

The Call Of God

By Peter Martin

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“Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

-Genesis 12:1-3

An amazing truth about our God is that He is not a distant deity that is removed from our day to day concerns, but He is an intimately involved God who calls to His people. We see this principle beautifully laid out for us in the life of Abram. In fact, the most interesting thing about Abraham is that, although he is one of the most well known and influential historical figures, he doesn't enjoy this prestige for accomplishing anything of note. He wasn't a king, he wasn't a warrior, he wasn't a great philosopher, or artist, and yet, thousands of years after he died, numerous different faiths are still studying this man's life and are proud to call him their father, in one sense or another. The reason for this is that, while he didn't achieve anything world changing, he was a man who was called by God, and strove to live worthy of that calling.

What Is God's Calling?

Many people today are really concerned with this concept of their “calling”, although many don't really understand what this means. Usually when someone uses this term, they are talking about their vocation. For instance, if someone is a really talented singer, but never becomes a musician, someone might say “I think you missed your calling.” In the church this term is also thrown around to describe any service within ministry. It seems that every job in ministry requires people to ask that all important question, “Am I called to this?”

Some have even taken this concept out of the arena of vocation and applied it to their relational life as well. When someone declares that they are looking for “the one” they are also conveying this idea of calling. In essence, what this phrase is getting at is that there is some person out there that will most fully complete them as an individual and, if they are a Christian, the one person whom God has made for them and called them to be with.

Looking at these examples it becomes clear that what the modern person means by calling is something like, what they were specifically designed by God to do. Or to put it another way, a person's calling is their purpose for existence and therefore the most fulfilling pursuits in their life. Because of this, there is much anxiety in our modern culture about "missing our calling".

Discovering Your Calling

This leads to an even more important question, how do you discover your calling? For most today, since they believe that there is only one real thing that they were created to do, and if they fail to find it, they will spend their lives in misery, they are constantly searching for that one career or person that will give them fulfillment. Some take a more practical approach and take personality tests and career placement tests to find which career, or personality type would most suit them. While others take a more "spiritual" approach by either looking for signs, or by looking within their own heart to see if they are finding the fulfillment that they were looking for. No matter what path someone takes to find their "calling" they usually struggle with at least a small level of uncertainty. This uncertainty can well up in an individual and make them doubt their decisions and possibly create instability within their lives as they move from career path to career path and relationship to relationship looking for that perfect job or person that will satisfy their soul.

To make matters worse for us is the abundance of choice that we are faced with. On the surface this seems like a good problem to have, but it actually has the opposite effect. In the past, our ancestors didn't have much choice presented to them. They grew up in small communities that didn't have that many potential careers or romantic partners available to them. If you go even further in the past, they didn't have any choice at all. They were stuck in the career field of their parents, and their partner was chosen for them by their family. While this might sound miserable to us, the fact remains that too much choice tends to paralyze the individual and fill them with anxiety about making the wrong choice.

To use a simple example, look at pictures taken decades ago versus pictures today. Back when I was a kid, camera options were limited. They didn't have that many fancy options to them, they were bulky, and they had limited film that you had to develop after you snapped the picture, meaning you couldn't even check to see if the picture was good until after you developed the film. As a result, if you look through my own photo album, or the photo album of anyone born before the 2000's you will notice that there aren't that many pictures, and that most of them are not that great from today's standards.

Most are out of focus, grainy, the lighting is bad, and usually there is at least one red eye. But no one really cared since all photos looked like this, and there was no social media that allowed you to share your photos with countless people. In contrast, today the modern phone has a far better camera than even professional photographers had access to 30 years ago. Beyond that, because they are digital, you can take an almost unlimited amount of photos and upload them to a cloud. You can preview photos, edit them, and upload them in mere seconds. All these options have made picture taking a little nerve racking as we are all trying to achieve that “perfect” photo. In other words, when there are few options, you don’t worry so much because you don’t have a choice and therefore won’t be judged harshly for taking a bad picture, or making a poor career choice. But, in the abundance of options, people judge mistakes harshly, and we judge ourselves with even more scrutiny.

If this principle is true for something as mundane as a picture, how much more true is it when it comes to a truly life altering decision like what career we want to pursue, or who we decide to marry? While there is much I can say about combating anxiety in these decisions, for now let’s simply evaluate whether or not biblical calling functions in the same way that we use the word in our modern world.

God’s Calling

“Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.”

-Genesis 12:7-8

We can see from this passage that the way Abraham understood his calling is very different than the way that we understand it today. For the modern person, we have been taught to be very self-focused, and so when we think about “calling” we think about our own potential and our own desires. For ancient man, when they heard the word “calling”, they thought of service and submission. When God calls to Abraham, even though this calling is a promise of prosperity and goodness, it remains incredibly vague. At this point, all Abraham knows is that he has been called outside of his tribe and native homeland and into a new land that he is supposed to possess. He is not told how he is to possess this land, nor is he given any insight into how his descendants will inherit the land when he had no children and his wife was barren.

If Abraham was a modern person he would have barraged God with questions and concerns. He would ask God what kind of man God was calling him to be. Whether he should strive to be a politician and govern the existing tribes in Canaan, or if he was to be a conqueror that would supplant the existing tribes, or maybe if through shrewd business deals he was to own the land. Abraham asks none of these questions, instead he merely follows the instruction of God, at great personal cost to himself, and immediately builds an altar to God and sacrifices to Him.

What this signifies, is that Abraham didn't see "calling" as God giving him a vocation or blessing for his marriage, instead he understood the call of God to be a call to sacrifice to God and call on His name. He knew that this was God's invitation for Abraham to submit his life to God and follow Him no matter what. He didn't feel entitled to anything from God, but believed that God was entitled to all of him.

"But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine."

-Isaiah 43:1

This is why we revere the life of Abraham. It isn't because he accomplished more than the average person, but it was because he understood what it meant to be called. As the above passage puts it, God calling us by name means that we belong to Him. The one who receives the call of God is the one who recognizes that their life is no longer their own, but it belongs to their God and their life is now lived in submission to Him and not their own desires. The beauty of this calling is to know that God has called you by name. Meaning that God knows you and wants to have a relationship with you, but the cost of this relationship is that everything else in our life, whether it is our career or our relationships must be done in submission to Him.

The Call To Sacrifice

"Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."

-Luke 9:23-24

When Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him, He is calling them to give up everything for His sake. He is not merely saying that they must tithe, or give up their Sunday's to go to church, by using the language of the cross, He is impressing upon them the truth that Abraham understood. When God calls you to follow Him, you become a living

sacrifice to Him. All of your wealth, all of your hopes, and all of your dreams belong to God. This doesn't mean that He will necessarily ask you to give these things up, but it is a recognition that He has the right to ask us to give up whatever He pleases and all these things now exist in service to Him. This is why Abraham was not surprised that the first thing God told him to do was to give up the most important relationship in his life, the relationship that he had with his father and the security he had in his home.

"Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you."

Genesis 12:1

This is also why Abraham is so willing to sacrifice his only son to God in Genesis 22. His heart was not set on what God could do for him, but only on what he could do for God. This doesn't mean that he forgot this at times, we will talk about one of his moral failings in a little bit, but that overall, he recognized his role towards God as one of sacrifice and submission.

This might sound like a harsh principle for some, but when we really examine the words of Christ when He calls His followers to "take up their cross" we can see that it is softened by two important points. The first is fairly obvious, if we are ever tempted to consider the words of Christ to be asking too much, we must remember that He isn't asking anything of us that He wasn't willing to do Himself.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

-Philippians 2:5-8

Unlike us, Jesus wasn't merely asked to sacrifice a mortal life that would end anyway, He was asked to give up an immortal existence free from pain and death. Jesus lived an existence that you and I can't possibly fathom. He existed, as Paul puts it in "the form of God", as well as in perfect joy and intimacy with God the Father. He wanted for nothing and had nothing to fear. He gave all that up, became a fragile human being and submitted Himself to one of the most cruel and tortuous forms of execution ever devised by man, which was merely a symbol of the true suffering He endured when He suffered for our sins before the Father. And yet, the life of Christ was not that of a solemn and joyless martyr, but a life of love and purpose.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

-John 15:9-13

From modern standards, Jesus’ life was a tragic story. He was born in poverty, raised in obscurity, and died at a young age after being abandoned by all His closest friends. And yet, on the night of His crucifixion, He speaks of having perfect joy and love within Himself. He did not speak with regret, but His words carry the very purpose and fulfillment that all of us are intuitively looking for when we talk about “calling”. So, when Jesus calls us to take up our own cross to follow Him, we remember that He first took up His own cross that He might forgive and redeem us. Are we willing to sacrifice all for the One who sacrificed all for us?

The second thing that we miss about Christ’s words is that He is giving us a universal principle of sacrifice. Meaning that it isn’t the Christian only who must sacrifice all for a purpose, when Jesus says that “whoever desires his life will lose it...” He isn’t talking about rare, tragic stories, but instead about the universal human experience. Everything that we have, our money, our time, our talent, and our relationships, all exist to serve something higher than themselves. And that higher purpose is what we will sacrifice to when it becomes necessary, whether we are conscious of this truth or not.

To illustrate this in a simple way, when children get to a certain age, they learn to ask the question “why?” When this happens, a child will use this question as a way to annoy, or frustrate the orders of their parents. A typical conversation might sound like:

Parent: It’s time to go to bed.

Child: Why?

Parent: Because it's your bedtime.

Child: Why?

Parent: Because you need a good night's sleep before school tomorrow.

Child: Why?

Parent: Because a good night's sleep will help you pay attention in class.

Child: Why?

Parent: Because it is important that you get good grades.

Child: Why?

Parent: So you get into a good school.

Child: Why?

Parent: So you can get a good job.

Child: Why?

For most parents, at this point in the conversation, or maybe a couple of sentences earlier, they will lose their temper and say something like “Because I said so!” But, as annoying as this might be, it does reveal an important point: for every action of your life, for every desire or goal, the question of “why” forces you to think of the higher goals that are moving your immediate actions. Or to put it another way, for every desire we have, whether it is as simple as eating lunch, or as complex as finding a fulfilling career, that desire is serving something greater than itself. And since our desires are in conflict with themselves, whatever the higher desire might be, is what we are sacrificing to.

For instance, when you attend school, unless you are a rare breed of person who actually enjoys it, you will find in yourself two conflicting desires. One will be to drop out, and the other will be to suffer in school so that you can graduate. Both of those desires serve something higher than themselves. The desire to drop out serves your laziness and desire for personal liberty, and your desire to graduate serves your desire to succeed as well as your higher goals of career and family. But, because these desires are in conflict, you have to sacrifice one for the other. If you decide to drop out, you are sacrificing your higher career goals, but if you stay in, you are sacrificing large amounts of time and attention to do something that you don’t want to do.

However, if we sacrifice to the wrong thing, if our aim is not high enough, we might end up sacrificing something we can’t get back for something that isn’t worthy. This is why most of us would understand that sacrificing your high school diploma for a little more autonomy in high school would be an unworthy trade that you will most likely regret later in life. But if this is true at a small level like school, what if we misplace our priorities at a cosmic level?

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”

-Luke 9:24

Jesus is claiming that He should be at the top of all our lists, that all things that we do should be in service to Him. He then assures His followers that this is the right decision, that there is no greater thing that we can live in service to. Which means that no matter how high the sacrifices of Christianity might be, they are worthy sacrifices that we will not regret. While any sacrifice made to something lesser than Christ, no matter how high or noble they might be, will ultimately disappoint us and separate us from our true

purpose found in God. Many today would think that Abram is foolish for sacrificing his father and his comfort to go to a foreign land that he knew nothing about. But we today see Abram, not as foolish but as wise.

Why? Because Abram sacrificed these things, not to satisfy some base desire for power, money, or fame, but for the sake of pleasing God. Because he set his aim at the right height, we today call him blessed and seek to live in resonance with his decision. What we must remember is that the call of God will be to great sacrifice, it is all worthy sacrifices that lead us to God Himself. As God assures Abram after he wins a great battle and sacrifices all his treasure to please God, God tells him:

“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”
Genesis 15:1

The Call To Potential

“Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”

-Genesis 12:5-7

As important as this principle is, it is vital that we don’t take this point too far. Many listening to the previous point might conclude that, since the call of God is a call to be with Him, then it doesn’t have anything to do with our earthly existence. Many Christians in the past have come to this conclusion and separated themselves from physical existence. They have retreated into caves and monasteries in order to pursue God in the spiritual plane by emptying themselves of physical concerns. However, examining the call of Abram shows us that this isn’t true.

After Abram received his calling, he didn’t become a monk or holy man, he instead worked hard as a shepherd and accrued a lot of wealth and livestock.

“Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.”
-Genesis 13:2

The interesting thing about the story is that God had never told Abram what to do when he got into the land of Canaan, and Abram never asked. This isn't because Abram thought this part of his life was insignificant, he clearly worked very hard to become as wealthy and prosperous as he did. It also isn't because he thought that his work life had nothing to do with God. When Abram offered burnt offerings to God throughout his story, he was offering his own flock. Instead, what this means is that Abram took the call of God to be something that touched every facet of his life. He believed that the call of God was a call to bring out his full potential in both his spiritual life as well as his physical.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”

-Colossians 3:18-24

We can see from passages like this, that when God calls a person to follow Him, He is calling them to wrestle with their potential, to manifest the call of God in their family and their work life. God cares deeply about our lives, He wants us to put Him first, but putting Christ first doesn't mean that everything else loses its meaning, on the contrary, all of life gains meaning in serving Him. The Christian who is really following Christ will understand that following Christ means striving hard to become a better worker, a more loving spouse, a more thoughtful child, a more proactive citizen, and a more discerning parent. The call of God is not one to be less engaged with the world, but more engaged. I love how the Dutch theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper put it:

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”

-Abraham Kuyper

The unfortunate thing is that many young people today are checking out of the physical world. They are becoming more consumed with the digital world and are falling behind the normal milestones that they are supposed to be crossing. They are leaving the home later, starting careers later, and starting families later than all previous generations, and many are choosing to never do any of these things. As much as I think the decision to check out of the physical world to pursue the spiritual is a bad choice, it is at least better than the decision to check out of the physical world for the digital.

*“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
-1 Corinthians 10:31*

That being said, I believe receiving this call of God helps us overcome some of the challenges to our modern concept of calling that I mentioned above. As stated above, the tough thing about the modern view of calling is that there is one particular thing that God has created you for. There is one specific job, one specific person, and one specific place that, if you find it, will bring you unlimited amounts of bliss and fulfillment. When we understand that the promised fulfillment of calling is true, but only when we understand that our call is to honor God, it can provide us with amazing amounts of peace when it comes to these complex life decisions.

When I first started in ministry, I had many people ask me if I was “called” to ministry. I had no idea what they meant and so I began to pray that God would show me if I was “called”. I was expecting to receive some sort of divine revelation or to have some sign from the heavens that announced clearly that I was supposed to be a minister. When nothing happened, I worried that I wasn’t supposed to be a minister, that maybe I had become one by mistake and needed to change my career path. This is when I started reading the Scriptures and trying to find out what God was “calling” me to do, when I came across this all important passage:

*“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”
-1 Thessalonians 4:3-8*

It was that first sentence that grabbed my attention: “this is the will of God...” When I was praying to understand my calling, this is what I was searching for, the will of God for my life. But the next part of the sentence is what gave me pause: “your sanctification...” I had expected Paul to say something about career or relationships, I didn’t anticipate that his advice was not about working hard to achieve the right kind of career or find “the one” but instead to orient our attention on our moral character.

The truth is, there have only been a couple of times that I believe God has spoken to me in my life, but none of those instances had anything to do with my career, or my relationships, they only had to do with my moral life and relationship with God. It was at

this point that I had a realization, I was asking God the wrong questions. I was asking God to show me what specific job or person that I should pursue. I was not asking Him how I might be faithful with what He had already given me. I wasn't seeking how to be a more faithful minister in the position I already had, or how to be a more loving person to the relationships that God had already given me, I was asking for future guidance on life decisions that weren't in front of me, and I was neglecting to be faithful to what God had already given me.

When I started to do that, God revealed all sorts of things to me. I saw how selfish I could be towards my family and friends, I saw how I was not spending enough time with those that I loved, I was allowing sins like lust to dominate my heart, and I was not being a very diligent employee. As I began to seek what it meant to honor God in all these areas, I began to see true opportunities when they came. Up until that point, I was so dissatisfied with what I had, I saw everything as a sign that I should leave what I had to pursue something else. I had bought into the lie that if I could just get that job, or that girl, I would finally be happy, I didn't realize that the main obstacle to my own happiness was my own heart. When I started to discipline myself to seek contentment in the place that God had me, and to become more competent and faithful in every other aspect of my life, I was open to seeing real opportunities that I could pursue without neglecting or abandoning the responsibilities that God had already given me.

If someone were to ask me today, "Did God call you to plant this church?" My honest answer would be that I received no direct calling from God, no moment of divine revelation that showed me that God was commanding me to do this. I saw an area of Tucson that was underserved, I saw people in my life who could come alongside me and shared my vision, and I sought to honor God and my family to the best of my ability. It reminds me of what Paul says when he expresses a desire to visit the church at Rome:

"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."

-Romans 1:9-12

Notice that God didn't *tell* Paul to visit Rome, Paul simply followed a desire that he had to bless the church there and God answered that desire, though not in the way that he thought. The truth is, the circumstances of our lives are always changing. People move

in and out of our lives, opportunities change, and careers change. I couldn't even tell someone with certainty that this is what I will do for the rest of my life. I can say that I am happy doing what I am today and have no interest in changing careers, and I am daily seeking to do the best possible job that I can.

This perspective will serve you well. It keeps you content with what you have, and faithful in your pursuit of God and His blessings for you. It also helps you cultivate eternal fruit in an ever changing world. Even if you lose your job unexpectedly, or your partner leaves you, if you have learned to discipline your soul towards God, you will be able to learn the lessons you need to from that situation, to grieve appropriately, and move forward without resentment. Habits of the soul are eternal, they follow us wherever we go. This means that if you develop bad habits, no matter what relationship or job you might find yourself in, it won't be successful. But if you cultivate the right habits, no matter where you find yourself, you will be met with success and fulfillment.

This lesson is demonstrated for us really well in the life of Joseph later on in the book of Genesis. When he is living with his family, he is a faithful son who brings prosperity to his family. Even when he is betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, he remains faithful and rises up in his master's house. After being betrayed in his master's home, he is faithful even in prison and rises up there as well. While Joseph's circumstances were outside his control, his outlook and perspective were well within his control. He kept his eyes on God, made the right sacrifices in his life, and in all circumstances, whether in adversity or prosperity, he pleased the God who had called him.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love..."

-Ephesians 4:1-2

The Call To Repentance

"Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, 'Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. 'Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 'Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.'"

-Genesis 12:10-13

All this doesn't not mean that we won't lose our way every now and then. Abram experiences an unavoidable situation in which he must leave the land that God had called him to in order to avoid a famine. While he is there, he is filled with fear and forgets one of the main things that God had called him to, and that was being a faithful husband to Sarai. In order to ensure his own preservation, he asks his wife to essentially become a concubine to the Pharaoh so that he might prosper as a result.

We shouldn't be too quick to judge Abram harshly, ancient Egypt wasn't exactly a civilized place and there was a very real probability that he would have been killed by the Pharaoh so that he could force his wife to be a part of his harem. Many of us faced with that same possibility might make the same mistake. However, it remains a mistake.

God had promised to prosper Abram, and he allowed this calling to go to his head and he justified this harmful behavior in order to save himself. He should have trusted God to protect him and his wife, knowing that God would not have gone back on his promise to prosper Abram, but he instead compromised his morals to protect himself on his own terms. He may have even believed he was doing God a favor by protecting himself to ensure God's promise, this will become an unfortunate theme in Abram's life. But this is not what God wanted, and after Sarai is taken by the Pharaoh, God supernaturally protects Sarai and has a pagan king rebuke Abram:

"But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 'Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way.'" So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had."

-Genesis 12:17-20

This is something that we are all vulnerable to. We forget that our primary calling is to be with God and not to prosper on this earth. It is so easy for us to fall into areas of moral compromise, or even more frequently, moral atrophy. As Jesus says in Luke 9:23, the one who comes after Him must: "...deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me..." The call of God is not a one time thing, it is a daily calling that we must respond to each and every day. It is easy to fall into the mistake of Abram though and get caught up in the daily concerns of life. But we must remain diligent so that this type of moral atrophy doesn't happen.

But the beautiful thing about studying the life of saints who have come before us, is that they can not only teach us how to live a life worthy of our calling, but they can teach us how to repent well when we make mistakes:

“Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”

-Genesis 13:1-4

Abram didn't spend time wallowing in self pity, nor did he hide his mistake and run from God's calling. He owned his mistake and humbly journeyed back to where he was before he had fallen and he recommitted himself to God.

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...”

-Revelation 2:5

Learning to repent well is part of what it means to live worthy of our calling, since we will all at times lose our way and fail. The unfortunate truth is that none of us can keep God centered in our lives permanently, we all lose sight of what is most important and we all fall short of the glory of God. The difference between the Christian who is constantly getting better in their lives, and the Christian who is slowly getting worse, has everything to do with repentance. Repentance is the ability to experience an appropriate sorrow over the wrong things that we have done, to confess those wrongs to God, to seek to make amends to the ones that we have hurt, and then commit to pursuing real change in our behavior.

Unfortunately this has become a bit of a lost art in the Christian church. Most Christians today have not had repentance shown as a good thing to them. They instead see church leaders present themselves as being flawless followers of God. This makes people want to hide their mistakes from other Christians, and even from God. This causes them to either be defeated by their guilt and shame, or to justify their bad behavior and never learn from it. They have missed the benefits, and even the beauty that is contained in a life that is so devoted to God that they are constantly seeking repentance. I love how Charles Spurgeon described the life of repentance:

“There is another mistake many poor people make when they are thinking about salvation, and that is that they cannot repent enough. They imagine that were they to repent up to a certain degree, they would be saved... “

Repentance, moreover, is never perfect in any man in this mortal state. We never get perfect faith so as to be entirely free from doubting. And we never get repentance which is free from some hardness of heart. The most sincere penitent that you know will feel himself to be partially impenitent. Repentance is also a continual lifelong act. It will continually grow. I believe a Christian on his deathbed will more bitterly repent than he ever did before. It is a thing to be done all your lifelong. Sinning and repenting— sinning and repenting make up a Christian’s life! Repenting and believing in Jesus—repenting and believing in Jesus make up the consummation of his happiness!”

-Charles Spurgeon

We should praise God that His calling in our lives is one that leads, not to some temporary benefit or earthly blessing, but instead it is a call to know Him and follow Him. We develop this calling and pursue it through every area of our life, our career, our earthly relationships, and even our failures. This gives our lives incredible meaning and joy that is found in fellowship with our beautiful Lord.

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

-John 15:16