

an essay:

ON THREE ELEMENTS OF A PROPER CALL TO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Robert Baral
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I. A QUESTION – HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE ARE CALLED TO MINISTRY?

How do we know if we are indeed called to Christian Ministry? What are the elements of a proper call to Christian Ministry? We may identify at least three: First, that we feel GOD's call upon us; Second, that those around you in, especially in The Church, must recognize ministry gifts in you and their proper application to the service of GOD's Kingdom and people; Third, that The Church formally and officially calls you and anoints you to serve within The Church. Without these three elements, we do not have a proper call to Christian Ministry.

II. THAT WE FEEL GOD'S CALL UPON US

First, that we feel GOD's call upon us. Do we have an internal sense that The HOLY SPIRIT is stirring us to serve in Ministry? Then we must be in faithful submission to The Church. We must have the highest reverence for GOD and His Word. We must have an earnest heart to serve, love and shepherd others.

But we are only human, and this internal sense of calling can be highly subjective. We must look at the motives that drive us to seek such a position. Our desire must not be to serve ourselves, but to serve GOD and His people. Are we seeking to rule to build ourselves up in our own eyes? Or are we seeking to serve to build up CHRIST's Kingdom?

This internal sense of calling to Ministry often gives us an overwhelming sense of urgency, that we must be immediately in GOD's service in an official position in The Church. But what is really needed is time to stand back and consider quietly and objectively, within ourselves and with others around us and over us. This can help us discern if this is just our emotions speaking, or ego craving or our hearts thirsting after The LORD.

III. THAT THOSE AROUND US RECOGNIZE A CALLING UPON US

Second, that those around us, especially in The Church, recognize a call of GOD upon us. They must recognize ministry gifts in you and their proper application to the service of GOD's Kingdom and people. Do we have a willingness to serve in humility and piety? And do we use the gifts, whatever they may be given to us by GOD, to do so? And do others see this in us?

Or do they see in us a lust for worldly acclaim and the applause of men? We may have all knowledge, and gifts of every kind, but if they are not employed in Christian Love, they are wasted on us! So when we speak, do our fellow Christians hear a noisy gong? When we serve, do they see a vain man dressing himself in purple robes?

Are faithful in our service as a Layman? If not, how will be faithful as a Clergyman? When constructive criticism and correction is offered to us in CHRIST's Love, are we angry and insulted? Or do we receive it quietly and consider it prayerfully? And if we err, do we admit it ask for forgiveness from both GOD and our fellow Believers?

The Spirit of GOD must give evidence to your fellow Christians and The Church herself. But if those who know us and see our works in CHRIST's Name find only arrogance and pride, this is certainly not a confirmation of GOD's call upon us for Ministry service. It is, in fact, just the opposite.

IV. THAT THE CHURCH FORMALLY RECOGNIZE A CALL UPON US

Third, that The Church formally and officially calls you and anoints you to serve within The Church. We do not ordain ourselves. Nor are we ordained by the Laity outside of established Church authority. Only those who are duly ordained within The Church may ordain others. The laying on of hands and the coming down of The HOLY SPIRIT upon those who are ordained lies only within the apostolic authority of The faithful Church and her Elders and Bishops.

Those who would seek ordination must pass through a gauntlet of testing. They must be examined. Their faithfulness must be tried. Their gifts must be observed in action. His capabilities must be put to the fire of service to see what remains and what is burned away. They must be of such a life that they will not bring reproach upon The Name of CHRIST or His Church.

V. IN CONCLUSION – WITHOUT THESE 3 ELEMENTS, THERE IS NO CALL

Therefore, the proper and valid call to Christian Ministry must contain all three of these elements: First, an internal sense that GOD is calling you. Second, a recognition by those around you that GOD has indeed given you gifts for The Ministry, and that you use them properly in service of GOD and His people. Third, formal calling and anointing by duly authorized Church authority into Church office. Without all 3 of these, no man is in fact validly and properly called to Christian Ministry!