

# Moments *for* You

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Theme: Calling



## CALLING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE

In Luke 5:32, Jesus declared, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” That statement expresses the essential uniqueness of Christianity and concisely summarizes His mission. It sums up the whole glorious scheme of salvation: the Lord Jesus Christ came to save repentant sinners (Luke 19:10).

Thus Jesus centered His ministry on people who understood their lost condition. Often, these were the outcasts of society, which earned Him a reputation as “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:34). Because such people were willing to come to grips with their true condition as hopeless sinners, the Lord was able to minister to them.

On one occasion during His earthly ministry, Jesus had a divine appointment to keep with a tax collector named Levi, better known as Matthew, the author of the Gospel that bears his name. His occupation as a tax collector made Matthew one of the most hated and despised men in Israel.

Undeterred by Matthew’s status as a social outcast, Jesus stopped at his tax booth and said to him, “Follow Me” (Matthew 9:9). The Lord knew his heart. He saw that Matthew was wretched and miserable; that he was distressed and burdened by his sin and hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

Matthew’s immediate response revealed the genuineness of his desire for righteousness and salvation: he left everything behind, and got up

and began to follow Jesus.

The traitor, extortioner, robber, and outcast sinner became an apostle and evangelist of Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees, however, rebuked Jesus for eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners.

God seeks the truly repentant heart, not the hardened, self-righteous one. It was the humble, repentant tax collector, not the self-exalting, self-righteous Pharisee who Jesus said was justified (Luke 18:14).

The truth is that God cannot save those who refuse to see themselves as sinners, who ignore, gloss over, or trivialize their sin. Only those who understand by the grace of God and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit that they are blind and oppressed, headed for a Christless, Godless eternity in Hell, and trust in Christ’s work on the cross as payment in full for their sins can be saved (Colossians 2:13-14). As James wrote, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

—Condensed from *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* by John MacArthur.

## “FOLLOW ME”

Over the years, I have heard many stories of missionaries leaving everything behind to follow God’s call to distant lands, to share the Gospel with lost people who have never heard. I often have the tendency to view these individuals, with their extraordinary faith, as—for lack of a better term—“super” Christians.

But I’m not sure that’s how God sees it. To the One who looks simply at the heart, the obedience to the call of God to live among and serve the lepers on the streets of Calcutta,

is no greater than the obedience of a blue-collar worker who follows the call of God into their workplace day in and day out, shining the light of Christ with their coworkers.

What matters is that you know God's call for your life, and you are obedient to it—whatever it may be, and whatever it requires.

In John 21, Jesus tells Peter what to expect in his future: he will be taken by force and put to death; in this unenviable end, he would glorify God. It was all part of His calling on Peter's life. Then Jesus gives him the simple command: "Follow Me."

Instead of looking forward, Peter looks around. Specifically, at John—the disciple who seemed to have an especially close relationship with Jesus. "What about this man?" he asks Jesus. Would he have a similar fate?

Jesus didn't tell Peter what John's call was. Instead, He says to Peter, "If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" Why did it matter to Peter what John's call was? What did that have to do with following his own call and being faithful to it?

Again, Jesus gave Peter the command: "You follow Me."

As humans, we fall often into a comparison trap. We feel we have to have a "special" call to be important and useful to Kingdom work. But what's important to God is not a role or a title, but rather a heart that is committed to each unique call in His perfect plan.

*"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).*

*"Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).*

—Tricia Kline

## WHAT IS GOD'S CALLING FOR YOU?

God calls everyone, and He calls for a reason. He wants this call to impact your life and those around you. But if we're foggy on how He calls, or what a call is, we may stay too busy or not even hear it.

Here's the fundamental question: What did He make you to do?

### **CALLED TO A PERSON**

God calls us, first, to a Person. Ephesians 1:18: "Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints."

And 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." You have been called into personal relationship with God the Father, through the work of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **CALLED TO A PURPOSE**

Second, God calls us to a purpose. Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The purpose is Christlikeness, being conformed to the image of His Son. God's number one agenda is not where you work, not what you do in the Church. God's number one agenda is to call you, first to Himself, and second, to a purpose.

### **CALLED TO A PEOPLE**

Third, God calls us to "a people." Ephesians 4:2-3 contains four different words about relationships. And they're all about getting along with other people: with all humility, with all gentleness, making every effort



to maintain the unity of the body of Christ and the bond of peace.

He gives spiritual gifts to believers. Why? “To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). He wants you to be a part of other people becoming like Christ. You are called to that.

### CALLED TO A PROCESS

The fourth calling is the calling into a process. You will be about as holy as you want to be. Everything you need to be like Christ, you already possess. If you’re a genuine follower of Christ, the Spirit that raised Him from the dead lives in you. You are called into a process, a walk, a journey of transformation by God’s Spirit through His Word.

Part of this process is to walk in the light. And then, we’re to walk in love (Ephesians 5:2) and in wisdom. Wisdom is the skill, the insight, the knowledge, and the understanding, to apply the truth of God.

### CALLED TO DIFFERENT PLACES

Fifth, and finally, God calls us to different places. 1 Corinthians 7:17 says, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.”

If He’s called you to a kind of work, do that work, unless He shows you something different, and reveal Jesus there. Be an ambassador for Christ.

—Chip Ingram and Living on the Edge, condensed.

## OUR HEAVENLY CALLING

Human beings need two things: We need to hear from God so that we know what He is like, what His purposes are for the world, and what He requires of us. And we need a way to God, because to be cut off from God in death would be darkness and

misery and torment forever. So we have these two great needs: to hear from God and to go to God. We need revelation from Him and reconciliation with Him.

Now consider how Hebrews 3:1 addresses these two needs. It says to Christians: “*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.*”

It’s a heavenly calling, which means it is a word from Heaven, a word from God. Christians are people who have been gripped by this calling. The word of God broke through our resistance, and took hold of us with the truth and love of Christ, and reconciled us to God and is now leading us home to Heaven. This means that Christians are people of great hope. God has spoken from Heaven, and made a way to Heaven, and we have believed, and our hope and confidence are firm.

The hope of a heavenly calling does not hang on our righteousness. If it did, we would be hopeless. Our hope and confidence hang on Jesus. This is why verse 1 continues: “*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus ...*”

Don’t holy brethren automatically consider Jesus? The answer is No. Remember the warning back in Hebrews 2:1, “We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”

The text concludes by saying we are His house—we are His people, we are partakers of a heavenly calling—“if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope” (Hebrews 3:6). The evidence that we are part of the household of God is that we don’t throw away our hope and drift into indifference and unbelief. Becoming a Christian and

being a Christian happen in the same way: by hoping in Jesus—a kind of hoping that produces confidence and boasting in Jesus.

—John Piper

## THE CALL OF ABRAHAM: RESPONDING BY FAITH

Abraham's faith-walk began "when he was called" (Hebrews 11:8). His faith wasn't founded on a subjective feeling about God's will, a cloud formation pointing like an arrow, or a vague message from a fortune-teller staring into a crystal ball. The Bible says "the LORD had spoken to him" (Genesis 12:4 NKJV), and "the LORD appeared to Abram" (Genesis 12:7). This is where true faith rests—on the clear revelation of God.

God's calling to Abram was audible, objective, and specific. He responded with faithful obedience. In Hebrews 11:8, the depths of his faith are seen: "he went out, not knowing where he was going." Can you imagine that? He packed up his things and led his wife, Sarah, from the comfort and security of his homeland to head to God-knows-where!

Hebrews 11:9 says it took faith to live as a foreigner in the Promised Land. He dwelled in tents like an unwanted visitor so he could move from place to place. In the midst of this, Abraham walked by faith, not by sight. He was depending on God and yearning for a permanent, heavenly city designed and built by God (11:10). His focus wasn't on the hardships of his journey through life, but on the reward at the eternal destination.

After all that Abraham and Sarah had been through over the decades, God tested Abraham's faith by instructing him to do the hardest thing he could be asked to do. In one act of trust and obedience, Abraham was

to surrender the fulfillment of God's promise, the center of his dreams—his one and only son (Genesis 22:1-2).

Abraham's unflinching trust and unhesitating obedience rested on a foundation of solid theology.

- Abraham knew that God is completely good and never commands evil.
- Abraham knew that God is completely wise and must have had a plan.
- Abraham knew that God is completely just and would not treat Isaac unfairly.
- Abraham knew that God is completely powerful and would keep His promises.

Even in the midst of an apparent contradiction, Abraham could trust and obey—not because he knew exactly what was going on, but because he knew the One who did. And, when Abraham demonstrated his faith through this radical test, God provided a ram for Abraham to offer in place of Isaac (Genesis 22:11-13).

Abraham and Sarah's faith was characterized by the ability to hope beyond the restrictions of the present, marked by a deep-down determination to embrace the eternal over the temporal, and demonstrated a willingness to release all earthly things for the sake of following God's will (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Are you willing to take the first steps of faith? Those are the hardest. But after that, each baby step will grow closer and closer to a mature stride. Then even you may become a living model for the Hebrews 11 type of faith with a faith-walk worthy of following.

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## THE CALL OF SAUL (PAUL)

(Please read Acts 9)

We last saw Saul in Acts 8:3, where it says that he *“was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”* Here he continued and expanded this work to the city of Damascus.

The picture is of an angry, violent man absolutely convinced of his own righteousness. Saul hated the disciples of the Lord. He wasn't seeking Jesus when Jesus sought him. We might say that Saul was decided *against* Jesus when Jesus decided *for* Saul.

Suddenly a light from Heaven shone around Saul and he heard a voice. This spectacular event must be regarded as unusual. God does not *normally* confront sinners with a heavenly light and an audible voice from Heaven. Saul's reaction was simply to fall to the ground. This wasn't because of honor or reverence for God, it was simply a reaction of survival—he was terrified at the heavenly light.

### **“WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”**

As the heavenly light overwhelmed him, Saul was confronted by the true nature of his crime: he persecuted God, not *man*. Saul thought that he was serving God in viciously attacking Christians, but he discovered that he was fighting God.

We shouldn't only emphasize “Me” in the phrase “why are you persecuting Me?” We should also notice the “why” and see that Jesus asked “why are you persecuting Me?” That is, “Saul, why are you doing such a futile thing?”

### **SAUL ASKED THE RIGHT QUESTIONS**

“Who are You, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). We must ask this question with a humble heart, and ask it to God. Jesus

showed us exactly who God is, and He can answer this question. Paul spent the rest of his life wanting to know more completely the answer to this question (Philippians 3:10).

“Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6 NKJV). Few dare to really ask God this question, but when we ask it, we must ask it with submission and determined obedience.

Saul's question was *personal*. He asked the question with a “me”: “Lord, what do You want me to do?” We often are quite interested in what God wants others to do. But the surrendered heart asks, “Lord, what do you want *me* to do?”

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## CALLED TO GLORIFY GOD

(Please read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

The Corinthians had a tendency to be “puffed up” with pride (1 Corinthians 4:6, 18-19; 5:2). But the Gospel of God's grace leaves no room for personal boasting. God is not impressed with our looks, our social position, our achievements, our natural heritage, or our financial status.

In the New Testament, we do meet some believers with “high social standing,” but there are not many of them. The description Paul gave of the converts was certainly not a flattering one (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Paul reminded them of what *they were* (1 Corinthians 1:26). They were not wise, mighty, or noble. God called them, not *because* of what they were, but *in spite* of what they were! The Corinthian church was composed primarily of ordinary people who were terrible sinners.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of *why* God called them (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). God chose the fool-

ish, the weak, the base (“low born”), and the despised to show the proud world their need and His grace. The lost world admires birth, social status, financial success, power, and recognition. But none of these things can guarantee eternal life.

The wise of this world cannot understand how God changes sinners into saints, and the mighty of this world are helpless to duplicate the miracle. Salvation must be wholly of grace; otherwise, God cannot get the glory.

**Finally, Paul reminded the Corinthians of all they had in Jesus Christ.** Since every believer is “in Christ,” and he has all that he needs, why compete with each other or compare yourselves with each other? It is the Lord who has done it all!

The spiritual blessings that we need are not abstractions that elude our grasp; they are all in a Person, Jesus Christ. He is:

- our wisdom (Colossians 2:3)
- our righteousness, our right standing before God (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- our sanctification, the power by which we are set apart to belong to God and to serve Him (John 17:19)
- our redemption (Romans 3:24).

We are set free because Jesus Christ paid the price for us on the cross. —Warren W. Wiersbe, condensed

## **CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE**

God’s plan of salvation spans the ages; in fact it stretches from eternity to eternity. It has been unfolded in a nutshell in a few Bible verses in Romans 8:28-30. This plan aims at a special class of people, namely “those who love God.” Who are they? They are His people, God’s own children, born of Him and of His Spirit. They

enjoy the divine promise, the divine assurance: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 NKJV). The Apostle Paul bases the assurance of which he speaks on the firmness of God’s eternal plan of salvation for His own.

The apostle’s purpose in writing these words is that we should learn to see everything in the light of God’s plan of salvation, that we should learn to view everything from the heights of His own plans and thoughts. That is the basis of the joyful assurance: “And we know.” Our assurance is based on the consciousness of all that God is, and does, for us.

For it is God who determines the course of all things. He holds all things in His hands. Nothing can happen which would change His plans or would detract from His counsels.

All things cannot but work for good even though everything might seem to go wrong. Nothing can thwart God in the execution of His eternal plans of love, and nothing can rob us of the assurance of His love. He expects us to be aware of the riches of His love and to love Him in return. He expects us to take the place of loving children and sons.

Christians may see everything from an *eternal* perspective. They are on their way to glory, and everything that they encounter along that way works for their good. It contributes to their reaching the goal. In the light of God’s eternal purpose everything looks different. All emphasis is laid on the divine plan of salvation. When the apostle speaks about “those who love God,” he is quick to add that they are those “who are the called according to His purpose.” The one goes with the other.

To raise us to the position of sons and heirs, much had to take place. God's purpose was to bless us, but our fallen state prevented Him from doing so. We had gone astray, we were far from God. God calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). He calls us out of the spiritual and moral darkness, in which we walk by nature, to bring us into the light of His presence.

This calling is also life-giving. We have not only been called out of darkness into His marvelous light, but also out of death into life. The portion to which we are called is *eternal life* (1 Timothy 6:12). —Hugo Bouter

## CALLED TO MAKE DISCIPLES

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus set forth a clear mission for every Christian: to become a disciple-maker. Put differently, any Christian who isn't actively working to disciple others is failing the mission.

Jesus not only provides the what—making disciples—but also the why and the how.

### WHY WE MAKE DISCIPLES

The first words Jesus speaks in this commission set the tone for everything that follows. He says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.” This declaration is vital. Jesus is not just a wise teacher or an inspiring prophet; He is the Son of God, the One to whom all creation is subject. His authority is supreme over every nation, every government, and every individual.

For us as disciple-makers, this truth must be our guiding star. When we teach others about Jesus, we are not sharing personal opinions or philosophies. We are pointing people to the One who holds ultimate authority in the universe.

Based on His supreme authority,

Jesus instructs us to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” This command leaves no room for hesitation. The gospel is not meant to stay within the walls of our churches or our communities. The gospel isn't tame like that. No, it's a message for every person, every nation, every culture. This includes our own nation, as well as the farthest reaches of the globe.

Disciple-making isn't a passive task; it's a proactive mission. Jesus calls us to focus our lives on it, to intentionally structure our days so that we are regularly helping people come to know Him or to grow deeper in their walk with Him.

### HOW WE MAKE DISCIPLES

Jesus doesn't leave us wondering how to fulfill this great mission. He gives specific instructions: “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” This is the heart of disciple-making. We are called to teach others everything that Jesus taught.

It's important to remember that Jesus affirmed the truth and authority of the whole Bible (Matthew 5:18). He taught that every word in Scripture is trustworthy, pointing us to God's plan for salvation and how to live as His followers. As disciple-makers, we need to do more than just share isolated Bible verses or surface-level truths. We must invest deeply in understanding the whole message of Scripture so that we can faithfully pass it on to others.

Finally, Jesus provides a promise that gives us strength and courage: “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The task of making disciples can feel overwhelming at times. Whether teaching the Bible to a new believer or sharing the gospel in a difficult situation, it's easy to feel inadequate or afraid. But Jesus reassures us that we are never alone. —Arnie Cole