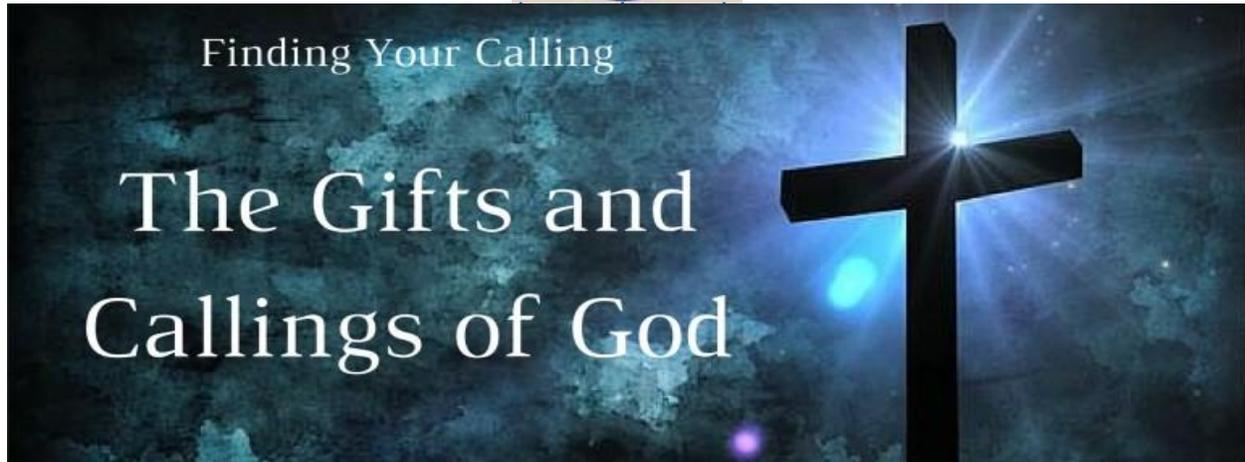


Lifeline Bible Church Special Seminar Outline



GIFTS, GRACE & CALLINGS

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I. Introduction:

A call is a divine appointment of a person into spiritual service. It is the choice and selection of man by God for specific or special assignments. It is first of all a spiritual exercise. Call to ministry is not something mechanical or professional and neither is it a business enterprise. This call then must come from God and not from man or by self-appointment. Consider the following passages: Exod.3: 4; Exod.31: 2; 1Sam.3: 4; 1Cor.12: 4-7; Rom.12: 4-8.

II. The Priesthood of All Believers – 1Pet.2: 9:

This verse of scripture is addressed to all believers and not just to the five principal ministerial offices of Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Evangelists and Teachers as we have come to see them today. Again, the believers are not just called into priesthood in this passage but into a royal priesthood. This is significant! Unlike in the Old Testament where the Bible only mentions three key offices of Kings, Prophets and Priests, who are anointed into office, the New Testament teaches that all believers constitute a Royal priesthood and have been anointed by God already to occupy for Him in this regard.

This means first of all that all believers are ministers and a royal priesthood in particular. The Old Testament king usurps authority; the prophet instructs and guides the people in the path of righteousness by the word of God while the priest stands in the gap between man and God. He ministers to God in worship and prayer and at the same time ministers to men as he presents their offerings and petitions to God. A royal priest on the other

hand is a priest with the authority of a king. He does not just present the people's petitions to God but oftentimes usurps the authority of a king to decree things that are not into being. This is the general and primary calling of every believer in Christ Jesus.

When Jesus died and said, 'it is finished' on the cross at Calvary, the veil covering the holy of holies in the temple was torn into two making it possible for us all to enter into God's presence and minister. Until then, not even all priests could enter God's presence that freely except the High Priest and even the High Priest could only do so once in a year. The division of the Church into Clergy and Laity therefore is not biblical or of God. The correct teaching of Scripture is that all believers have their gifts, grace and callings – Ephesians 1: 18. We should all then be interested in finding out what God has called us to do and what gifts and grace He has given us to carry out our assignments for Him here on earth.

III. Major Key to Success:

Success in life therefore is largely due to knowing one's God-given gifts, grace and calling and making the best use of them. But simple as it seems, only few people know their callings and get to discover their gifts and grace in a lifetime. This is why only a few succeed in the true sense of it while the vast majority simply drifts along. Don't just drift along in life but pray and take the time to discover your gifts, grace and calling.

IV. Photocopies and Originals:

Most men are mere echoes or photocopies; only a few have real voice among men and are originals. However, we all can live the original life God designed and desired for us because we all have our God-given gifts, grace and callings. If only we would discover and operate in them without comparing ourselves with others or try to copy them, we would definitely succeed. This is the crux of the matter!

V. Joseph in Egypt – Gen.41:

The gifts of Joseph distinguished him in Egypt. In Genesis 41, King Pharaoh of Egypt dreamt twice regarding the famine that was to ravage his land and the surrounding nations at that time. In the first dream he saw seven ugly and gaunt cows came out of the river and another set of seven fine looking and fat ones. The seven gaunt cows swallowed up the fat ones without any change in stature. In the second dream, he saw seven poor & dry heads of corn on a stalk and another set of full, nice-looking heads of corn on its stalk. Again, the seven poor corn heads swallowed up the good ones and still looked so poor. Pharaoh was troubled as he was convinced God was talking to him yet he could not decode or understand the message. He summoned all the magicians and astrologers of Egypt but none could interpret the dreams or understand the mystery.

Eventually, the Palace Chief Butler remembered how Joseph helped interpret his dream and the Baker's in Prison and so suggested that the king should send for him. When

Joseph arrived, the ease with which he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams was unparalleled and amazed all. Ultimately, he was appointed Minister-in-Charge to manage the coming crisis. Joseph could do it because he operated in his God-given gifts and grace. He was born with this grace from God to dream and interpret dreams.

VI. Daniel in Babylon – Dan.2:

It could be said of Daniel also that his gifts distinguished him in Babylon. In Daniel 2, he interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar after a long search for interpreters and none was found. In this case, Nebuchadnezzar had even forgotten his dream and threatened to kill all the wise men, magicians and astrologers in his domain if they fail to interpret it before Daniel rescued the situation and interpreted the dream that even the dreamer had forgotten. He was eventually promoted as the Chief Administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. He also read and interpreted the hand writing King Beltechazzar saw on the wall in Daniel 5 that none of the astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers could read or interpret. Nothing works like a man's gifts, grace and calling!

VII. Esther in Persia – Est.1-9:

Esther was a Jewish orphan and slave girl taken away to Persia yet the gifts and grace of God upon her distinguished and singled her out among her peers. Although King Ahasuerus was ruthless and highly impulsive yet Esther found favour in his sight. She won the beauty contest and eventually became queen who later delivered her people from the wicked plan of annihilation of Haman. Esther's beauty was her major gift from God. She was also intelligent and wise; she was bold and courageous with high sense of initiative and discretion. She was very innovative and creative in her plan. She was thoroughly feminine and deeply spiritual. She realized she was called and raised up by God as a deliverer for her people at such a time of emergency in Persia and rose to the occasion. In the end, Esther's gifts, grace and calling preserved and distinguished her. She succeeded and excelled where Vashti failed as queen.

VIII. David, The Shepherd Boy of Israel – 1Sam.17:

David also was a wonder boy to the Jews of his time. He achieved a feat King Saul, his elder brothers and the entire army of Israel could not achieve with their swords and shields when he faced and killed Goliath with just a stone and sling. It was simply miraculous! Later, Saul eyed him with envy and sought to kill him but when the grace of God is upon a man's life, the more men seek to destroy his dream, destiny or God's plan for him the more they will hasten its fulfillment. King Saul only succeeded in destroying himself and not God's plan for David.

IX. Good & Bad Engines:

Only bad engines make noise, emit much smoke and generate heat while working. Good engines work quietly with little or no friction and smoke. A man operating in his God-given gifts, grace and calling will not struggle or be frustrated but will work as though playing; almost effortlessly and with joy. He will be a surprise and wonder to all!

X. Operating Within The Scope of Our Gifts, Grace & Callings:

1. Nadab & Abihu – Lev.10:

Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons offered strange fires before the Lord and were smitten. They ministered outside the scope of God's grace for their lives.

2. King Saul – 1Sam.13: 8-10:

King Saul also simply because Samuel delayed crisscrossed from his office as king to offer the sacrifice Samuel the prophet should offer. As a result, God rejected him.

3. King Uzziah – 2Chron.26: 16-21:

King Uzziah (also known as Azariah) was struck with leprosy when he forcefully entered the temple to usurp the priestly office. All these are examples to teach us that we cannot function without God's unction.

Our life engine cannot run smoothly if we do things God has not committed to our charge or equipped us for with His gifts and grace. That way, we would only be a round peg in a square hole or a square peg in a round hole.

XI. Signs of Square Pegs In Round Holes: Isaiah 42: 1-4.

1. Boredom and lack of interest.
2. Lack of ideas and creativity.
3. Uneasiness & lack of comfort
4. Low productivity and lack of effectiveness.
5. Silly mistakes and blunders.
6. Lack of ambition.
7. Constant recurrent discouragement.
8. Complaints and grumbling.
9. Irritation, edginess, resentment and faultfinding.
10. Frustration, lack of joy and fulfillment.
11. Stiffness and congestion.
12. Tiredness and fatigue.
13. Loss of appetite or self-indulgence.
14. Distraction & lack of concentration
15. Looking haggard & aging fast.

XII. More Illustrations:

A fish doesn't struggle to swim and a bird has no difficulty flying. Nobody teaches a cock to crow, the dog to bark or lion to roar. The monkey is a talented natural acrobat and gymnast. So is every man that functions in his God-given gifts, grace and calling. He will run and not be weary, and work and not faint.

There is this funny story of the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria's first president) during a visit to England with his friend the late Dr. K. O. Mbadiwe. They were both served vegetable salads. While 'Zik was busy munching away as he was widely travelled and

already used to it, Mbadiwe was just struggling to swallow the leaves. At a point he looked at 'Zik curiously and asked, 'Nnamdi, Nnamdi, they cook ya own.' He thought 'Zik's vegetable was cooked and his raw but really they were served the same thing. Just that he was only accustomed to the typical Nigerian boluses and not fresh un-sliced vegetables. That is how many people struggle through life as they do what God has not called or equipped them for.

XIII. Diversities of Gifts:

The Bible teaches that there are diversities of gifts. These gifts are quite important especially the motivational ones. These are the gifts that motivate a man's ministry and run through all he does. We succeed in life and ministry by identifying and using our motivational gifts to the fullest potential.

Some of these gifts listed out for us in Romans 12: 6-8, 1Corinthians 12: 4-12 and Ephesians 4: 11 include the following:

- 1. Prophecy**
- 2. Service or Ministry**
- 3. Exhortation**
- 4. Giving**
- 5. Teaching**
- 6. Government or Administration or Leadership**
- 7. Mercy or Helps or Compassion**
- 8. Word of wisdom or Wisdom**
- 9. Word of knowledge or Knowledge**
- 10. Faith**
- 11. Healing**
- 12. Miracles**
- 13. Discerning of Spirits**
- 14. Divers kinds of Tongues**
- 15. Interpretation of Tongues**
- 16. Intercession**
- 17. Apostles**
- 18. Evangelists**
- 19. Pastors**
- 20. Others**

Others that could be seen in people's lives but not necessarily included in this list are the gifts of Music (Ability to sing and lead in praise and worship), Visitation, Celibacy and Martyrdom.

The list really is long and not exhaustive. In fact, all our peculiarities are gifts from God and confer on us certain grace in life; starting from our gender, height, stature, temperament as well as age and position in the family.

XIV. Peculiar Gifts Are From God:

Our talents, trainings and skills also should be seen as gifts from God for there are countless others who don't have the opportunities we have in life. These are the individual make-ups that help us do with ease what others find so tough and difficult. It is an error to say, '*what a man can do, a woman can do better*' as there is no need for such comparison or unnecessary competition. The truth is there are lots of things men can do that women cannot do and also lots of things women can do that men cannot do.

Tall, light complexioned and slim people enjoy certain grace over others who are short, dark and fat. For example, I have generally noticed that short, dark complexioned and fat ladies rarely win beauty contests and only tall people play basketball. But there are occasions too when all that becomes a disadvantage and short, fat or dark skinned people are favoured. For example only sturdy people with big muscles lift weights or fight in sumo wrestling. You will notice that for reasons best known to God certain sports and professions are dominated by blacks and others by whites. Some are even peculiar or localized to certain geographical areas. That is why East and Central Africans usually dominate marathon races, Brazilians football, Americans basketball, Asians martial arts and Europeans swimming. Life is beautiful and meaningful only when we function in our God-given gifts, grace and callings.

Whereas the Bible describes Jacob as introverted and homely, Esau his twin brother was an extrovert and outgoing man of the field. Whereas King Solomon was famous and lived in stupendous wealth and affluence, John the Baptist the fore-runner of Christ centuries after him lived such a poor and lonely life in the wilderness. His clothes were made of animal skin and hide and he ate locusts and wild honey. The standard of living at his time was not that poor. It was only a matter of his gifts, grace and calling. Thank God John the Baptist was not distracted and did not disappoint God. He fulfilled his ministry! Mary, Lazarus' sister also was introverted and so sat with Jesus and listened to Him when He visited them. Martha her sister was all over the place busy trying to entertain Christ and prepare food for all. She would not stop at that alone. She complained to Jesus about her sister's uncaring attitude and requested that she be asked to join her. But for Jesus, Mary's attitude towards the word of God mattered most.

XV. No Room for Envy or Comparison:

Avoid envy, strife, unnecessary competitions and all forms of distractions knowing for sure that no one really can take your place before God. Seek to understand your peculiar gifts, grace and calling, be effective and faithful and never fall for the common temptation to compare yourself with others to emulate them. Never succumb to societal or peer pressure to do what God has not called or equipped you for. Don't follow popular trends and opinions too. Live your life to please God only and not any man because really, He is the One you're accountable to in the end. We should therefore stay focused and on track to do only those things God has given us gifts and grace for and for which

He has called us. That is a major key to success in life and ministry. That way, we would not run or live in vain.

XVI. Our Gifts & Grace Define Our Callings:

Eventually, according to Scripture, it is the gifts of a man that would make way for him (Prov.18: 16). Other points to be noted regarding our gifts are:

1. God is the source of these gifts – Gal.2: 8, James 1:17.
2. Every man's motivational gifts are built-in at creation – Psalm 139:13-16.
3. These gifts could be observed at childhood – Prov.22: 6, 2Tim.3: 14&15.
4. They are usually seen in all we do and how we see things – e.g. Joseph's dreams, Mary and Martha.
5. We are to stir them up – 2Tim.1: 6.
6. We are to use them – 1Peter 4:10.
7. Constant practise or use of our gifts eventually leads to a sort of 'expertise', as practice makes perfect.

XVII. Know What God Has Called You To Do:

Every work has its specifications & requirements. The worker therefore must know what the work is all about and what it requires before ever starting.

Some of these requirements are listed as follows:

1. A clear understanding of the work to be done: Num.13: 1-3, 16-25; Josh.2: 1; Neh.2: 11-17; Lk.14: 28-32.
2. Required trainings, skills, time, energy, financial & material inputs: Prov.4: 7-9; Eccle.3: 1-11; 10: 10; Lk.14: 28-32; 2Tim.1: 6; 2: 15; Heb.5: 14.
3. Good focus or vision: Prov.29: 18; Matt.6: 22-23; Phil.3; 13-14; Heb.12: 1-3.
4. Right motive & intention: 1Sam.16: 7; 2Chron.16: 9; Ps.26: 2; Jn.10: 10; Heb.4: 12-13; Jam.4: 3. Examples are: King Saul (1Sam.15: 24-31); Jeroboam (1Kg.12: 25-33); Judas Iscariot (Jn.12: 1-8); Ananias & Saphira (Acts 5: 1-11); Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8: 14-25); Diotrephes (3Jn.9-11).
5. Commitment & devotion to work: Gen.2: 24; Ps.137: 5-6; Ruth 1: 16-17; Jn.4: 34; Acts 6: 4; 21: 13; 1Cor.9: 16.

XVIII. Gifts, Grace & Callings Have Their Purpose:

God blesses us in order to make us a blessing. We should never forget the purpose of ministry (in any form) in itself, that is:

1. Equipping and perfecting the saints.
2. Edifying the body of Christ.
3. Service or work of the ministry.

Eph.4: 12&13, 1Cor.10: 23, 2Cor.10: 7&8, 2Cor.13: 10.

We should never forget also, the need for oneness, cooperation and submission to constituted spiritual authority in the use of our gifts, grace and callings. Although God calls, it is actually the Church that sends: 1Cor.12: 12-27; Acts 13:1-4. Let us do everything decently and in good order.

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1Peter 4: 10

XIX. The Place of Vision (Isaiah 6:1-10 as a Case Study):

There is need for vision – Prov.29: 18. Vision is important for the following reasons:

1. Vision gives direction.
2. No man lives beyond his vision.
3. The price of vision is quite great - Matt.13: 46, Phil.3: 7.
4. ‘What is not worth dying for is not worth living for.’
5. Your vision will make or mar your life e.g. Moses, Jacob etc.

To have a vision, every Uzziah in our lives must die. These include whoever or whatever is king on the throne of our hearts that is blocking the vision of God for our lives. These are earthly or material ‘kings’ competing for the throne of the King of kings in our hearts. The death of these kings ‘Uzziah’ in our lives therefore could mean any of the following:

1. Dying to self. - 1Cor.15: 31
2. Loss of career.)
3. Loss of property.)
4. Loss of a friend or loved one.) - Matt.5: 4

Isaiah’s vision was in three dimensions. It was quite revealing.

1. Upward - Inward - Outward.
2. Height - Depth - Breadth.
3. God - Self - People around.
4. Confession (Woe) – Cleansing (Lo) – Commission (Go).
5. *Holiness of God.
*Hellishness or depravity of man.
*Helplessness and hopelessness around.

This type of vision is only given of God (Isaiah 6:9-10). It is the Spirit that quickens (John 6:63). When we eventually receive this type of vision from God, it achieves the following results in our lives:

1. It breaks us.
2. It cleanses, purges, and purifies.
3. It sanctifies and consecrates us.
4. It gives burden and passion for the lost souls around us.

At the end of the day, a combination of vision and commission produces our mission that is, **Vision + Commission = Mission (Ministry or Calling)**.

XX. Knowing Our Gifts, Grace and Callings:

We can know our gifts and callings through any of the following ways.

1. Burning Heart e.g. David in 1Sam.17: 35-37.

Features: - Boldness, zeal, courage and determination.

2. Burning House e.g. Esther in Esth.2-8.

Features: - Resourcefulness, high position & privileges, compassion

3. Burning Bush e.g. Moses in Exod.3: 1-10.

Features: - Timidity, introvertedness, unwillingness and inquisitiveness or curiosity.

Others are:

4. Learning from past trends and experiences e.g. Eli, Jacob & David
5. Gifts of the Holy Spirit e.g. Christ and Apostle Paul.
6. Volunteering our skills, resources and services e.g. David.
7. Delegation of duties and leadership appointments e.g. Timothy.

XXI. Appreciate Yourself, Gifts, Grace & Calling:

1. Appreciate your uniqueness – Ps.139: 14, 1Cor.4: 7.
2. Be content with what God has given you or called you to do and don't covet others or compare yourself with them – Exod.20: 17; Lk.12: 15; 2Cor.10: 12. Learn from Rachael (Gen.30: 1-2), Moses (Heb.11: 24-26) & Paul (Rom.11: 13).
3. Don't follow popular trends and opinions – Exod.23: 2.
4. Don't yield to peer pressure – Prov.1: 10.
5. Live to please God and not man – 1Thess.2: 4.

XXII. Conclusion:

For us to enjoy the benefit of divine leading and guidance in this all-important task of identifying our ministerial gifts, grace and calling, we must meet up with the following pre-requisites of God:

1. Spiritual ambition – Matt.5: 6; Ps.103: 7.
2. Righteousness – Ps.15; Ps.37: 23-28; Matt.5: 8.
3. Commitment – Ps.37: 5; Prov.4: 6.
4. Diligence and watchfulness – Prov.22: 29; Jer.29: 13.
5. Faithfulness in assigned tasks and duties – Luke 19:17; 1Cor.4: 2.