

Calling



As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew
sitting at the tax collector's table.

"Follow Me," He told him,
and Matthew got up and followed Him.

Matthew 9:9

November

Calling

Bible Boot Camp; What's your name? Excuses; Callings and Careers

Scripture-based exploration

- ☼ *Blue Book* chapters: Calling, Seek, Chosen by God, Direction
- ☼ Bible Boot Camp (see Week One)

Non-Scripture readings

- The Echo Within*, Robert Benson
- Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer
- To Be Told: Know Your Story, Shape Your Future*, Dan Allendar
- Becoming* (personal or small group study guide), Jim Branch
- Woman Overboard*, Jo Kadlecek

Online

TheBibleProject.com. Don't skip this one — it's phenomenal. See how the calling and careers of several millennial artists come together to bring the Kingdom of God into the field of animation.

<https://herviewfromhome.com/i-cant-be-everyones-chick-fil-a-sauce/>

Artwork for the creatives

Through your medium of artwork, convey the idea of *calling*, of understanding who you are and what you're supposed to do. Perhaps it would be an intimate scene between you and God.

Take one of the Scriptures in Bible Boot Camp and illustrate the essence of *calling* in it.

Movies

- The Pursuit of Happiness*
- Babette's Feast*
- Hoosiers*
- Groundhog Day*

Music

- Brave* - Nicole Nordeman
- O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing* - Ben Haake (good, modern version)
- A Voice Calling* - Bethany Dillion
- There's a Stirring* - Caedman's Call
- Who am I?* - Watermark

Week One: Bible Boot Camp (Suzanne)

There are many aspects to the concept of Biblical *calling*: a call to the **heart of God** that is like a lover's wooing; a call to **repentance** that is like a life-giving piercing; a call to **leadership** that is like a captain's order; and a call to **choice** that is like determined stepping onto solid ground.

So you will have a firm foundation for this month's topic, let's look at these aspects and focus on the Scriptures this week.

To the left is a passage for you to peruse. Read it not as a lawyer, but as a lover. Read it to experience God's voice and presence, not just to analyze or categorize or critique it. Take it personally, explore it, and apply it.

Scripture	Gist	Calling	Your Thoughts
Genesis 12:1-9 Abraham		Leadership: God called A & fam to leave; blessing	
Exodus 3,4:1-17 Moses	God calls Mo to deliver His people; Mo gives excuses; God will be with him and help him		
Joshua 24:15 Joshua to Israel			
Judges 6: Gideon		Leadership: God calls Gideon to deliver Israel	
1 Kings 18 Elijah to Israel			
Isaiah 6:1-10 Isaiah			
Isaiah 45:22 _____		Choice: _____ _____	
Jeremiah 1:4-10 Jeremiah			
Jeremiah 7:13 Israel/us			
Ezekiel 33:10,11 Israel/us			
John 7:37-39 _____		Heart of God: _____ _____	
Mark 10:17-31 Jesus to the rich young ruler			
_____ Jesus to us	Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.	Wooing	
Matthew 3:7,8 John the Baptist			
Saul/Paul Acts 9			

Scripture	Gist	Calling	Your Thoughts
2 Cor 5:16-21 All people			I am His ambassador, reconciliation=my hope

Through these Scriptures, what did you learn about *calling*?

With which Scripture do you most identify?

My prayer for you is that:

God will **pierce** your heart as a gifted surgeon pierces the skin of one who is suffering and sick;
that you will **choose** Him, first and best, dearest and greatest, with open arms;

God will **woo** you as the Creator of your heart and Lover of your soul;
that you will **lead** others to His great love.

Week Two: What's in a Name? What are You Called? (Summers)

What's your name? Seems like an easy question, right? We can ask any preschooler and get an answer. But if we dare linger with this question, we will see that there is depth. Our name conveys meaning, identity. What is my name? Who am I, really? How do I define myself? What does God call me?

When we take a look at Jesus right before he first stepped into public ministry, at the moment of his baptism, we see God declare Jesus's name: "As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'" (Mark 1:10-11). God named Jesus his Beloved, One who Pleases God. If we are in Christ, this becomes our God-given name: we are God's beloved, his daughters with whom he is well pleased. Can we listen and hear it? That voice that speaks from above and from within that whispers softly, *you are my beloved, with you I am well pleased*.

Henri Nouwen writes, "Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: 'I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted you together in your mother's womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child'" (*Life of the Beloved*).

Every time we listen with attuned ears to the voice that calls us our true name, the Beloved, we discover a desire within us to hear that voice longer, more deeply, more intimately. "It is like discovering a well in the desert. Once you have touched wet ground, you want to dig deeper" (Nouwen).

God is in the business of giving us new names, names that determine our identity, who we are in Him. In Isaiah 62 we see Isaiah prophesying that Israel, God's people, will be given a new name. "The nations will see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be called Forsaken, and your land shall no more be called Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her... for the Lord delights in you." (Isaiah 6:2-4). Here we see God's people, who felt forsaken, unchosen, unworthy, get a new name -- My Delight Is in Her. God undoes the old names -- Forsaken, Desolate -- the names out of which the Israelites had lived. He gives them a new name, a new calling, a new identity. God alone defines the destiny of his people.

Like Israel, we need to be reminded of our true names. Who we really are, who we were created to be. "Most of us work our entire lives to find an answer to that question -- to try and make a name for ourselves. The problem is that any name we make for ourselves can never be our true name. Because our true identity can never be achieved, it can only be bestowed. And it can only be bestowed by the One who made us" (Jim Branch, *Being With Jesus*).

Do you ask the One who created you to speak to you, to remind you of who you are? Whose you are? What a blessing that we can lean in and hear the voice of God whispering our name. His voice is the quiet one, the still small voice. The one that is tender and loving.

The problem is, there are other voices, ones that are loud and destructive and convincing. It's challenging to hear God's loving whisper in a world filled with voices that shout: "You are no good. Worthless. Ugly. Nobody. Not Enough." The lies from the Liar that calls us all sorts of false names: "Unworthy. Unlovable. Alone. Shameful." These names, spoken furtively by these other voices, can be convincing. What's more, we then create a story about ourselves using these false names. "We all tend to live out of the name we most believe to be true about us" (Jim Branch). What a tragedy that we end up living from this false identity.

Ask God to show you the name that you tend to live out of, the name that is not true. Ask him to reveal to you the ways you listen to the Accuser and live out of his false name for you. Lean into the Lord, the God of freedom and peace and truth, the one who made you, and ask him to whisper your true name to you, the name he calls you. His beloved, his daughter, with whom he is well pleased.

Week Three: Excuses (Rebekah)

Excuses. We all have them. We have some in our back pocket, readily available for when a situation warrants. I have to work, I have to get the kids, I'm so busy, I'm not qualified, I'm tired, I'm hungry, everything is piling up, I'm so busy, I'm having a date night with my husband/boyfriend, "she" would be better at this than me, I have to clean the house, make dinner, SO busy, get new furniture, get a degree, learn more, I'm so busy (just to name a few). Some of these are legitimate events that need to happen. Some are our excuses to get out of new or different or hard situations. And the problem is, we don't use them only with one another. But we use them with ourselves and with God.

I don't like that I have excuses. I don't like that I use them. But let's be honest, I do. I have excuses for why I stay in bed until THE last possible moment, why I don't go for a training run, why I don't set aside time with the Lord, why all I will eat in a day is coffee and chocolate, why I allow other things to crowd out my time with the Lord, why I haven't returned a phone call or email, why I get annoyed with the driver who doesn't use their blinker and a completely different excuse for why I don't use mine (oh and mine is legitimate, while theirs is not - and excuses for why this is!). What is with us? What is with me? Why do we do this? Does it have to do with trust? Or rather a lack of trust and faith in the Lord's care for me? Are my excuses my attempts to say to the Lord, thanks for the suggestion, but I have a better idea? I know better. Are my excuses ways in which I am asking the Lord to give me His throne so that I can sit upon it? Are they part and parcel of my underlying desire to be worshiped and in control? Do I think, in my inner being, that I know more and better than that Lord? Oh goodness, YES! At my core, I wonder if God is good and has good things for me. Can He be trusted? What is He hiding from me? I know better than Him. I am more trustworthy than He is.

When I have these realizations of how I want God's place, I panic a bit, at first. Then I calm down and I open my Bible. I go looking for ways to remind myself that the Lord is trustworthy. That He cares for His Beloved (which is me and you). That from the beginning He has had the whole world in His hands (just like the song says) and that no matter what humanity has done, thought or experienced, we have never been and never will be outside of His hands, His care. Have you noticed, from the beginning, we human beings have had excuses for our actions, and lack of action. Let's look at a few examples throughout Scripture:

Genesis 3 - After the man and woman ate some of the fruit from the tree of good and evil, God was walking in the garden. Notice in verse 8 that the man and woman hide themselves from God. Then God calls out to them and the excuses begin - I was afraid because I'm naked, so I hid from You. Wow. Lots of excuses right there.

And then more excuses follow; the woman gave me the fruit, the serpent deceived me. Can't you just hear the man and the woman shouting, "It's not my fault! If you only knew the whole story! There's a really, really, really good explanation for what has happened. And it's not my fault! It's actually yours, God." Excuses for not living the life God created for them. Excuses for not trusting the goodness of God.

Exodus 3-4 - Moses is speaking with God on the mountain of Horeb. God has commissioned Moses to go back to Egypt and free the Israelites. And Moses, after seeing a burning bush that wasn't consumed and hearing the Lord's voice, says, but who am I? I'm nobody special. Have You made a mistake? I'm Moses, remember, the one who was raised by Egyptians, killed a man, and then ran away. I'm that Moses. I can't do this. My past disqualifies me. EXCUSES. The Lord continues with telling Moses that He will be with him and give him signs to perform. Moses has more excuses: but who are You? Everyone will think I have gone crazy. What's Your name so I can tell everyone that this was Your idea? The Lord reassures Moses again by revealing Himself through His name (I AM) and more details of how events will play out in Egypt and that the Lord will be victorious. Again Moses says, no one will believe me. I'm a nobody, remember, just some shepherd, murderer, Israelite raised by Egyptians. The Lord reassures him again and gives him another sign to perform. Moses has another excuse for not going - I'm not a good public speaker, never have been and it hasn't changed since I have been speaking with You. The Lord tells him to go, reminding him that he was made by the One who is speaking, He knows who He is sending.

I mean, how long is this conversation? It feels like a long, tiring conversation. Why is God not frustrated? Why has He not given up on Moses and found someone else? Why doesn't He do this with me? Moses sites so many reasons why and how God was wrong and should send someone else. Do you ever have conversations like this with the Lord? You hear Him tell you to talk to someone or do something unique. Is your first response, are You sure? Me? Don't You mean, "her" instead? But what about my past, I'm disqualified, right? I'll look nuts. This is not normal. I had this other plan for how life would look, wouldn't that be a better plan? I have a five year plan, we are only on year two ... I think I'll just wait and to see if You are sure, maybe You were having an off day and tomorrow You will get it together again. And again we hear the call. Sometimes, we behave as if we have voicemail for our life, for when God calls us. "Hey, this is Rebekah. I'm busy right now living life and having fun. I'm not available for another assignment. Please leave a message, try someone else, or try me later when I'm ready to change my plans or I'm bored with what I'm currently doing. Thanks! Have a great day!" Seriously, who are we? We humans are absurd! We live as if either there will always be more time to get around to our responsibilities or there will never be enough time to to manage our responsibilities (see *None Like Him*, Jen Wilkin, p.76-77).

Jeremiah 1 - The Lord speaks to Jeremiah concerning the appointment He has put upon his life - to be a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah responds, I'm a little young, God. I really don't know enough. (I should get a seminary education before I become one of Your messengers, right?) EXCUSE. The Lord responds, *I know you. You are the right person to tell the people everything I tell you. I'll be with you the whole time.* And then He reaches out His hand and touches Jeremiah's mouth. WOW! Has anything like this ever happened to you? Has the Lord called you to something and you felt you were either too young or too ignorant to complete the task? Do you let your doubts, your conviction that everyone else is better equipped, more knowledgeable than you, keep you from following? Has the Lord reached out and touched that part of you that you felt fell short? How so? If not, what would that look like in your life? What would it take for you to believe the Lord as Jeremiah did? John 4 - The Samaritan Woman. She makes excuses for herself and her people: I'm a Samaritan (an outsider, unwanted); I'm a woman (no authority); the well is really deep (do You want me to use my hand to get the water?); who are You? Do You think that You are better than Abraham?; I don't have a husband; the Jews say we worship wrongly; the Messiah will explain it all when He comes, I don't need to figure these things out now, I'm just a woman and Samaritan. So many EXCUSES to not listen, not learn, not change her life, not see that the Messiah was sitting next to her, talking to her, calling her forth into new life. So many excuses about why she was disqualified and unable to live a righteous life that glorified God.

What are your excuses? Are you "just" a mom? Do you lack knowledge or education? Do you believe that God only uses those who are already equipped, qualified, and knowledgeable? I read a great blog post today, that fits with this line of thinking (<https://herviewfromhome.com/i-cant-be-everyones-chick-fil-a-sauce/>). We need to

stop comparing ourselves with others, thinking that God has made a mistake in calling us, and that the Lord needs us to be perfect before we are worthy of Him. We can't be everyone's Chick-fil-a sauce, but the Lord finds us each, individually, tasty and delightful - right now!

I often wonder if I/we have so many excuses because we have a spotlight on our faults and forget the glory that God has redeemed. Yes, we are not perfect. We are all still in process of becoming what God dreamed and intended for us to be. Charles Wesley, in his song *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*, reminds us that "He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free". I so often need to be reminded of the truth that the power of my past sins has been broken in Jesus' name. I am free. "He replaces my historical liturgy of sin with one of holiness. When I become discouraged about giving in once again to a past sin, the 'lifter of my head' reminds me that though I am not yet who I will be, I am not who I was. He draws me from the past back into the present with an assurance that sanctification is slowly doing its work *today*. He keeps me from rehearsing my past hurts by reminding me to forgive as I have been forgiven. We can combat the 'bad news' of the past by remembering and trusting the good news of the gospel" (*None Like Him*, p.75). We have been set free!

Now we are called to live in that freedom. Call forth the truth, you are the beloved of God. He loves you deeply and completely. He is good and His heart is kind. He does not call, or assign, or place you where He will not also equip you to be. Sometimes the equipping happens in the midst of the call (I think we would rather be finished with the equipping before the going), but the equipping happens. May we all dig into our excuses and find the beliefs and falsehoods that are causing us to hesitate; dig them out, confess them, and replace them with Truth. Then may we JOYFULLY hear and follow what Robert Benson calls "the echo within", the call of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Week Four: Calling and Careers (Suzanne)

At the Table clearly loves the Scriptures. Our question this week is, how does the Word of God relate *calling* and *career* to the life of a modern woman?

As we read the Bible we can conclude that *calling* connects the gospel to the realities of the world around us. *Calling* is an invitation from God Himself to enter into the broken places and people of the world with His good news: there is life now and forever through Jesus. There is forgiveness and transformation and hope. There is intimacy and joy and meaning and purpose in God through His Son. The Holy Spirit is Life and Truth within every believer.

How is God asking you personally, prophetically, and powerfully to fulfill *your* calling? In what way does God want you to connect this world and the gospel? Could it be that your calling can actually be your career?

Pray and ask God to make this clear to you. We know He delights in us and has work for us to do ("For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do," Ephesians 2:10).

He may be general as He was with Saul ("...do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you," 1 Samuel 10:7), giving details and instructions along the way.

Or He may be specific as He was with Jeremiah: *The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." "Alas, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord. Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."*

What do you think your calling is? Do you know where to start? Consider these generalities:

1. We know God wants us to live by His two major commandments: Love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself (as Jesus loves us).
2. We know that God wants us to be Spirit-filled women who produce fruit that will last.
3. We know He wants our lives to be fully surrendered to Him.
4. We know He wants intimacy with us.
5. We know He will produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as we abide in Him.
6. We know He made us as ezer warriors, helpers who enter the battles during our watch on this world to make a difference for His glory and bring His Kingdom to earth.
7. We know He sees the heart, so in all we do for Him, He sees not just the outcome, but also the process. He is concerned with heart, not appearance.

I think the most important things to God are that you fulfill your general call as His daughter: whatever you do, you do it as if He was your employer to His glory (Colossians 3:23), that you take the gospel with you in word and deed (“as you are going, make disciples” (Matthew 28:16-20), and that your heart is His. Then, as He reveals your specific call, do what He leads you to do in a way that pleases Him.

So what do those generalities look like in various vocations or callings? How do you bring the Kingdom of God into specific, daily work environments?

Let me give you an example of what I’m thinking. Perhaps you’ve been a doodler. Perhaps when you hear a Bible story, it is playing out in your mind with cartoon-like illustrations. And perhaps you love to watch movies — can’t get enough of good stories. How do you turn this into something that connects God’s Word with this world? Could your calling actually be your vocation? Could you get paid for this?

Go to TheBibleProject.com for an example of using the talents of animating, film-making, story-telling, and cartooning for the Kingdom. It’s astounding. Phenomenal. Engaging, inspiring, illuminating. You’ve got to look at that site and see what they’ve done!

Let’s list some callings and careers (alphabetically) below. How can these examples be part of a person’s calling? How can you connect your career, your calling, and the gospel with the world?

- **Artist:** using your style of art for His Kingdom, selling it in coffee shops or paper companies or giving it away or enhancing brochures or billboards or gifts
- **Businesswoman:** being the CEO, CFO, or COO of a business
- **Caretaker:** helping the elderly or infirm or children
- **Decorator:** bringing beauty and order everywhere you go, to everything you touch
- **Entrepreneur:** innovative job creation for women in Knoxville or around the world
- Being a faithful **employee**, faithful in the small things, being an amiable presence, pursuing excellence
- **Food entrepreneur** or chef
- **Geneticist:** using science to bring information to people about their genetic makeup
- **Hospitality industry worker**
- **Inspector** (could get very interesting!)
- **Judge** (like Deborah in the book of Judges ... maybe you too could sit under your own palm tree!)
- **Kinesthesiologist:** help people move, stretch, be fit and strong
- **Landscape architect:** bring diversity, order, and visual loveliness to homes and businesses
- **Motherhood:** Raising little people for Him
- **Medical or dental personnel** for your area and in remote or poor parts of the world
- Being a solid, steady, loving **neighbor** in an unsettled part of town
- **Networker:** joining people in a certain field together so together there will be Kingdom impact on the city
- **Officer** of the law, of your church, of a company
- **Pastor:** shepherding the flock God has given you to love and serve
- **Quilter:** one who takes scraps of fabric and makes lovely, useful, warm quilts
- **Retreat speaker, singer, or manager**

- **Serving the poor** (so many ways to do this!)
- **Teacher** (so many venues for teachers!)
- **Trainer:** strengthen and enrich others to do their jobs well
- **Ultrasound technician:** operate a sonographic scanner that creates images of patients' babies or organs
- **Valedictorian** of your class (yes, you!)
- **Waitress:** bring joy and food and space for conversation to your customers
- **Yeoman:** a farmer who tends to her land
- **Zookeeper:** attend to God's diverse creation in a format in which people can marvel and experience animals and reptiles for themselves

May God richly bless you in your calling and in your career. May He make His face to shine on you, give you true success, and help you flourish. May He delight in you and give you His peace. May His love fill you as you work, and may His grace and truth flow out of you into everything you do and everyone you meet. Amen.

Short Form: What if my group can't do all this stuff?

Week One: Bible Boot Camp (Suzanne)

Have each person present pick two Scriptures from the Bible Boot Camp table. Have each person look up their two references and read them aloud to the group. What do you learn about calling as you ponder each Scripture?

Week Two: (Summers)

Ponder this quote from Summers' writing:

We need to be reminded of our true names. Who we really are, who we were created to be. "Most of us work our entire lives to find an answer to that question -- to try and make a name for ourselves. The problem is that any name we make for ourselves can never be our true name. Because our true identity can never be achieved, it can only be bestowed. And it can only be bestowed by the One who made us" (Jim Branch, *Being With Jesus*).

What is your true name, the name spoken to you by God?

Week Three: Excuses (Rebekah)

Look up the story of Moses and read through it, identifying his excuses to NOT do what God is asking him to do (Exodus 3 and 4). Then reflect: what are *your* excuses?

Week Four: Careers and Calling (Suzanne)

Read this excerpt from Suzanne's writing, then go to thebibleproject.com (see more below). Have fun!

"As we read the Bible we can conclude that *calling* connects the gospel to the realities of the world around us. *Calling* is an invitation from God Himself to enter into the broken places and people of the world with His good news: there is life now and forever through Jesus. There is forgiveness and transformation and hope. There is intimacy and joy and meaning and purpose in God through His Son. The Holy Spirit is Life and Truth within every believer.

How is God asking you personally, prophetically, and powerfully to fulfill *your* calling? In what way does God want you to connect this world and the gospel? Could it be that your calling can actually be your career?"

Spend some time on thebibleproject.com. Explore the site, looking for how God called these millennial entrepreneurs to use their skill sets to bring the Kingdom of God into the field of animation. It's incredible, fun, and engaging. Choose a book of the Bible or a theme and click. Enjoy.



The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb

I knew you,

before you were born

I set you apart”

Jeremiah 1:4,5