

The Teacher and His Calling

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers....As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me...for the work whereunto I have called them”
(Acts 13:1-2).

Objectives

1. Define calling and distinguish between the primary calling, secondary calling, and vocational calling.
2. Identify three marks of a good teacher.
3. Describe the role of teaching in fulfillment of the Great Commission.
4. Explain the scriptural importance of teaching.
5. Establish the scriptural foundation of the ministry of the teacher as part of the fivefold ministry.
6. Determine how teaching and/or the teacher helps to fulfill Ephesians 4:12-15.
7. Identify the partnership between the human teacher and the Divine.
8. Explain how a teacher takes a student from a passage to practice.
9. Tell how teaching was important in the Early Church.
10. Prove the call to teach as being part of the life of the Apostle Paul.

Introduction

A search for resource material on “The Teacher and His Calling” yielded scarce results on such a pivotal subject. Hopefully, this lesson will be a widespread blessing to anyone that feels the prompting of God to be a Christian teacher.

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Author's personal testimony: In my local church any minister that preached that was boring was usually tagged with the title "teacher." Right before the listener would drift off to sleep, he would say, "Oh! He is a teacher." I learned early in Christian life to equate teacher with dull and boring. It troubled me when I began to realize that God had called me into the teaching ministry. Was I commissioned to a lifetime of putting people to sleep? I think not! Thank God, I was quickly rescued through association with teachers that were exceptional, energetic, encouraging, exciting—yet educational. They became my role models. To this day, I detest students sleeping in my classes. I will do just about anything to keep them awake.

God calls both men and women. I refer to "his call" throughout this lesson. This is not meant to exclude women from being part of the teaching ministry or faculty development process. Insert gender preference where appropriate. All Christians are called. We were created by God. He has a purpose and there is something He wants us to do. The question is not, "Am I called?" but rather, "What is my calling?"

The Teacher and His Call

Dr. Thomas Addinton and Dr. Stephen Graves wrote an excellent little book entitled *A Case for Calling*. In it they define "calling" as: "God's personal invitation for me to work on his agenda, using the talents I've been given in ways that are eternally significant." Calling is what I do to fit into God's purpose.

We are "called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose..." (2 Timothy 1:9). "I therefore, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

The Teacher and His Purpose

Your life matters in God's plan (Jeremiah 29:11). My calling is my way of contributing to God's purpose in my life. In the Bible "purpose" and "calling" are closely linked. When I walk worthy of my calling I am doing what God intends for me to do with my life. We are called according to His purpose. The calling is inseparably connected with His purpose.

"In the beginning God created..." (Genesis 1:1, NIV). The opening words in the Bible are so significant. Among other things, they tell us much about ourselves. We are created. This means we also have a purpose and a future. Something that is created succeeds best when it is doing what it was purposed to do. Our calling is to become what we were created to be. Addinton and Graves said, "Without purpose for existence, existence becomes the sole purpose of life."

"Who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time" (2 Timothy 1:9, NIV).

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A study or poll was conducted in *USA Today*. It found that if people could ask God just one question most would want to know, “What is my purpose in life?”

The Teacher and His Primary and Secondary Call

Our primary call is to know the One that called us: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

The primary call is universal—for everyone, everywhere, throughout all of time. It is the call to be in a correct and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This requires us responding to God’s call:

- To salvation (Luke 19:10; Matthew 11:28).
- To the kingdom (Matthew 6:33; 11:12; Esther 4:14).
- To a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:3-7).
- To be a disciple (Matthew 10:24-25; 28:19-20).

It entails:

- Obedience to the salvation plan (Acts 2:38).
- A growing, maturing, relationship with God (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).
- Living a brand new, abundant life (John 10:10).
- Becoming a student of His Word (2 Timothy 2:15).
- Obeying (not just hearing) His Word (James 1:22).

In order to show others the way, one must know the way and go the way first. The prerequisite to an effective teaching ministry and a call to teach is we must first be submitted, committed, and transformed ourselves. “Calling them to himself...” (Mark 10:42). Jesus first calls us to Himself and then He calls us to be a blessing and minister to others.

Every Christian receives at least two types of calls:

The Call	Dimension	Purpose			Kingdom Math
General/Universal Call	Salvation	To save.	Called to HIM (Mark 10:42).	Called to the Kingdom.	Adding to the Kingdom (Acts 2:47).
Secondary	Service	To serve.	Called to do a work for HIM.	Called to the work of the Kingdom.	Advancing the Kingdom (Acts 1:8).

The Teacher and His Specific, Vocational Call

Additionally, there are those that are called into the fivefold ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Of course, in this lesson we are mostly concerned with the calling to be a teacher.

The calling, at this level, encapsulates our work or vocation. The English word “vocation” comes from the Latin *vocare* and means “to call.”

Your calling is a summons from God to use your life and gifts for the advancement of His kingdom.

The Teacher and the Timing of Receiving His Call

When did you receive the call? “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5, NIV).

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

God had a purpose in mind for us from the beginning. His call, however, takes a lifetime to develop and perfect. We strive for continuous improvement, mastery of teaching skills and techniques, and are on a perpetual pursuit of excellence.

The Teacher and His Mission

Teachers are called with a threefold purpose:

Teach them to win them.	“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations”
Teach them to keep them.	Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).
Teach them to send them.	“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations”

Notice how the fulfillment of the Great Commission never stops until the coming of the Lord. It is a continuous loop. You go, teach and convert others to Christ, and then teach them to be disciples, and to observe all that Christ commanded. One of those commands is to reach the world. So, you teach them to send them. The cycle happens all over again. Each one that you reach has a role to play in the Great Commission: going, reaching, teaching, and sending. We produce Christians that are Bible-believing, Bible-living, and Bible-witnessing.

The Great Commission is to teach and win the lost and to train the saved. There should be a balance between bringing people in (evangelism) and building people up (edification). We should not emphasize one to the exclusion of the other.

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The same cycle or continuous loop can also be seen in 2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

The Teacher and His Motivation

Jared T. Bigham and Samuel J. Smith in “Called to Teach: Interpreting the Phenomenon of Calling as a Motivating Factor” realized that those that experience a spiritual calling in the areas of service recognize a pull from an external source. This ignites an inner motivation and passion that gives better meaning to their careers. Teachers, with their low pay (if any pay at all), rely on such motivating factors that are beyond routine criteria for selecting a career. If a teacher is getting involved in the teaching ministry for extrinsic rewards like money and prestige they will likely be poor, unsatisfied teachers. Thank God for the hundreds of Bible School teachers and multiplied hundreds of thousands of Christian education teachers that sacrifice to equip workers in the kingdom. They do it because they are summonsed to the kingdom for such a time as this. The extrinsic rewards rarely balance with the intrinsic call and the amount of self that is given to the job.

Bigham and Smith, in their research, found that those that experience a calling in relation to their teaching understood that identifying the call was more of a process over a period of months or years, rather than a onetime event. Sensing a call from God deeply added a spiritual sense of commitment to their teaching.

Parker J. Palmer in *The Courage to Teach* said that, “any authentic call ultimately comes from the voice of the *teacher within*, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self.” He went on to state, “In a culture that somehow equates work with suffering, it is revolutionary to suggest that the best inward sign of vocation is deep gladness—revolutionary but true. If a work is mine to do, it will make me glad over the long haul, despite the difficult days.”

Teaching is a calling from God. Devoting one’s soul—submitting to the call of God—is more important than a job, money, and public identification.

The Teacher and Scriptural Importance of Teaching

Following are a few Scriptures that establish the importance of teaching:

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

“My people are ruined because they don't know what's right or true” (Hosea 4:6, MSG).

“Point your kids in the right direction — when they're old they won't be lost” (Proverbs 22:6, MSG).

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children....” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Teaching is not merely an exercise conducted with children. It is a holy task impacting children and God’s people; both in the present generation and those that are to come.

“And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth...” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The Teacher and Scriptural Foundation of His Call

The teaching ministry is on the list of God’s selected workers in His kingdom. Check out the scriptural backing:

“A bishop then must be blameless...apt to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2).

“And the servant of the Lord must...be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:24-25). (A teacher, of necessity, must be gentle, patient, and meek in order to instruct effectively.)

Many bible translations state those in spiritual leadership must be “able to teach” rather than “apt to teach.” They must possess the general ability to instruct and explain the doctrine.

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14, NASB). Mature saints should be able to teach others.

Every pastor teaches but not every teacher is a pastor; not every pastor is called to be a teacher. However, there are those select men and women who have a function or specialty as a teacher:

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching” (Romans 12:6-7, NKJV).

“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28, NKJV).

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“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11, NKJV).

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1, NKJV).

“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (2 Timothy 2:2, NLT).

The Teacher and His Position in the Fivefold Ministry

All five ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 can—and should—be active in the twenty-first century apostolic church. They minister together—cooperatively and not in competition with each other—to bring about spiritual maturity in the lives of every believer. Each of these specialized ministries is an extension of the ministry of Christ Himself. Jesus embodied and exemplified the fivefold ministry.

Ministry	Kingdom Function	Ministry Explained in Brief	How Jesus Fulfilled It
Apostles	Govern	Is sent out.	Sent by God (John 3:16).
Prophets	Guide	Listens to God and speaks for Him.	Foretold events, was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and words spoken were a revelation from God.
Evangelists	Gather	Brings good news and eagerly shares the message of salvation.	He embodies the Good News. See Him at work with the Samaritan woman in John 4.
Pastors	Guard	Shepherds God’s people.	Referred to as the Good Shepherd who came to lead people. See John 10:11.
Teachers	Ground	Teaches and enlightens God’s people in doctrine and lifestyle.	Often referred to as Teacher. He taught with authority. See John 13:13.

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15, Emphasis mine).

There are at least three goals of the fivefold ministry revealed in Ephesians 4:12:

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1. Perfect the saints. To perfect means to equip, complete, and prepare.
2. Equip God's people for works of service. "To train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church" (MSG).
3. Edify or build up of the body of Christ. To edify insinuates that the minister is promoting the growth of another.

The fivefold ministry works together to achieve these goals until God's people:

1. Reach the unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. In order to have unity or knowledge one must first understand truth,
2. Mature or become perfect: "Fully developed within and without" (MSG).
3. Attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, fully developed, and brought to completion, ready for use in the kingdom.
4. Reject false teachers and preachers. We can best reject the counterfeit when we have a full understanding of the genuine.
5. Know the whole truth and speak it wisely and in love.
6. Grow in every way to be fully like Christ.

Go back through the two lists. Notice how many of the points are directly related to the teacher and his teaching ministry. The purpose of teaching is to prepare the saints for the ministry and to assist in their maturing. Teachers build a strong foundation and provide spiritual stability.

The Teacher and His Divine Partnership

Robert W. Pazmino in *Basics of Teaching for Christians* tells us that teaching is a gift of love we wholeheartedly offer to God and to His people. He believes—and this author concurs—that we are in a partnership between human teachers and the Divine teacher. We rapidly recognize our utter dependence on God from the beginning stages of responding to His call to teach. It is a joint venture. His anointing, call, illumination, and inspiration is funneled through human lips.

"For we are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). We are teachers together with God. He is at work, teaching through us. Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). He was almost correct. Jesus was not only a teacher sent from God. He was God that came to teach. When He returned to heaven His teaching ministry continued through those He called—and calls—and through the Holy Spirit.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things..." (John 14:26).

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). I like how *The Message* paraphrases this verse, "The Spirit of the Truth...will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth..." It is easy to picture our calling as a teacher; taking students by the hands and hearts and guiding them in truth.

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The Teacher and His Qualifications for the Call

Dr. Howard G. Hendricks in *The 7 Laws of the Teacher* has found that there are three marks of a good teacher. These are qualities that we look for in teachers because they are the same ones that God looks for. He will be:

- Faithful
- Available
- Teachable

The Teacher and His Authority and Anointing

Within we have the:

- Spirit.
- Call.
- Gifting.
- Authority.
- Anointing.

God empowers—through His Spirit—those He calls with his anointing and authority. Notice the little word there at the core of the bigger one. It is “author.” We are teaching at the bidding of the Author. He is at the center of not only our authority but hopefully everything we teach as well.

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18, NASU).

“When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29, NASU).

Authority comes from different sources:

- Tradition. The responsibility in the past had authority so it is passed on.
- Knowledge. We’ve learned therefore we teach.
- Position of responsibility. The position in society brings authority.
- Anointing and calling. These come from God. The three categories above never measure up to the authority that comes from the One who possesses all authority and power.

“These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15, NASU).

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The Teacher and His Role – Call

Gregory C. Carlson in *Rock Solid Teacher* once spoke of the role of the teacher. On one hand we have the students. On the other we have the Word of God. Bringing those two things together involves the spiritual dynamic of life change. He went on to say that we take students:

“From the passage;
To the principle;
Toward the practice.”

We open God’s Word, praying that the Lord will open our students’ hearts, explain biblical principles, and trust the students will put them into practice.

We teach from the heart of God, with the heart of a teacher, and aim at the heart of our classroom audience. All these hearts need to be connected for teaching and preaching to be effective.

The Teacher and His Call to Transform Lives

Spiritual, God-called teachers understand that they are involved in transforming lives. It is our unique calling. We are people builders. Christian education is more than passing on information. It is about transformation—about shaping lives. It is only the submitted, committed, called teacher that will effectively transform others.

“Nature FORMS us,
Sin DEFORMS us,
School INFORMS us
But only Christ TRANSFORMS us.”
(Benjamin R. DeJong)

The Teacher and the Early Church Model

Teaching; grounding believers in the apostolic doctrine was paramount in the Early Church starting in the beginning verse of Acts and extending all the way to the last verse of the book. It should continue in the twenty-first century, and until Jesus comes.

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up” (Acts 1:1-2). (Did you notice that? Jesus taught until the day He left the earth. After that He continues teaching through us.)

“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).

It is not coincidental that the Acts of Apostles begins with the word “teach” in the opening verse and the closing verse contains “teaching.” Acts closes with Paul preaching and teaching, from morning to night.

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That is a church in action. How can we have any less today, when false teachings abound and false teachers have gained popularity?

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine...” (Acts 2:42). Other words for “steadfastly” help strengthen our role in teaching apostolic truth.

We should teach:

- Persistently
- Consistently
- Unwaveringly
- Faithfully
- Solidly
- Unshakably
- Firmly
- Reliably

All believers, “committed themselves” (MSG); “devoted themselves” (NLT); and “spent their time learning the apostles' teaching” (NCV).

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

“And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). It is noteworthy that the community identified believers as Christ-like in direct connection with their being taught.

The Apostle Paul must have felt teaching to be an important role. He spent eighteen months in one place teaching the Word (Acts 18:11). In the next chapter he spends two years teaching the Word in a daily Bible school (Acts 19:9-10).

Paul identified the call to teach as part of his divine appointment and ordination: “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Timothy 1:11). “Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not; a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1 Timothy 2:7). What a privilege, to stretch our hands across multiplied centuries and join it with our teaching colleagues in the Early Church. Teaching truth is still urgent, vital and presses us forward.

Conclusion

As Bible school teachers we are touching people, transmitting truth, and transforming nations. We have been ordained as teachers to the nations! W. C. Pearce (in his last message to teachers and workers at his church) said with a prophetic clarity and emphasis, “If this were my last message to this great congregation of Christians, and I had only three words to say, those words would be: ‘Teach, teach, teach.’”

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Lesson in Review

1. Define calling. _____

2. Distinguish between primary, secondary and vocational calling. _____

3. According to an *USA Today* survey if people could ask God one question what would it be?

4. What does the primary call entail? _____

5. What should be the motivating factor(s) in becoming a teacher? _____

6. What is the best inward sign of a God-called vocation? _____

7. What type of teacher is effectively involved in transforming lives? _____

8. According to Dr. Howard G. Hendricks what are three marks or qualifications of a good teacher?

9. According to this lesson what is the threefold purpose of a teacher's call? _____

10. What type of Christian(s) are we trying to produce in our teaching? _____

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11. What balance should be achieved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission? _____

12. Provide three scriptural references that speak of the importance of teaching. _____

13. Provide three scriptural references that prove that the teacher is on the list of God's selected workers. _____

14. What does it mean to take students from the passage of God's Word toward practice? _____

15. What three hearts are connected to effective preaching and teaching? _____

16. Prove, using Scripture, that all church leaders should possess the general ability to teach. _____

17. What are the three goals of the fivefold ministry? _____

18. What likely resulted in the Antioch believers becoming identified as Christians? _____

19. Show that Paul thought that the teaching ministry was important. _____

20. What three words did W. C. Pearce say would be his last message to his congregation? _____