

CALLING

A Clear Calling is the most important ingredient for any new church

call•ing \kô'ling\ noun 1: a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence

As you may know, the sad reality is that the majority of church starts fail within the first year. The main reason this happens is a lack of a clear calling in the heart of the church starter. A clear calling to start a church is the most important ingredient in the planting of any new church. And it's important to remember that successful church starts begin with a personal *calling* rather than a personal *choice*.

Common Sources of Improper Calling

1. Unemployment
2. Anger or resentment at another pastor
3. Disgruntled staff
4. Easier than searching for an existing ministry position
5. Parent or grandparent
6. Ego
7. It's the "in" thing

Common Sources of Proper Calling

- **Prayer and Bible Study**—God confirms His call in our lives through prayer and Bible study. People who are called often feel that God confirms His calling 'every time' they pray or read the Bible.
- **Surprise**—Sometimes, people are surprised by the calling because the idea of ministry is so far from their own plan for their lives. This surprise leads to a 180° turn in career and life focus.
- **Holy Discontent**—Anger or resentment at a church or a pastor is a source of improper calling. However, there is a sense of holy discontent around a proper calling. This discontent is more focused on what could be done to improve the situation in a town or community versus all the things that are wrong with it. Holy discontent also comes when you have ignored God's calling in your life, and you realize you will not find fulfillment until you surrender to His will to start a church.
- **Burden for the Unchurched**—The proper call to start a church is always accompanied by a desire to reach the unchurched. If your desire is to change the Christians in your community, then you are most assuredly *not* called to start a new church. However, if you have strong passion to reach the unchurched, then you may be hearing properly from God.
- **Godly Counsel**—Are people around you confirming your call? They may be surprised, but in their hearts, they can confirm that God has called you to plant a church.

The Four Calls of a Church Planter¹

1. My Call to Start a Church

We've explored the sources of the call; now it's time for you to nail it down. When exactly were you called? What were the circumstances around your call? And how did it match up with the sources of proper calling? How does it match up with who you are?

6 Indicators That You May Be A Church Planter by Ed Stetzer²

1. Pattern of Ministry INITIATION – Is there a consistent flow of new ministries, Bible Studies, etc. in your ministry life?
2. Pattern of Ministry MULTIPLICATION – Are you able to train others in an area of ministry and let them go to lead that ministry?
3. PERSONAL WIRING – Am I wired & driven to start new things?
4. HOLY DISSATISFACTION – Negative experiences can be part of God's stirring the waters in your ministry life.
5. FAMILY COMMITMENT – God will not lead you to start a church if it means you have to leave your spouse and kids.
6. CHURCH AFFIRMATION – If your church is hesitant about your church planting gifting and calling, then you should be hesitant as well.

It's a good idea to sketch out an outline of your call. Write it in ink, because once you start moving forward, you'll want to come back to your confirmed calling over and over again.

2. My Spouse's Call

“This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one.” - Mark 10:7-8 (NLT)

¹ Nelson Searcy, “The 4 Calls of a Church Planter,” Outreach Magazine.

² Ed Stetzer, “6 Indicators That You May A Church Planter” The Exchange: A Blog By Ed Stetzer, May 20, 2014. Accessed June 10th, 2014. <http://christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/may/6-indicators-that-you-may-be-church-planter.html>

If you are married, God will *not* call you without confirming the same call in your spouse. There are few greater stresses on a marriage than a call to start a new church. It's important to go slow in this area and carefully communicate to your spouse what God may be doing with you and your family.

Several things you should understand about your spouse's call:

1. The TIMING of *your* call may not match exactly with the TIMING of your spouse's call.
2. Your call may also come AFTER your spouse's calling. God may use your spouse to nudge you along.
3. The INTENSITY of your call may not match your spouse's.
4. Never move forward without your spouse being fully heard, involved, and committed.
5. Your call to MARRIAGE *always* takes precedence over your call to start a church.

3. My Call to a Place

The third call is the call to a place—a city, town, community, or area where God wants you to start a church

If you do not already know the place, here are **some guidelines that might help clarify where God is calling you.**

- a. Has God called you to leave the place where you currently live? Your call may be to right where you are.
- b. Has God placed a passion in your heart for a particular area of the country or the world?
- c. Is there an area where you told God, "This is the last place in the world I would ever want to live?" That might be the place where He is calling you to start a church. Remember Jonah.
- d. If this is an area where you're still stuck, take time to do some research, talk with other church leaders, pray with your spouse, study some examples from Scripture, take a vision tour or two.

- e. Contemplate this passage: “It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance.”—Hebrews 11:8 (NLT)

4. My Call to a People

Even though you may have a call to a specific place, many different types of people probably reside there—young, old, rich, poor, etc.

- One people group that church planters are universally called to reach is THOSE WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHRIST.
- However, you must also consider the people that you are EQUIPPED TO REACH and who are MOST LIKE YOU. In the early days of a church plant, the Law of Magnetism will often show itself. The Law of Magnetism is – “Who you are is who you will attract.”³
- If you want to reach a different people group it will take INTENTIONALITY.

Exercise

When exactly were you called? What were the circumstances around your call? And how did it match up with the sources of proper calling? How does it match up with who you are?

³ Maxwell, John C. The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People will Follow You. Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

Which of the Five Sources of a proper calling are true of your life?

Between 1-5, with 5 being most unified, how unified are my spouse and I on our calling to plant a church?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5

What is the place to which I'm called to plant? How has God confirmed this call?

What people group am I called to reach? Why? How has God confirmed this call?

To do:

- Write letter stating your call to plant to potential partners and to potential core team members.