit in sending you a call:

- So the pastor/teacher can be affirmed in the fact that God the Holy Spirit has truly called him into the public ministry. You now hold two calls.
- So the pastor/teacher can take the time to personally evaluate his gift and skill sets and how God is using him in his present ministry. This allows the pastor/teacher to compare how his gifts and skills are being used in his present calling and then consider whether the new call in regard to how his gifts and skills can be used there. He will also look whether all of his gifts and skills are being used at his present call and whether the gifts and skills not being used presently would be used at his new calling. Would the new call stretch him more than his present call? Are there gifts and skills and passions of his that will not be used at his new calling?
- So the congregation can evaluate the pastor/teacher, his gifts and his skills, and how they are being used at his present call. They will need to ask themselves about whether a pastor with different gifts and skills are needed at this time. This is not a time to talk about what will happen to them during a vacancy or how much they like the pastor and his family and would hate to see them leave. It is good that they feel that way about their pastor but they do need to have a kingdom perspective at this time.
- So that the Holy Spirit may use this second call to move you to a new field of labor. A kingdom perspective is still important for the pastor/teacher as well.

SOME THOUGHTS ON DELIBERATING DIVINE CALLS

- Consider not how the place you are now can get along without you. That is the Holy Spirit's business.
- Consider not how the place to which you have been called can possibly survive or thrive unless you come. If you do not come, the Holy Spirit will take care of them, too.
- When you have a call, think as a steward. How can your talents best serve the Lord at the present time? Think kingdom, not congregation. Do not consider your professional future; the future is also the Lord's. Think only of how your talents can best be applied to the Lord's work today.
- It is not necessarily selfish or unspiritual to decide on the basis of what you would most like to do. What you enjoy has a big impact on good stewardship of your talents. You will likely apply yourself most and best when you are doing what you enjoy.
- And, of course, stewardship involves using all of God's gifts wisely. Don't forget, when considering a call, that your wife, your family, your health, and your salary are gifts of God, too.
- Keep in mind this is not a right/wrong decision, as in one would be God's will, one would not be. It is a win/win – either you have the privilege of serving God in place A or the same privilege in Place B. You cannot lose with either decision.
- There is a lot to be said for the advice of actually writing and printing a decision letter, putting it in the envelope, but not announcing or sending it for a day or so to be sure you can sleep soundly with the decision.