

Live Your Calling Reflection

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Define your Calling

Approaching graduation this semester has caused me to sit back and reflect on the calling of my life, bringing me back to remember why I came to Alliance Theological Seminary. I know that my primary calling is first and foremost to be with God. To abide in God's presence and choose to be all in with Him¹. As for my secondary calling, I honestly have been struggling to articulate the roles in which I am called into vocationally. As I draw near to God, the pathway in which the Lord is leading me on becomes clearer, but I hesitate to label things as a "calling" at times because of the weightiness of the word calling.

To define my secondary calling roles at this point in life, the first is that of *a student*. I am an average learner, but in the past, I have bounced around between different degree concentrations and industries before I finished my bachelor's. As an ATS student, I have been fully committed to the Intercultural Studies program and in this role my mission is to finish well and study with the intention of becoming equipped to serve God by serving others in the future. I believe that one should look at life with the mindset of a learner and so I am constantly learning new skills to better my capabilities in the future.

As I have spoken with others, prayed, and asked God, I feel that one of my callings is involved in *building community* between people that they would not choose isolation but to walk together to pursue a model of Kingdom community, drawing near to God in vulnerability with Him and with one another. This was confirmed when I did the skillset exercise² and the cluster that I most enjoyed was helping. I circled advise/counsel, encourage/motivate, listen, mentor/coach, and prescribe treatment as the skills that I would enjoy using in both a work and a volunteer ministry/service setting. I am a very relational person and place high value on my

¹ Brennfleck, *Live Your Calling*, chap. 1.

² *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

relationships with others.

The third area which I feel called in is the role of a *worshiper*. I have a strong desire to connect with the Lord through music, and though I know I am not the most advanced musician or talented singer, there have been times in the past, and I know there will be in the future, where the Lord has clearly told me to lead people into worship though in the moment I felt unsure about it due to nervousness or fear of judgement. In those times in the past, others have encouraged me after saying that they felt the Lord's presence and were led into their secret place during that time of worship. The skillset category which came second for me was in creativity, so I feel that it does align with how I believe that God has called me.

Another role that I have received prophecy for, and contributed to my enrollment at ATS, is the role of a missionary. I have some experience in missions on a short term capacity, with the longest being a six month discipleship training school run by Youth with a Mission at the Adelaide, Australia base. I still feel called to be a missionary, but am seeking God in the specifics of what this means. The more I learn at ATS, the more I realize that there is so much left to learn! Missions is not only for the overseas ministry workers, but there is local mission next door, in our communities, and there are many needs around us that go unmet everyday which the Lord can address through us. I believe that I am called to be a missionary for Jesus, and I have a desire to someday live in Japan but I am still discerning if that desire is from myself or from the Lord.

As a single woman, I do not have roles such as wife and mother that I can necessarily label as my secondary callings, but I am a fiercely loyal *friend* who loves those in my life with a passionate fire. I hope to see all of my friends succeed, flourish, and find hope in life, and it is a privilege to be alongside them, even if it becomes long distance.

How does this impact how you are currently doing ministry?

Being a student and working as a TA currently impacts my ability to commit to ministries within church or other non-profit opportunities because my time is consumed with studying or grading. This is the short-term effect, but in the future, I know that this is equipping me to be a better minister to those who will be part of my community and hopefully to others in my everyday life as well. I have learned and am still learning to listen to others well, have patience with them, but also hear from the Lord with them in how to process emotions that they may have suppressed long ago. I am also learning to be culturally sensitive to the nuances which people hold as normal, finding the ways that the Lord meets with them in their context and how I can honor that encounter rather than suffocate it with a label of “non-Christian.”

Believing that I am meant to be a catalyst in developing community between unlikely individuals pushes me to diversify those who I interact with regularly. My friends are not all like me, and they are not like each other either. I find that I can make one on one connections quickly, but I am still learning to find the balance and how to draw boundaries with people. It is likely assumed that I struggle to draw boundaries, but it is quite the opposite in that I build walls up unnecessarily and it is no wonder why I am in such longing for intimate personal relationships³ in life. I share about myself as I see necessary or as God tells me to, but mainly I feel that my role in others' lives is to listen to them. This unfortunately has left me feeling like I am becoming a burden to others when I have something that I need to process outside of counselling sessions. I believe that ministry is about loving others honestly and unconditionally, showing the love of God to them in a tangible way, but if I cannot find the balance between boundaries and barriers, it will negatively impact how I connect with those I am ministering to.

³ Walborn, *Spiritual Journey: Can I Really Get Close To God*, chap. 3.

What implications does this calling have for future leading in a church or ministry?

As stated earlier, a calling into missions or being a missionary is much broader than I had realized coming into seminary. I felt that I was going to be sent internationally, (though technically I am already international as a student here,) to evangelize in another country. Missions is not just evangelism, though that is a much needed part of ministry, but I believe that my relational gifts and ability to connect with people is geared toward ministry that is more focused on mentoring and discipleship. Currently we are in the process of weekly mentorship groups for another assignment in this class, and though it poses many challenges, I am enjoying this time to seek God together and unlock hidden emotions, memories, or other elements that could draw the participants and myself closer to the Lord.

My willingness to learn combined with my community building calling makes me wonder if there is some capacity for me to step into a position of teaching as ministry. Whether it is children's ministry, youth, young adults, or even just a discipleship study, I feel that the best teachers are those who naturally have a curiosity to life, showing that in an investment into their students. There have been times when others have spoken ministry with children into my future and at the time I was opposed to the idea, but the Lord has His way of showing me I do not know myself as much as I thought I did.

Though I feel called as a worshiper, it might be implied that I would be leading in worship ministry. I do not feel that this is primarily going to be my role in the church soon, but there might be opportunities later wherever I might be placed. I feel like this is something that helps me in my primary calling of being with the Lord, as worship is a form in which I feel the most connected to God and hear Him clearly.

What needs to change in your life to align yourself with this calling?

I feel that there are many things in my life that need to be changed for me to be fully aligned with this calling. There are unfulfilled dreams and losses that I must actively grieve, and spiritual practices that can be incorporated into my spiritual rhythm that will help me hear God with clarity, move in wisdom, and speak with authority to align myself with the calling that God has placed on my life.

I wrote a grief journal in PPTFM and included the process of grieving my unfulfilled dreams of becoming an optometrist that were squashed by an ex-boyfriend who didn't believe in my abilities. Sometimes I do still think about that route and how much different my life might have looked at this point, but even then I wanted to be equipped with knowledge in optometry to do medical missions and specifically to provide a safe space for kids, as many are afraid to go to the doctor. It is important for me to continue to process this because I feel like it is distracting me from fully diving into ministry and being aligned with God's calling as a missionary on my life. I know that some people do both, but I am still unsure if I am meant to do both.

There are spiritual disciplines that I know will draw me near to God, and practicing them is when I hear Him the clearest, but I haven't had the discipline to regularly incorporate them into my life, let alone foster a spiritual rhythm right now at all. My intentional intimacy with the Lord seems to be sporadic rather than a consistent routine that I can build upon overtime and add/subtract to as needed. To be better aligned with my calling, I definitely need to develop a consistent habit of personal worship, silence and solitude, and prayer and fasting. It is from a place of intimacy and abiding in which I will be sure about where the Lord is calling me to next, specifically, and even more sure about the pathway in which my life is pulling me towards.

References:

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