

## Case Studies of Called Lives – Week One

This Quiet Time series is used in conjunction with *The Curtain Call*, a series of lessons taught on March 9-10, 2007. Please see [www.chicagochurch.org](http://www.chicagochurch.org).

Welcome to our first seven cases of called lives in the Bible. The purpose of this series is to fine tune our ability to sense what God is doing in our lives by examining the ways he has worked in the lives of others.

Cell phones, mp3 players and computers compete for and win a sizable portion of our weekly attention. Quietly reading a book has been usurped by watching movies, resulting in less reflection than in previous generations. The tools to decipher the important voices in our lives are still available but we may need to sharpen our reading and listening skills for this great era that we live in—especially when it comes to the Bible. This will enable us to discern our various callings from God so that we do not miss the most significant signals all around us.

This topic involves important questions. If God were reaching out to you (outside of placing a big sign in the sky) how would you know? If He had some special service for you to accomplish, a mission to accept, a feat to perform, a need for you to fill or a role in which to serve, how would you know? And how would you discern between your wants and His calling, your likes and His design, your drive and His will? How would you know if you were resisting God?

Rather than answer these questions for you, this series is designed to take you to the places where those answers are to be found. You are not going to be “spoon fed” solutions according to your life predicament, but instead, you should be strengthened in your deciphering techniques. Over the next four weeks, twenty-eight lives will be examined and you will have to assess which kind of summons they were receiving from God. Was it “give up everything and know God”—the **general calling**, “go anywhere to serve God”—a **missional calling**, “do anything to please him or make him known”—a **primal calling** “or become whatever God needs you in a tough situation”—a **crucial calling**? Some of these people received more than one calling, even in the same moment. What about you? Are you aware of your current calling, in Christ?

### Getting Started

First, listen to the lessons Online at [www.chicagochurch.org](http://www.chicagochurch.org) under *The Curtain Call* (located under Sermons, then Congregational, then Special Events). Now you are ready for Day One but do not be misled by the brevity of these case studies. You must do the work of these assignments in order for them to actually have an effect.

## **Day One –Moses**

### **Read Hebrews 11:24-27**

Key words: Refused, Chose, Regarded, Persevered

Other texts: Exodus 2-4, Acts 7:20-36,

At a point in Moses life when he could cash in on his Egyptian upbringing he gave it up. He turned away from immediate pleasure, forfeited his status and decided not to take advantage of the privileges of being raised among Egyptian royalties (Exodus 4:19-20, Hebrews 11:24). He also lost his second family (Hebrews 11:24), access to Egyptian treasures (Hebrews 11:26) and the accessible “pleasures of sin” (Hebrews 11:25).

Nonetheless, Moses entered into the greatest fellowship with The LORD known to man until that time. God achieved eternal purposes through him and he participated in the most unforgettable moment of deliverance in all of the Old Testament (Exodus 14:29-31). Formerly bitter and grieving slaves now sang great verses like Exodus 15:10-13. Giving up the momentary meant positively affecting the eternal.

- 1) For Moses, circle his call (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
- 2) Did Moses’ apprehension of God’s call come overnight or over a long time?
- 3) What purpose did his years in an Egyptian home serve for God?
- 4) What purpose did his years in exile serve for Moses?

## **Day Two –Nehemiah**

### **Read Nehemiah 1-2**

Key phrases: “God had put,” “hand of my God upon me”

Nehemiah served King Artaxerxes as a cup-bearer who deeply cared and inquired about the Jewish remnant (Nehemiah 1:2). F. B. Meyer wrote that “He lived in the inner part of the palace, and was necessarily excluded from the great deeds of the stirring outward world.”<sup>1</sup> After he discovered the state of affairs of Jerusalem from his brother he took his burden in prayer to God. At the end of his petition he said “Give your servant success today by granting him favor in presence of this man,” referring to the King, for Nehemiah knew that he was lined to be part of the solution (1:11). He appealed to the King, received an open door, went to Jerusalem to scope things out, waited to tell the brothers “what my God had put in my heart” (2:12). Later he told the officials of God’s blessing and the king’s response and they said, “Let us start rebuilding” (2:17-18). There were many obstacles along the way that called for such a person as Nehemiah who constantly turned to God for help.

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<sup>1</sup> F. B. Meyer, D.D., Our Daily Homily, 1 Samuel-Job.

- 1) For Nehemiah, circle his call (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
- 2) Why did Nehemiah seem startled by the facts of Jerusalem's condition? Could his isolation have been providential?
- 3) What was it that led the cup bearer to use his connection in a high place?
- 4) What do you think led Nehemiah to know what God had put on his heart?
- 5) Are you in an opportune situation where God is putting something on your heart? (Think through your observations, experience and gut instincts). Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Day Three – Simeon and Anna**

Read Luke 2:25-38

Key words/phrases: “righteous and devout,” “never left the temple,” “looking forward,” waiting

Simeon and Anna were poster-children of holy people of God among the Jews. He was “righteous and devout” and apparently waiting to see God’s comfort of Israel through the Messiah. The Holy Spirit chose for him to understand history’s most important developments concerning the Christ. Anna “was very old” and “never left the temple night and day, fasting and praying.” She was the first to proclaim to Jerusalem about Jesus, the Christ (Luke 2:38). God especially works through such people.

- 1) For Anna and Simeon circle their call (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
- 2) Is there a connection between living the life and being rewarded?
- 3) There is no evidence that Anna and Simeon were committed “day and night” because of external motivations. Therefore, what inspired them to such faithfulness?
- 4) In what area can you become the model of for other Christians in your small group? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Day Four – Jonah**

Read Luke 1:1-16, 3:1-10

Key words/phrases: “but Jonah ran away,” “to flee from the Lord,” “they turned from their evil ways”

The people of Nineveh were arguably the most hostile group around at that time. The city’s wickedness was the reason that the Lord was going to send Jonah to preach “against it.” Perhaps this seemed like an impossible mission. One thing is certain—at no point did Jonah ever demonstrate a desire to go to Nineveh. Jonah reluctantly went only after he first tried to go in the opposite direction. And he

knew this mission was God's will. Jonah was candid about his reluctance, resistance, and attempts to flee from God (Jonah 2).

Even after he saw the success of this mission he resented his involvement and God's mercy towards the hostile people of Assyria (Jonah 3:5, 4:1). Though God made Jonah uniquely suited for this task, it did not mean that Jonah's own desire was in line with Nineveh's spiritual needs. In fact, in the end Jonah was still working out his attitudes with the Lord, who was patiently steering Jonah through his response (Jonah 4:4-11).

- 1) Circle Jonah's calling (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
- 2) Why would God use such a reluctant witness as Jonah?
- 3) What were some of the positive traits did Jonah demonstrated?
- 4) What is the modern mission that, to you, resembles Nineveh, in whom you might act as Jonah? (Chicago's tough neighborhoods, places in the Middle East where Christianity is illegal, Africa's Sudan, North Korea)

### **Day Five – Aaron**

#### **Read Exodus 4:10-31**

Key words/phrases: "he can speak well", "as if he were your mouth"

Other texts: Exodus 5-14, 32

Sometimes people humbly fill in a gap with some giftedness but their truer calling comes along later. Consider the first calling of Aaron, the brother of Moses.

Aaron was able to speak better than Moses as his aid. This gap- speaker was important because he had a better connection to the Hebrews than his brother who grew up in a privileged, Egyptian setting. Unknowingly, he was being prepared for a later role of mediation. This function put a strain on him, and he seemed insecure as he stood in an important gap in Moses' presence. Aaron later failed as a gap leader when he was left alone—think golden calf, thousands dead (Exodus 32). He was not a gifted leader. *"Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies."* (Exodus 32:25)

- 1) Circle Aaron's calling (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
- 2) Why was Aaron a good choice for helping Moses other than his speaking ability?
- 3) From your memory, was Aaron successful in helping Moses?
- 4) What was Aaron's obvious failure in Exodus 32?
- 5) What incidents in Aaron's leadership reveal that he could be a good priest?

6) What is one of your strengths? \_\_\_\_\_

### Day Six – Aaron Again

Read Hebrews 5:1-4

Other texts: Leviticus 16

Key phrases: “he must be called by God”

Through the golden-calf tragedy Aaron became largely responsible for the sins of Israel. He became familiar and empathetic with God’s people and God was providentially establishing him for a niche role. Leviticus 16 indicates that he would preside over the atonement rituals involving the two goats, for the community. The author of Hebrews wrote—“*Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. No one takes this honor upon himself; **he must be called by God, just as Aaron was.***” (Hebrews 5:1-4, “emphasis mine)

Aaron’s heritage (being the brother of Moses) and life preparation involving personal failure (failure with golden calf incident), among other things enabled him to be given an honored calling as a mediator of two perspectives—as a chief sinner and one who understood firsthand about a holy and merciful God.

- 1) Circle this calling of Aaron (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
  - 2) Why was Aaron set up for this role?
  - 3) How does his ministry parallel a recovery ministry (addiction, divorce, etc.)?
  - 4) Does his mean that our past failures can tie in to our calling from God?
  - 5) What past failure of yours might enable you to help others?
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### Day Seven – Joseph of Arimathea

Read Matthew 27:57-62

Other texts: Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42

Key phrases: “had become a disciple”

Joseph was a member of the ruling counsel and a rich man. He is among those who were secretive about their thoughts of discipleship—“and *Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews*” (John 19:38).

This story of Joseph appears in all four Gospels (a fact which, in itself, is marvelous). And the word “disciple” is used to describe him in Matthew and John. The impression of this story is that he was initially covert about his belief in Jesus.

In time though, the example of Jesus must have left an impression that he could not suppress. He did not consent to Jesus’ death and made it known. According to Mark’s Gospel He “*went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.*” This demonstrative act probably led to his losing his position but it would not have mattered. Joseph went far in his association with Jesus. He saw to it that Jesus was laid in his expensive tomb.

It is apparent that Joseph had been a seeker, someone who was becoming a disciple but had not fully become one. Then, in the instant that he dared to identify with Jesus’ body, he crossed over and found a place in the stories told by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- 1) Circle Joseph of Arimethea’s calling (General, Missional, Primal, Crucial).
  - 2) What was Joseph’s cost in identifying with Jesus?
  - 3) Why do *you* think this story was covered by all four Gospel writers?
  - 4) What would be the demonstrative act for Jesus in today’s religious climate?
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