

Evotional.

Date: 9th May 2010 (am & pm).

Speaker: Neil Durling.

Message title: "The will of God for your life: Career and calling."



Message summary:

We live in an age of consumerism where we have too many choices, are too busy and too isolated. Why is it that many of us spend our health to earn money, then spend our money to try and salvage our health? As I said last week, God's will for our lives is to put him and his kingdom first today, and trust that he will then "bless" our decisions for the future. Paul says: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." (Ephesians 5:15-17) and: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2) God wants us to follow him today and has given us a calling in life.

We all have a calling: We need to be consistent about this as Christians. Often we talk about ministers, missionaries, nurses and teachers being "called" to their vocation. But not lawyers and accountants, or factory workers, or people who stay at home and raise a family. Why are we so inconsistent? David Roper comments: "We are not great stuff. God surrounds himself with incompetence. The people God uses have rarely been great people. Nietzsche looked for a 'strong kind of man, most highly gifted in intellect and will.' God looks for misfits and milquetoasts, schmucks and schlemiels. It's not that he has to make do with a bunch of fools, he chooses them." However great or rubbish we think we are, God has chosen to call us, to place something on our hearts, so that we can make a unique difference in the world.

Calling is different to career: My calling is not to be a minister, that's my career. My calling is to show Jesus to people, and, at the moment, I happen to do that as a minister (and hopefully for many years to come!). But I might fulfil that calling in the future as a novelist, film director or American wrestler! Our calling might encompass many careers; it is the overarching theme of our lives – our theme tune. This means several things:

- **Our calling is higher than our career:** You may have a job you can't stand, but it doesn't put a limit on your calling.
- **Career can get in the way of calling:** Your job might go against what God has placed in your heart and you might have to change jobs.
- **Short or long term:** Career is often about short-term performance (have I met my targets and made my profits?). Calling is about long-term consistency (am I being faithful to whom God has called me to be?).
- **If you don't have a career we still have a calling:** You are not overlooked by God. You aren't on the scrapheap. If you are at school, retired, a stay-at-home mum or dad, have chosen not to take paid-work, etc. you are still called by God.

Discovering my calling: Why has God placed me on this planet? Here are six things that help us discover our calling:

- **Motivation:** What captures your interest and gives you energy? Or, reversely: What irritates you and makes you want to get rid of that irritation? Paul was motivated partly the result of his personal goals / aspirations; Romans 15:20 being a good example (italics mine): "*It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.*"
- **Talent:** This precludes many choices and provides a clue to our calling although it isn't enough on its own.
- **Life experience:** Dostoyevsky's philosophy for life, which laid the plot for several of his novels, grew in the years he spent in a Siberian prison camp. Without those years what would he have written; what calling would he have lived out?
- **Opportunity:** Doors open and close for us. John Calvin travelled to Strasbourg in 1536 and stayed over in Geneva at the request of William Farel. Farel asked him to help organise a church, as Geneva had decided to be a Reformation city and was in upheaval. Calvin said no, he couldn't lead a church, he wanted to study instead. Farel told him: "God will condemn you." Calvin stayed (!) and died in Geneva where he fulfilled his calling as a pastor, leader and writer.
- **Others:** God put us in community for a reason. If even Jesus needed people around him then so do we. Do you have a spiritual mentor (some who can listen and give you Godly advice)?
- **Gladness:** Some people seem to think that following God's calling should make us miserable! It should be joyful service (I don't just mean happiness which changes with our surroundings). We will sometimes feel weary or bothered by others, but can still rest our heads at the end of a tiring day with gladness in our hearts. Jerry Sittser quotes a wonderful writer: "Frederick Buchner argues that amidst all the voices that are trying to get our attention and to give us direction in discerning God's call, the voice we should listen to most attentively 'is the voice that we might think we should listen to least, and that is the voice of our own gladness'." Jerry Sittser

A question:

If you're not sure what God's calling is on your life will you take the time and courage to work it out?

A prayer:

Father God, may I have the courage to find and fulfil the calling you have placed on my life. Amen.