

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF CALLING ON DISCIPLESHIP

by

Todd Nelson

Making disciples of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian church. This study addresses one aspect of discipleship, calling, that initiates the process. Calling, as understood in this research, is the avenue by which God initiates a relationship with humanity through an invitation to faith in Jesus Christ. After the relationship is established through faith, calling then manifests itself throughout the rest of the life of a disciple as an invitation to use the gifts of God for the common good. The research sets out to affirm that as a person understands calling and then grows in the confidence their calling, they will demonstrate a deeper level of commitment to God, the church, and neighbor. This will be done by working with the congregation of First United Methodist Church in Lexington, Kentucky to discover their understanding and confidence in calling and how it impacts their discipleship.

The literature review will show that calling is not a new subject for the church. Rather calling has been actively witnessed in Scripture, written about by theologians, and has found its way into the broader audience of contemporary social and behavioral sciences. The literature review will also show that calling has morphed in its definition throughout time from the first century until today from having a relationship focus to work focus.

The research employs a survey as well as a focus group aimed at finding correlation between understanding and confidence in calling and its impact. While the

wider research and biblical/theological evidence shows that calling does indeed have tangible impact, the following research did not find such a correlation. This project did not find a straight line between the variables. Instead, the journey from calling to impact may include a step that was not considered in this project.

THE IMPACT OF CALLING ON DISCIPLESHIP

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter identifies the need for the local church to be ground zero for discipleship development in the Christian movement. This process begins as individuals understand, explore, and live into the call on their life by God. The facts presented will focus less on where Christians are and more on where Christians might go to establish the local church in the business of making disciples who make other disciples. Why this is an issue for the researcher will be discussed as well as the guiding research questions and key themes for the literature review.

Autobiographical Introduction

The pastoral staff at First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky sits down for lunch and conversation every Tuesday. We usually talk about a wide range of topics from family life to administrative issues and everything in between. From all appearances, we are a group of competent pastors with growing ministries that are even a bit cutting edge in some ways when it comes to doing multi-site ministry. The four pastors across the three campuses of First Church share a common deep-seated conviction. Something is missing. Something is not quite the way we would like, and our ministry is not as impactful as we feel our ministry could be. After much discussion over many months, we identified a hole in our discipleship process. We are not seeing disciples within First Church procreating other disciples on a regular basis. John Wesley was clear that the goal of discipleship is disciples who make disciples or as he said “mothers and fathers” in faith. The pastoral staff agreed that this discipleship process

was simply not happening in our context and, therefore, set out to identify a way forward that would make sure this was a thing of the past and not our future.

Statement of the Problem

At the core of the church's mission is making disciples (Matt. 28.19). Discipleship demands a strong foundation from which to build a relationship with God through Christ. That beginning phase of discipleship is initiated by God through calling. A deeper understanding and confidence of calling leads to committed and effective disciples. The inverse is also true. If the call is missed so too is the invitation to discipleship. Misunderstand the call and the same is true. Therein lies the problem.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to determine how members of First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky define calling; understand calling in their own life; and determining what, if any, impact calling has on their discipleship.

Research Questions

Three research questions which will guide this project. These questions deal with hearing, understanding, and answering God's call as well as the impact of God's call to a life of discipleship.

Research Question #1

How do members of FUMC, Lexington define calling?

Research Question #2

How confident are members of FUMC, Lexington in their calling?

Research Question #3

What impact does calling have upon members of FUMC, Lexington?

Rationale for the Project

The beginning point of the discipleship process is initiated by God in what we Wesleyans understand as prevenient grace (Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*. 217).

Prevenient grace is God reaching out and working in Christians' lives even before a recognition exists of the need for God or even a recognition that God even exists.

Prevenient grace can take many forms such as the people in one's life as well as personal experiences both positive and negative. God "calls" as a parent does from the front porch to say come home when dinner is ready, or it is time for bed. The call is always God's to make. The answer is a Christian's opportunity and even responsibility. Hearing, understanding the call in a way which brings an answer, is, therefore, a crucial point in the discipleship process.

At the heart of our pastoral table conversations were the questions about the discipleship process which begins in the hearing and responding the God's call. We needed to know if the congregation listening in a way that leads to hearing. Do we know what to listen for? And do we know what to do, or are willing to act upon what we hear? The research questions above seek to illumine where the members of First United Methodist Church are in terms of calling. This research begins with discovering their understanding of calling. How would they define it and describe calling? Secondly, is there confidence among members that they, themselves, have been called? Rather than watching from the sidelines, confidence in one's calling places a person in the discipleship arena. Finally, the research looks at what impact is calling having upon the membership? The working assumption is that as understanding of calling increases so does confidence in calling. As confidence increases, the corresponding impact upon

discipleship should be seen. The study seeks to affirm that discipleship and calling are correlated.

Definition of Key Terms

The following is a list of key terms used throughout the research. This list is not meant to be an exhaustive list but rather a primer to a few key concepts that will be prominent in the research.

1. Disciple—a person who through faith follows Jesus’ words, example, and leading through the Holy Spirit. In so doing, the person makes available by word and deed the Gospel to others.
2. Discipleship—the process of becoming a disciple.
3. Call—the God initiated invitation into a life of discipleship.
4. Primary Call—the God initiated invitation into a relationship with God through faith in the work of Christ.
5. Secondary Call—the God initiated invitation to work out your call by using gifts and graces given to do God’s will.

Delimitations

The focus of the research is First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky. Established in 1789 by the Rev. Francis Poythress, First Church was one of the first churches to be formed in the frontier which included Kentucky that time (Ockerman Jr. 12). First Church has decided to be one church with multiple expressions in the past ten years by existing as one church in three locations with shared mission, values, ministry strategy, administrative leadership, and Wesleyan theology. Each

worship community embodies the same DNA but expresses this DNA differently. Each worship community is connected to each other through this DNA.

All three campuses (Downtown, Andover, and Offerings) will not be included in the research project. The focus will rather be on the Downtown campus where I serve as the Lead Pastor. The three sites together host six unique worship services on Sunday morning with a total average attendance of five hundred. Between study groups, Sunday School classes, and catechesis groups, First Church averages three hundred persons involved in a small group experience.

Review of Relevant Literature

The literature review in Chapter 2 focuses on the understanding of calling and its impact. A biblical and theological review sets the tone for the project while a wider review of resources outside of biblical and theological reviews help to highlight the validity of calling outside of a faith based one. What becomes apparent in the review is that calling has captured the imagination of researchers and writers both within and outside the church. Calling is seen as having the power to shape motives and actions and to steel determination and perseverance.

The biblical portion of the research contains examples of call and impact from both the Old and New Testaments. The review shows calling being present in every part of Scripture from the Torah to the Epistles along with the Prophets and Gospels. The review identifies prominent biblical stories such as Abraham and Paul to show how calling shows up and where calling leads.

What the theological research showed is that calling has changed in its understanding and impact from the first century until today. Beginning with the church

fathers such as Augustine and leading to the monastic period and the reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin along with John Wesley, an attempt to identify what calling is and what calling does is seen. The monastic movement pigeonholed calling to a special group of people, often monks, who were willing to live the difficult way of Christ that leads to perfection. As such, calling became used primarily in relationship to clergy and clergy specific roles. While the reformers moved the needle back to including all of life as impacted by calling, the Puritan writers such as John Bunyan moved calling into principally a vocation or work perspective. What began as a viewpoint that yoked calling with a relationship with God and serving fellow humanity begins to shift to a focus on what one does for a living. The original meaning of calling morphed from a focus on a relationship of faithfulness into a relationship with purpose. Therefore, the movement away has been into a works based understanding away from a grace filled one (Palmer 35).

The theological review concludes by examining contemporary authors such as Os Guinness, Marva Dawn, Gordon T. Smith, and Parker Palmer who have begun to swing the pendulum back, once again, to the original meaning of calling. These authors caution against boiling calling down to a pursuit for meaning in life. Rather, these authors begin to build the case that the fullest impact of calling derives from a faithful relationship with God.

Along with the movement away from an original biblical understanding of calling, the literature review also highlights a growing interest in the understanding of calling and calling's impact from secular researchers. Researchers such as Ryan Duffy and Bryan Dik, whose overview of the research on calling was at the center of this

literature review, focused on research outside of the Christian faith. They identified calling as a force for good in the workplace, home, and in our society as a whole.

Some of the secular research supports vocational surveys which suggests what type of work best suits a person. The writing of J. Stanley Bunderson and Jeffery A. Thompson was especially helpful in discerning a wider audience's view that a job can be a calling with upsides and pitfalls too. The literature review shows that researchers are sensitive to calling being a road to remaining in unhealthy or even abusive situations. The current researchers works on calling were helpful to this research to broaden the understanding and affirming the truth of calling as a transcendent one that goes beyond the church.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

This project was a mixed method, pre-intervention study using a survey and focus group as the data collection tools. The project's objective was to measure and describe a situation, namely how do congregants within this context understand calling and calling's implications on their lives. The quantitative portion of the research was a fifty-two-question survey using Survey Monkey. Two questions pertained to consent, three questions pertained to demographic information, one question asked if responders would participate in the focus group, and the remaining forty-six questions pertained to the research questions. The qualitative research portion of the study was a focus group made up of a subsection of those who completed the survey. The research was conducted in the Fall of 2020 with the survey strategy implemented first followed by the focus group.

Participants

Research participants were members of First United Methodist Church of Lexington's Downtown Campus.

Data Collection

Both data collection, survey and focus group, tools aligned with the research questions and purpose statement as follows. The survey was a group of fifty-two question in total designed by the researcher. Twenty-one of the questions were focused on ascertaining respondent's understanding of calling. Six of the questions dealt with calling confidence, or in other words, does the respondent identify that they have a personal call. Nineteen questions focused on impact. The survey respondents self-selected to participate by answering a general email to First United Methodist Church's members. They were given the opportunity to take the survey directly from the email without the researcher being notified.

The focus group was a semi-structured interview consisting of three questions that aligned with the three research questions covering understanding, confidence, and impact of call. The group was then facilitated to allow for expounding upon the initial questions. The questions were designed by the researcher and administered by the researcher via a Zoom conference call.

Data Analysis

The *FUMC-Call Survey* was analyzed through a variety of statistical measures. The arithmetic mean and median were determined to identify the general agreement and/or disagreement of each of the questions. The normal distribution was established to identify the spread of answers and to determine any significance

variance. Finally, regression analysis was used to identify the correlation present, or lack thereof, between each question.

The semi-structured focus group was analyzed through a process of identifying, naming, and organizing common words and themes from researcher notes and transcribed audio recording of the session. The list of themes was then labeled by large overarching headings and the particular issues within each heading. For instance, the heading “Calling Impact” would contain T1, T2, T3, etc. Once the list was compiled per interview, they were then combined to codify and examine further.

Generalizability

This study was completed in such a way that the mechanics could be reproduced. The principal item that would be difficult to reproduce is the context and the responders. The context, while unique, is not unusual within North America United Methodism based churches. The discipleship path at First United Methodist Church of Lexington’s Downtown Campus consists of worship, small groups, and serving. This pattern is fairly standard across the denomination. Preaching is predominantly lectionary based in terms of text and narrative in terms of style. All of these factors of discipleship would be found in other contexts.

Project Overview

Chapter 2 focuses on a review of past and current literature including biblical and theological foundations. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology including design, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 reviews the results of the research. Chapter 5

interprets the research and includes observations and ideas for further research and application.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The word *call* is a loaded term. From shelves filled with literature to the pews filled with congregants, the term has a variety of meanings, interpretations, and uses. This chapter begins by tracing the term call through the Old and New Testaments before turning to the understanding, theological claims, and practical results of calling from the time of Christ until today. After developing a working definition for call, the next step will be to review the implications for those who have a call and finally determine how someone goes about identifying their call and gaining confidence in living it out.

The bottom line is that the term *calling* has become distorted. In so doing, *calling* has lost its original meaning and power. Emil Bruner warns that “to renounce this expression (calling) would mean losing a central part of the Christians message. We must not throw it away, but we must regain its original meaning” (Bruner 205–06). The project as a whole is focused on restoring calling to its original intent. In so doing, this project may very well unlock one of the keys to a life of discipleship and as a result personal and church renewal (Trueblood 28).

Biblical Foundations

The basis for calling begins quickly in Scripture with Genesis and persists through Revelation. Walter Brueggemann identifies the recurrence of calling through entire book of Genesis as one of its primary features (Brueggemann, *Genesis* 1). In Genesis 1, God speaks, and the world come into existence. Right away God reveals his way of doing things which is to interact directly with creation and change takes place as a result.

Broadly, Genesis chapters 1 through 11 are a statement about God calling the world and people into being and faithfulness while chapters 12-50 share God's call for there to be a people of God (Brueggemann, *Genesis* 105).

God continues to speak in Genesis. One result is that Noah builds an ark. Abram and Sarai leave a homeland as a result of God's word. Moses frees a nation after hearing from God in the midst of the burning bush. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel begin to prophesy. The list goes on.

The New Testament picks up where the Old leaves off with Jesus now as the primary caller who bids Peter, Andrew, James, and John to leave their family and livelihood and follow (*New Revised Standard Version*, Matt. 4.18-22). Paul is stopped in his tracks and moves from being the chief persecutor of the church to one of its primary builders upon Jesus' meeting him on the road to Damascus and calling him (Acts 9.1-19). John, on the island of Patmos, receives a word to write to the churches across Asia Minor (Rev. 1.10).

Upon examining calling throughout Scripture, several themes exist. Martin Heidegger suggests four dimensions that are contained within a call (152). The first being a caller. Calling does not exist without an initiator. Heidegger agrees with Os Guinness who states succinctly that "there is no call unless there is a caller" (Guinness 20). The second dimension of a call is someone, or in the case of creation, something, that responds. As with a phone call, two persons are needed to complete a call. One person may leave a message, but without hearing and responding, the message is impotent. Third is some sort of message, or content, which is communicated. Finally, the message directs the recipient to something.

Third is some sort of message, or content. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (Gen. 1.3). The beginning of Scripture moves quickly and decisively into a series of moments where God speaks and something happens. God speaks and the waters gather, and land appears (Gen. 1.9). God speaks and humanity is created (Gen. 1.26). God speaks, the earth is created, and the earth begins to reproduce and move forward (Arnold 47). From the outset then, the pattern is that God initiates not by proxy but directly and interacts through word.

God speaks in Genesis 6, but this time not to “ex nihilo” but to Noah. The narrative surrounding Noah extends the pattern of God speaking and things happening by demonstrating why and when God calls. Work has been done to discover the general pattern of call in Scripture. Biblical scholar Norman Habel identifies six major elements of a call account: (1) divine confrontation; (2) introductory word; (3) commission; (4) objection; (5) reassurance; (6) sign (35). Waldemar Janzen posits the call narratives as a movement beginning from a confrontation with God’s holiness which produces a sense of unworthiness (140). The sense of unworthiness is met with reassurance from God before God commissions the individual to a task. These two are by no means the only ones putting forth ideas about a calling pattern, but the reading indicates that most are closely aligned with one of these two scholars. All of this gives insight into “how” God calls. For Habel and Janzen, God calls to resolve the tension that exists between human reality and God’s holiness. The chasm between the two is bridged by God initiating and humanity responding. In the case of Noah, the chasm was that “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6.5). The

wickedness of humanity and the holiness of God are the two sides far apart which God addresses with Noah. God commits to act and looks for a partner to work in and through to bring about the closing of the chasm. Notice that the call derives from God's faithfulness and initiative. Humanity's role is to hear and respond out of obedience.

Genesis 12 begins, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.'" In this call narrative, God begins with the task and its results before showing the chasm that exists precipitating this call from God. Why there is a need for a great nation who will be blessed in order to be a blessing was not told. As time passes, an understanding begins to form of what God has in mind and the chasm that exists between the world and God that a people will help to fill and eventually bridge through the Messiah coming from its ranks. Again, God's vision brought to fruition by God's power and humanity's, this time through Abram and Sarai, obedience.

God initiates another call through a burning bush to a man named Moses in Exodus 3, and the first thing God says after getting Moses' attention is "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exod. 3.5). The chasm between God's holiness and Moses is immediately stated in this passage. Moses and God share a conversation that ushers in a divine command and introduces three new components to call narratives namely objections, reassurances, and signs. Moses needs to be reassured when he says, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt" (Exod. 3.11). God replies and takes the calling a step farther by saying, "But I will be with you; and this

shall be a sign for you, that I have sent you; when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain” (Exod. 3.12).

The boy Samuel receives a call one night while serving in the Tabernacle under Eli’s, the high priest, leadership. After God’s most patient attempts to garner Samuel’s attention, Samuel meets God’s call with, “Speak, for thy servant hears” (1 Sam. 3.10). The new piece to the call equation is that Samuel is a young man at the time of his call. Samuel’s young age re-affirms that calling originates with God and only through God’s power and wisdom is obedience possible. Samuel is put in an unusually difficult position because God confides in him that Eli will be confronted and removed as high priest. The overarching sign from God will be Eli’s removal which brings a new but difficult day for Israel as Samuel assumes Eli’s place.

King David received his call from God while still a shepherd boy, tending his family’s livestock and not being invited to a major event hosted by the aforementioned Samuel. David and Samuel share something in common in that they were both unlikely candidates to receive God’s word because of their age. David was also unlikely because of his birth order, but God reminded Samuel that “the Lord sees not as a man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16.7).

An important genre of call narrative is that of the prophets. In particular, the call narrative of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jonah point toward God’s prevenient grace and ability to use the committed as in the case of Isaiah, the uncommitted in Jonah, and the youthful in Jeremiah.

God confronts Isaiah in a vision and immediately Isaiah understands the chasm between God’s holiness and Isaiah’s reality. Isaiah proclaims, “Woe is me! For I am lost;

for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6.5). Jeremiah’s inadequacy comes from his youth, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth” (Jer. 1.6). Jonah’s unrepentant heart is God’s biggest obstacle to overcome as witnessed by, “‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.’ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” (Jon. 1.2).

The assurance by signs in these three narratives are a major part of their story. For Isaiah, God sends cherubim with tongs holding a coal to purify Isaiah from his uncleanness personally and that from the stain of society. Jonah’s sign of assurance that God is truly calling him is a dramatic sea storm, being thrown overboard, and then rescued by a giant fish which swallows Jonah before spitting him out on dry land three days later no worse for the wear (Jon. 1 and 2). Ezekiel is given a scroll to eat as his sign of the validity of God’s call along with apocalyptic visions. None of these prophets are left to guess or question God’s call on their lives.

The results of these prophets are different and is, therefore, noteworthy. Two committed prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, see very little fruit in their lifetime. In fact, Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, has no discernible single convert beside his scribe Baruch. Contrast that with Jonah whose heart is against the call of God but sees dramatic repentance from the people of Nineveh.

The New Testament continues with calling narratives. Matthew demonstrates that Jesus took up the mantle of calling early in his ministry as he calls out to two sets (Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*. 280–81) of brothers, at two separate times, who

were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Peter and Andrew are called first to “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4.19). This calling is followed by James and John who followed but no language or call is recorded; simply they “Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” (Matt. 4.21). The word “called” in this context is ἐκάλεσεν which is from the root word καλεω which means to call, summon, or name.

Another compelling call narrative in the New Testament is from Acts 9. Saul, later to be named Paul, was on his way to Damascus to continue his persecution of the early church. Saul was the sworn enemy of Christians who were then known as “followers of the way.” Before reaching Damascus, a light from heaven falls upon him and a voice calls out “Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9.4). Jesus confronts Saul and tells him to “rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do” (Acts 9.6). After this event, Saul goes from being chief persecutor to chief builder of the church. This radical reversal of affection and purpose is one of the defining events of the New Testament and sets the stage for the church to move from Jerusalem to the ends of the world as Jesus directed in Acts 1.8.

The final calling narrative considered for this research is from the book of Revelation. John, the apostle, is exiled on the isle of Patmos when God reaches out to him through an angel who “bore witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw” (Rev. 1.1-2). What follows is a faithful retelling of a letter from Jesus to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 1.4) and an apocalyptic account of the final era and days prior to Jesus’ victorious return (Rev. 21).

While only a partial of the call narratives have been covered in this literature review, they are nevertheless representative. The totality of Scripture affirms that God’s

primary way of interacting with creation, including humanity, is through conversation, as Mildred Wynkoop states, “to whom God speaks and one who can answer back in genuine conversation” (Loc 2382). While calling may not look the same from episode to episode, the basic pattern already mentioned holds true. First of all, God always initiates the event. The idea to bring forth light or Moses’ idea to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt was chaos. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were contented fishermen until Jesus arrived and said to “follow.” In the Wesleyan tradition, the truth that God is the first mover is detailed within the concept of prevenient grace (Wesley, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation”). God moves before creation is aware of the need or the ability to respond. Secondly, each calling episode is an invitation to respond. Noah is invited to build an ark. Ezekiel is requested to eat a scroll and then to speak a word. Saul is asked to go to a city and then wait. At any point the persons called had the opportunity to decide to not respond and do what Jonah did which was to move in the opposite direction (Jonah 1.3). John Wesley was fond of acknowledging St. Augustine’s well-known quote, “So true is that well-known saying of St. Augustine, (one of the noblest he ever uttered.) *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*: ‘He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves’” (Wesley, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation”). God’s pattern is to generously include humanity in the very acts of redemption whenever, wherever, however they take place. The results, as previously stated, of response look different in each narrative. Some results are dramatic and swift such as Noah and the ark. Others are dramatic but a mixed result such as Moses and the Israelites who go from happy to disgruntled; from obedient to disobedient like a pendulum. Each person called by God is on a continuum of ranging from confidence to rejection. Normally, some sort

of push back exists by the one called that must be overcome by signs and reassurance. While you would think that this would be a one-time event at the beginning of the call, often, as with Elijah in 1 Kings 19.1-14, the one called must be reassured even after major evidence of God's power and purpose are revealed.

Douglas Schuurman summarized the biblical idea of calling when he states, The ones God chooses, God calls or summons or invites for a particular purpose. God calls people to salvation, hope, repentance, feasting, performing a task, undertaking a labor, fellowship, and more. Put in general terms, the purpose of God's call is for the people of God to worship God, and to participate in God's creative and redemptive purposes for the world, to enjoy, hope for, pray for, and work toward God's shalom (18).

God's redemptive purposes of bridging the chasm between God's holiness and the rest of creation are accomplished through calling. Parker Palmer describes calling as "not a goal to be achieved but a gift to be received" (10). Calling becomes a gift, or grace, from God to be opened and allowed to do its ultimate work. As with any gift, if the recipient does not open the gift, it is still a gift but without impact. Only as the recipient opens and uses the gift, or allows the gift to do its own work, is the cycle complete. The same can be seen with calling in Scripture.

Theological Foundations

The truth behind calling has shaped the church and its people since the beginning. Calling has had an impact from the first century C.E. through today; therefore, an examination of the theological foundations of calling is needed. Calling is seen in Jerusalem in the first century to the monasteries of the medieval period to the reformation

of the 18th and 19th century before winding up in the contemporary understanding and impact.

The Early Church (1st – 3rd Centuries)

Two cultural factors, among others, weighed heavily on what being called by God meant in the early church. Christianity began as a sectarian movement of Judaism on the eastern rim of the Roman Empire. The movement was small in number and influence (Jolly 27). In addition to these factors, the government of Rome was tolerant of Christians but not without the occasional local persecution. The most widespread of these was by the Emperor Nero in 64 C.E. when, after setting a fire to much of Rome during one of his wild parties, he blames the Christians. This occurrence began a period of persecution which included torture and death of Christians in and around Rome. Church tradition holds that Peter and Paul were swept up in this wave of persecution and put to death. Most of the persecution in this timeframe was localized and short-lived (Placher 25), but it did make a person who was considering choosing to follow the Way think twice about the potential implications for themselves and their families.

This was not the first persecution experienced by the Christians. The Jewish establishment also sought to squelch the movement began by a Jewish Rabbi, Jesus, who was put to death by crucifixion by the Romans based on the urging of Jewish leaders (Matt. 26-27). Saul, who would later become Paul, was one of the key persecutors as seen in Acts 8-9. This same Saul, now known as Paul, writes to the Christians in Thessalonica and gives insight into the conditions facing the early church when he says in 1 Thessalonians 2.1-2; 14-15,

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition. 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men.

Paul highlights two persecutions facing the new movement of followers of Jesus. He identifies the external forces of government and local non-Christians who seek to stop the movement. Secondly, notice the internal forces facing the church in Judea from the Jews who were part of the new community of believers.

In addition to persecution shaping calling during the early church, limited choices of work shaped the understanding of calling. For instance, children of fishermen were expected to enter the family business as were children of carpenters and shepherds alike. The idea that you would ask small children “what do you want to be when you grow up?” would have been a foreign concept. If you were male, your chosen vocation would match that of your family patriarch. The expectations were even more restrictive, if not non-existent, if you were female. In this case, you most likely waited until the day that your family arranged a marriage and spent the rest of your life caring for your new family (Richter 34). Socio-economic status did not impact these factors. Children of kings as well as children of shepherds had the same expectation to take up the family business (Placher 5).

The general state of Christianity in respect to Rome and the Jewish people in the first three centuries coupled with the cultural demands upon continuing in the family business greatly impacted the understanding of calling. First of all, the obvious impact was that calling had nothing to do with your job. Calling was not a job you were called to but a relationship with God and with a body of believers (Schuurman 19). The relationship with a body of believers was the second impact that shaped calling. There was also a familial impact as joining this group would often necessitate leaving immediate family or perhaps better understood as being removed from the local family unit (Placher 26). The family was where livelihood was bound up for today and the future. The best understanding to this leaving behind of security was a divine or supernatural experience which re-aligned personal and corporate life. To respond to a call meant answering God's invitation to follow even though where that took you may mean loss of livelihood, standing, and even life. Following meant to secure your eternal destiny, often a destiny more appealing than the temporal reality facing the believer, and to begin a new life with a new extended family bound not by blood but by something more transcendent—faith (Minear 67). The understanding of calling in the early church is captured again in 1 Thessalonians 2.12 when Paul encouraged believers to “lead a life worth of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”

In final analysis, calling in the early church was about joining with God and, therefore, others through love for personal and corporate redemptive purposes (Bennethum 44). Calling in the early church was directly linked to the kingdom of God. Marva Dawn says she is “convinced that the primary focus in Jesus’ teaching was not God's love, but God's rule” (Dawn). Calling was an invitation to enter into a new way of

living, or as it would later be called by Calvin and the Anabaptists, a general invitation to salvation (Placher 237). The water closer to the origin of any stream is arguably purer than farther downstream. The case can be made that calling understood in the early church was a more accurate Biblical understanding. As stated in a previous section, calling (*klesis*) in both the Old and New Testaments was not typically in relation to a project or action but a relationship. The same was true for the early church.

Rise of Monasticism

As Christianity grows from being a sectarian movement on the fringes of the Roman Empire into the forefront of the Roman Empire under the leadership of Emperor Constantine, the understanding of the meaning of called changes as well. The New Testament creates a high bar for those who would be followers of Christ. Jesus himself set the ultimate bar as to be “perfect” (Matt. 5.48) and to “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5.39) in addition to “sell your possessions and give the money to the poor” (Matt. 19.20). These charges in and of themselves give the most diligent follower of Christ a reason to pause and re-examine their life.

As a result, many followers of Christ did not attempt to follow these commands while a handful of others took up Jesus’ demands and lived them out. Those choosing to live out the demands of Christ often gathered together in monastic communities. As a result, the divide between the clergy and laity grew wide. The big shift in understanding of call was that a few, the clergy, were called to perfection while the many, the laity, were allowed an ordinary life. In essence, the Priests were called and the laity were not. In fact, Eusebuis, bishop of Caesarea, taught that Jesus allows “two ways of life” to his church. The first way is the “perfect” life. This way of life is the call of a few such as

priests, nuns, and monks who take upon themselves the demand of celibacy in singleness and devote their entire life to living up to the exacting commands of Christ. The second way was the “permitted” life (Guinness 63). This way of life was a lesser way and was referred to as a secondary way in which people would marry and carry out ordinary lives. The obvious impact was a two-tier system that divided the religious and the secular and distinctly prioritized them in that order (Eusebius 48–49). Os Guinness calls this shift to a permitted and perfect life as the Catholic distortion. He points out that,

...monasticism began with a reforming mission-it sought to remind an increasingly secularized church that it was still possible to follow the radical way of life required by the gospel. But it finished with a relaxing effect-the double standard reserved the radical way for the specialists and let everyone else off the hook. (33)

During this period of shifting, the use of the word *vocation* became synonymous with calling during this period. Karl Holl points out that “the seizure of the title *vocation* by monasticism prevented for a long time in the West the development of a proper religious evaluation of secular occupations and make it impossible for the word *vocation* to become customary to them” (“The History of the Word Vocation (Beruf)” 127). This understanding further segmented the called, clergy, from the uncalled, laity, in a way that can be seen even in contemporary times. The holy vocations were priestly while the laity were left to live out their lives in a less-than existence or “a disagreeable necessity” (Wassenaar). Not only was existence less-than, but, in the minds of Thomas Aquinas and other Medieval theologians, work outside the holy vocations was a sign of God's

punishment of a fallen humanity. Manual labor was only useful as a means of discipline (Bennethum 44).

Reformation

The Reformation impacted Christianity in many ways. One way which deserves noting for the purpose of this study is that the understanding of what being called means and the impact of calling, particularly for the laity, changed dramatically. For both Luther and Calvin, following God's will includes living the life that God intended in this world. Earthly work was no longer simply a 'disagreeable necessity', but a potential means of grace. The definition of calling was also expanded to include glorifying God in everyday professions as everyone lives the life that God intended for them in this world (Serow 65–72). For Martin Luther in particular, becoming a monk or nun was not necessary to be holy and to please God (Hart, "The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work: 2. John Calvin (1509-64)" 35–52). In fact, Luther goes so far as to refute that good works are only religious activity and instead he says, "a good work when man works at his trade, walks, stands, eats, drinks, sleeps, and does all kinds of works for the nourishment of his body for the common welfare and...God is well pleased with them" (Luther 4). The Reformation swings the pendulum back toward calling, or *Beruf* as Luther refers to it, as being something for all people. Calling must be for all people because Luther's bold claim that all tasks performed to God provide an opportunity to "exercise one's faith" (Bennethum 45). In so doing, Karl Holl makes the case that Luther "brought honor to a peasant" (*The Cultural Significance of the Reformation* 25).

John Calvin, having solidified and illuminated the Reformation principles in 1536, continued in the tradition of opening call to all people. For Calvin, predestination

led naturally to an understanding of calling of what God ordains, God blesses, and what God blesses, humanity benefits. Calvin said that “Every man’s mode of life...is a kind of station assigned him by the Lord” (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 472). As a result, every act of life whether work or play is filled with possibility, or means of grace, that regenerates humanity.

Calvin also took a step toward melding work with calling when, as Hart points out, he “believes that it was possible for each person to discover what kind of work God wanted him to do” (“The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work: 1. Martin Luther (1483-1546)”). This, for Calvin, begins by acknowledging that all skills are given by God through the Holy Spirit when he says, “even the artisan with the humblest trade is good at it only because the Spirit of God works in him.” Gifts are given in order to be used in fullest effect for the glory of God and the benefit of humanity’s “general advantage” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* 11, 16).

Both Luther and Calvin push back on the notion that religious work is more valuable or noble than ordinary secular work (Hart, “The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work: 2. John Calvin (1509-64)” 121–35). Together, Luther and Calvin create major holes in the wall that separate clergy and laity. Perhaps this breaking down of walls is no more clearly seen than in Luther’s treatise on the priesthood of all believers in which he levels the playing field by stating every person is a priest in service to and for and through God. Art Lindsley goes so far as to argue that Luther’s intent was to make the title of priest as common as the title of Christian (5).

In the early Reformation period, little thought of getting to choose your job still existed and neither Luther nor Calvin did much to change that. The idea of having

freedom to choose what you wanted to “be” when you grew up was still a foreign concept. A person’s station was defined by Luther as their family role of parent, grandparent, child and so on, as well as their job (Placher 207). Callings were roles assigned to us in everyday life whereby God formed Christians as they served each other. Calvin likewise opened the door to seeing potential in our positions of life both family, job, and socially, but he was hesitant to encourage someone to move away from their particular job and chase after greener pastures (Placher 207). Calvin wrote that “each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander about throughout life” (*Writing on Pastoral Piety* 289). In summary, while Luther and Calvin re-imagined the idea of calling as for all people, a change occurred from Luther to Calvin in terms of perception of living out one’s call. Luther maintained that people were called to serve God in their callings while Calvin moved to declaring that God has a calling for you to discover which is your vocation (Bennethum 55). In the end, while Luther and Calvin highlight every task being filled with the possibility for grace, the expectation was still that your job would be dependent upon continuing the family trade rather than making your own way.

One final note and implication from Luther and Calvin’s teaching on calling is that there now stands three expressions of calling (Smith 104). One expression of calling is what Calvin called the “universal” or “general” call which is followed by a “special” call that “God bestows on believers only” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* 643). The first kind of call is to salvation, which Calvin saw as internal, and the second to a place in life, which Calvin interpreted as external. The second expression of salvation concerns a vocation or a work in this world. This expression is the place where gifts meet needs. One

may receive compensation, or the fulfillment of one's gifts meeting needs may be something outside of their regular job. This expression includes both one's gifts as well as one's roles such as daughter or son and spouse. The third expression of call is to the "immediate responsibilities or those tasks or duties God calls us to today" (Smith 260). This expression encompasses our responsibility to be a good neighbor and citizen. While the separation between laity and clergy has come down, the beginning of a wall being built between the call to salvation and the call to live out salvation can be seen.

As will be seen later, the wall coming down between secular and religious has major implications and swings the pendulum to the end of the continuum away from calling being a clergy thing. Now calling is in all things in all places for all people. The unintended consequence is that this creates confusion with the words calling and vocation becoming synonymous. A calling moves toward a job that one is gifted to do and sees benefits for the greater society. The search is on for individuals to find that one true way forward for them.

Before moving from the Reformation era, other figures were present who influenced the understanding of calling during this period. The Puritans, a group of English Protestants in the late 16th and 17th centuries who were aligned with Calvin, forwarded the idea of calling as work for God (Perkins 2). They too held calling as a two-fold process moving from a general call to salvation and then to a specific call for Christians to take up a place of service in this world namely through work. John Bunyan, perhaps the most well-known Puritan, describes the two fold calling as he narrates the call to saving grace and the call to making it through the "trough" of life (Section 5). Cotton Mather, a Puritan pastor in America, spoke specifically about calling by saying,

“Every Christian ordinarily should have a calling. That is to say, there should be some special business... wherein the Christian should for the most part spend the most of his time; and this, so that he may glorify God” (Ryken 27). William Perkins, a leading Puritan theologian at Cambridge University, wrote, “A vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God for the common good ” (Perkins 7). The Puritans taught that one’s calling, his or her job, was the primary calling, and, therefore, an important way God works in and through us. Serving God by serving others is the principles means of grace and, therefore, all work is spiritual activity. That belief is why the Puritans maintain that even if a person does not need to work to provide for themselves or their family, this person still needs to work in order to fully live into their relationship with God. For the Christian, their entire life, with work being at the center, is bound up in a relationship with God. At the other end of the spectrum, Puritans applauded that being a beggar or rogue being “restrained” by government for “to wander up and down from year to year to this end, to seek and procure bodily maintenance, is no calling, but the life of a beast, and consequently a condition or state of life flat against the rule everyone must have a particular calling” (Perkins 14). Which type of job was not as important as how it was done. William Tyndale said, “there is difference betwixt washing of dishes and preaching the word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all” (137). The importance of work dominates Puritan theology and shapes their views on humanity.

While much of the Puritan understanding of call is in step with Luther and Calvin, an important way exists in which they differ. Both Luther and Calvin, because of their high view of God’s sovereignty, assumed that calling was God ordained and, therefore,

out of a person's control. The point was to live into that God ordained work area. The Puritans rather teach that choice does exist and, therefore, making the proper choice of the utmost importance. "It is not enough that you consider what calling and labor is most desirable, but you must also consider what you or your children are fittest for both in mind and body" (Baxter 586). The Puritan understanding of God's providence are nuanced enough from both Luther and definitely Calvin that human decision and choice are possible. Therefore, a person has the right as well as the responsibility to make choices that best align with their gifts, the communities' affirmation, and the common good.

Horace Bushnell makes the claim, "[t]hat God has a definite life-plan for every human person, girding him, visibly or invisibly, for some exact thing, which it will be the true significance and glory of his life to have accomplished" (128). The true significance and glory of a person's life is wrapped up in God's definite life-plan for them. A call to something is transcendent and sets up a threat that not finding or not moving towards the specific life-plan leads to a less-than existence.

John Wesley, the formational head of the United Methodist Church, did not formally address the idea of calling. This lack of addressing is not surprising as he was not a systematic theologian but rather a pragmatic theologian. Albert Outler describes him a folk theologian able to "simplify, synthesize, and communicate the essential teachings of the Christian gospel to laity" (Outler 5–14). Therefore, to understand Wesley's view of calling, reviewing how calling shaped his life along with his preaching and teaching as a whole is vital. God's free gifts, grace, are given and then life is spent in a constant stewardship of these same gifts. This understanding is John Wesley's theology

in a nutshell. In fact, Wesley states that “no character more exactly agrees with the present state of man than a steward” (*Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards, Part 1: The Sermons* 516). The importance of stewarding time, talent, and resources lays at the heart of Wesley’s teaching, preaching and example. For instance, Wesley’s says the first rule is to “be diligent. This is followed by ‘never ever be unemployed: never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time or spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary’” (Telford). How time is spent is a matter of stewardship of God’s gifts for Wesley. While affirming salvation through faith alone as all the reformers before him, the matter of works, stewarding God’s grace, therefore, held more significance for today than tomorrow. Stewardship is an earthly construct for the benefit of sanctification because heaven has none (*Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards, Part 1: The Sermons* 8).

John Henry Newman, an Anglican Priest turned Catholic Cardinal in 1800s England, made the following remarkable statement about calling.

For in truth, we are not called once only, but many times; all through our life Christ is calling us. He calls us to Baptism, but afterwards also; whether we obey his voice or not; he graciously calls us still. If we fall from our baptism, He calls us to repent; if we are striving to fulfill our calling, He calls us on from grace to grace, and from holiness to holiness, while life is given us. (Newman 12)

Newman sets the tone for calling to be initiated by God for the benefit of humanity.

Obedience may activate the call and its benefits, but obedience does not initiate the call.

Only God initiates the call.

Newman sets the groundwork for what will become a major re-shaping of the Catholic Church’s understanding of call by Pope John Paul II. While still holding that

vocation is primarily concerned about a call to be a priest or nun, John Paul opens the door to identifying that other types of work have meaning given them by God.

Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work.

(4)

Work is part of the likeness of God in which humanity is called to partake. He goes so far as to claim, “The Church is convinced that work is a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth” (Paul II 9). At the core of humanity’s reason for existing is to work and fulfill the mandate and example given in the book of Genesis. Pope John Paul II, in effect, is doing the work of the Reformers within the Catholic Church as he opens the work of God’s call beyond the priesthood and nunnery into the domain of the laity. Pope John Paul II affirms that work and its grace-filled impact is open to all people in every place rather than a few in specific places.

The word calling has come a long way since the first century. Beginning as a summons from God in most of Scripture and an invitation to a particular act or work in a few instances, the Reformation moves the understanding of calling to include and in some cases focus solely on work. The reformers split the call into two components under the categories of general and specific. The general call is to salvation while specific individual calls to work or vocation also occur (Guinness 49).

Contemporary or Post-Christian

Since the end of the Reformation and moving into what is now considered a post-Christian period, contemporary theologians wrestle with the following issues, among others: What about those who are physically, mentally or emotionally unable to work? Do they have a secondary call on their lives? What about those who are retired? Or what about certain types of work that seem to not add to the common good (Rauschenbusch 235)? Can this work be considered a calling? Or what if, as the French philosopher Jacques Ellul asserts, that work is a result of the fall and not of creation (Simmons 117). Is work better understood as a curse instead of a call as the Reformers believed? Or what about John Wesley's concern that work would produce wealth that, if not used wisely, may very well lead Christians away from God (*The Works of John Wesley*. 372)? Does work have the propensity to become detrimental?

Our contemporary wrestling with calling has left the church and entered into academia with results useful in a variety of disciplines beyond the church walls such as psychology and management to name two. A focus on calling's results has emerged and a host of phenomenological studies all pointing toward a positive impact between calling and issues such as burn out, contentment, and effectiveness (Duffy et al.). Researchers are also moving deeper into the study looking for the why behind calling results (Weir).

Before diving further, a quick review of three distinct contemporary constructs of calling will be helpful. Generally, the contemporary understanding of calling falls into categories that can be described as (1) Classical; (2) Modern; and (3) Neo-classical (Hart and Hart).

The classical, or religious, viewpoint is that calling comes from God, or a higher being, and often involves discerning a work or career that God has chosen for the

individual (Weiss et al.). The contemporary church in recent years is beginning to explore calling as a means to answer one of life's deep questions, "what on earth am I here for?" Writers such as Os Guinness, Parker Palmer, and Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren have been some exploring the meaning and implication of calling in recent years. The success of Rick Warren's book in particular shows society's intense desire to answer a question that calling is uniquely qualified to answer.

The Modern view describes calling as one's occupation within a division of labor that you are uniquely gifted by talent or opportunity. The result of calling is fulfilling a gifting as well as a deeper meaning in life (Bunderson and Thompson). The idea of fulfilling your "destiny" is often used to describe finding a purposeful place within society. The key distinction is that calling comes from within. Namely calling is the intersection of your talent and the world's need. Dik and Duffy are helpful in understanding the Modern view when they say, "Self-awareness is a prerequisite to identifying one's calling because it helps the individual develop a deep understanding of one's interests and aptitudes" (Duffy and Dik). To summarize, if one finds themselves one will also find their place and, therefore, fulfill their calling.

The third view may be called Neo-classical. This view is a blend of both the Classical and Modern (Hart and Hart). In this viewpoint, the call comes from "out there" but not limited to a religious understanding. Calling's great purpose is to motivate actions, answer the question of "what am I here for?," and serve a community purpose. Dik and Duffy can be helpful here as well as they identify three parts to a transcendental understanding of calling as (1) external summons; (2) viewing one's work as a source of purpose and meaning; and (3) having a pro-social orientation or using one's work to help

others (Duffy et al.). Most of the writing identifies experience, study, and interpersonal relationships as areas that may lead to call discovery.

Downsides of Calling

While much has been made of the positive aspects of calling, not identifying downsides and potential risks associated with calling as well would be remiss. Calling goes off course because of humanity's interpretation and misuse. The crusades, holocausts, bombing of the World Trade Centers on September 11, 2001 are extreme examples of calling being weaponized against others.

Calling also may lead to vulnerability on one hand and exploitation on the other of workers. Working conditions such as length of days and safety of work sites may take a back seat to the calling for the called. In the hands of misguided persons, calling can become a powerful tool to justify inhumane treatment of others in order to achieve a greater good whether that be economic, political, or even religious. Calling going awry may be as simple as cutting off career choices when they are deemed as not a calling (Duffy et al.).

Closely aligned with the first two downsides of calling is the third which can be summarized as Rhys Kuzmic describes as "divine legitimization" (Kuzmič). This downside exists when a person or group claims that God has spoken or given a message to be carried out. While this is seen in the Bible with people such as Abraham, David, and Paul to name a few, the practice of claiming divine will being on a particular side is not always accurate and can be detrimental. For instance, claiming God's will on your side limits, if not cuts off, debate or critique. This claim can make others question their own relationship with God as somehow less than or inferior because of their lack of calling.

This claim can also create an environment in which God becomes an absentee yet very present reality in whose mouthpieces cannot be challenged or questioned.

These areas of downside are obvious and, therefore, easy to see, but just below the surface lurks less obvious downsides which in many respects have to do with how one sees themselves as well as one's roles and responsibilities in light of calling. Calling, especially when calling has been fully embraced, may lead to an unhealthy self-reliance. If a person is called from God, there may actually be a move away from depending on God and into conceitedness (Guinness 118). Instead the person relies upon the confidence of a moment in the past instead of the present work and power of God through others in the community. At the very least calling holds the potential to see humanity's role as greater than is helpful or necessary. Stanley Hauerwas gets at this point by arguing that Christians are not co-creators with God but representatives (2). The moment calling becomes an idol instead of an active relationship it becomes detrimental.

Calling may also lead to myopic focus in one area while gross neglect in other areas (Schuurman 13). Two examples are areas such as personal health and care of others. The calling becomes a way to justify washing your hands, so to speak, of the responsibility of situations outside the call that demand our attention. Albert Schweitzer speaks to this danger by saying, "only a person who can find a value in every sort of activity and devote himself to each one with full consciousness of duty, has the inward right to ask his object some extraordinary activity instead of what falls naturally to his lot" (Schweitzer 157). Jesus said that, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much" (Luke 16.10). Calling does not supersede personal responsibilities and intentional growth. Calling is not a 'fast-pass' at an amusement park.

Calling may also lead to an unhealthy self-reliance (Schuurman 12). Having a sense of divine destiny may give way to undue risks taken and a limiting of help from others. The thought “Why would we need help if God is on our side?” may become prevalent. While calling is absolutely a personal matter, calling is never to be considered a private one (Palmer 92). Calling may even lead to cutting off exploring other options because calling creates what Bunderson and Thompson call “reflexive loops” instead of open systems of input (Berkelaar and Buzzanell; Bunderson and Thompson).

An existential threat exists when someone receives a calling so decisively and its impact so great that it threatens others as their mediocrity is revealed. The more a person lives in congruence with call and their life becomes filled with transcendental purpose, the more obvious the difference with others. This difference becomes a flash point for rejection or undermining. Jesus is the prime example as being rejected in Nazareth during which he states, “a prophet is not welcome in his hometown” (Luke 4.24).

The final downside to calling comes from Parker Palmer’s work on vocation. Palmer says that if one is not careful, calling can create feelings of inadequacy and guilt about the gap between current reality and the vision of who they are supposed to be and what they are supposed to do (10). Rather than an inspiration, calling can become deflating, demotivating, and depressing because things in our life do not match up with what one feels, senses, understands, and maybe even says should be (Palmer 14).

Upsides of Calling

While care needs to be taken so that calling does not become a blunt instrument of attack or a nuanced instrument of misdirection, the upside, or positive impacts, of calling on individuals and society continues to exist and does so with dramatic impact for good.

Perhaps nowhere is the upside more visible than in the biblical evidence. God speaks and all of creation arises. Abram is called and a nation begins. Paul is called and a church full of Gentile believers is formed. These upsides are already well documented in this paper and, therefore, will not be rehashed at this point except to say the evidence of God's call and its impact shapes the entirety of Scripture.

God's will is accomplished on earth as it is in heaven. This phenomenon is the macro-impact of calling. As God calls and creation responds, the perfect will of God and its impact is felt, heard, seen, and most importantly transforming. As Walter Brueggemann describes, "A transformation is always involved in the call; the call does not destroy nature, but creates, preserves, and aims to perfect it" (*Genesis* 18). This drawing to perfection, which is started on earth and completed in heaven, is the chief aim of God's call on creation. Perfection, completion, or in biblical terms shalom, is the ultimate reality for which God desires for all creation and ultimately works towards (Dawn 210).

Calling also gives meaning and dignity to an individual life (*Gaudium et Spes* 3). The great both/and proposition of calling is its impact corporately as well as personally (Schuurman xiv). Calling has been well-documented as a key, if not the key, component for meaning in life. The transcendency of calling provides a road map, true north, in which to follow. Calling also provides the necessary desire to walk the path even when life gets difficult, complex, and confusing (Nouwen 57–58).

In close connection to purpose, freedom is achieved by living into one's calling. Freedom is an important part of Martin Luther's theology and how freedom is achieved is particularly helpful. As God's Lordship is accepted and begins to govern our lives instead

of our own will freedom is found. Luther says that “Those who ‘go their way’, always being deceived and deceiving, progressing, indeed, but into a worse state, blind leaders of the blind, wearying themselves with many works and still never attaining to true righteousness” (Luther and Tranvik). Here the lordship of Christ is achieved by a constant call and response cycle. Pope John Paul II takes freedom a step further by equating divine freedom rightly exercised not by “blind internal impulse nor mere excellent pressures” but rather from a deep response of obedience from within (*Gaudium et Spes* 1).

In close connection to the idea of freedom, and in reality, its natural extension is that calling directly leads to sanctification (Schuurman 6). Sanctification is the process by which God’s grace works in a life to bring about transformation from self-centered to sacrificial, darkness to light, lost to found, or being “conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom. 8.29 NRSV). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “By reason of special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will so they may be effected and grow according to Christ and the glory of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church | Catholic Culture*).

What happens in our daily life if done for God’s glory, is used by God to shape a person in the likeness of Christ.

Increase of satisfaction and decrease of burnout is another upside of calling. Studies show that individuals who view their vocation as a calling rather than a job often are more likely to find satisfaction in their work and life outside of work. A direct correlation between calling confidence and the decrease in burnout exists (Duffy et al.).

The final upside of calling for benefit of this review is the means for church renewal. Recapturing the spirit and meaning of calling may be a key to renewal within the walls of local congregations. The weight of evidence, as listed above, points toward a personal impact of calling. In addition, calling translates corporate results.

Renewal is defined by SRRM as “a change in structure, culture, standards or norms without altering the fundamental purpose of an organization” (SRRM Website). I chose renewal over reform or revitalization because I believe renewal more accurately gets at what God is doing in all of creation as witnessed throughout Scripture (Ps. 104.30, 2 Cor. 4.16, Col. 3.20, and Rev. 21.5). Renewal acknowledges that the core of an organization continues to remain viable. Any organization headed by Christ, in my estimation, is always viable (Matt. 16.18). Renewal then becomes like the work of a physician healing an illness, repairing broken bones, and “reviving the essence” (Brooks 235).

Acts 1.8 holds the key to understanding how calling became a key in renewing the health and vitality of local congregations and hence the catholic Church. Jesus said to his followers immediately prior to his ascension that they would “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth.” Jerusalem would have been ground zero for the gospel to spread via these witnesses. They were already there and so it was natural to start in that same place, but the witnesses were counseled to not be satisfied with staying local. The witnesses were to begin to move forward step by step to the surrounding places (Judea and Samaria) and not stop until they reached the ends of the world.

The church needs to do more than doing church better for it to be an instrument of change in society. The church is in need of a radical change (Bennethum 20–21). The work of the laity and the importance of call may very well hold the key. In fact, William Diehl makes the case that the Christian church in the 21st century will fall on the shoulders of the laity (Diehl 92). The opportunity for renewal is contained in opening the ministry to all Christians rather than a select few clergy. This movement may be as groundbreaking as the period of time when Bible reading was opened to folks in the pews and not reserved for those behind the pulpit (Trueblood 32). Renewal presses the ministry deep into Monday through Sunday instead of holding it out and relegating it to Sunday morning for an hour or so (Trueblood 57). Impact is no longer reduced to a group of people who assemble on Sunday but to a much wider community thereby increasing the potential impact (Bennethum 17). Laity, therefore, make up the front lines of impact because they tend to be closer to the situations of real life than clergy and, therefore, living out their calls may be the revolution the church needs (Minear 67–68). The battles of today are being “fought in factories, shops, offices and farms, in political parties and government agencies” (Bennethum 18). The work done by laity has eternal value because of the thin line which runs between new creation and old creation (Volf 36).

Research Design Literature

To ascertain if a link exists between calling definition and calling confidence with calling impact that the literature review described, two tools were developed. A generalized survey and a focus group set of questions set the research boundaries to test the assumption. Based on Tim Sensing’s recommendations, the research took a multi-methods approach (Loc 1854). As a result, this pre-intervention study used both a

quantitative approach as well as a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand what correlation, if any, exists among the three areas of interest (Sensing Loc 1890). The survey was developed based on the findings of the literature review which was the baseline from which correlation patterns, standard deviation of answers, and arithmetic means were used to describe the interplay among the areas. Meanwhile, the focus group questions were developed to elaborate upon the results from the survey adding depth to the results along with clarifying the patterns uncovered. The focus group was chosen based on Sensing's observation that smaller groups at times provide greater clarity than one-on-one as individuals are able to hear from other participants who may give language to what they are feeling (Loc 2939).

Summary of Literature

The literature review begins to paint a picture of calling as a foundational aspect of life which includes Christian formation or discipleship as has been referenced in this paper. Scripture is clear, plainly spoken, and full of examples of calling being the primary way that God's will is expressed and carried out (Gen. 1, 2, 12 et al).

The literature review also highlights that the meaning of calling has shifted. Calling is now more understood to be what one does instead of who one is (Palmer 25). As a result, calling is derived from exploring our gifts instead of identifying a relationship. This not-so-subtle shift distracts, and perhaps even discards, the ultimate goal of calling which is to align persons and society with the will of the Caller bringing about the common good (Nouwen 66). Calling has been co-opted and branded as a personal improvement strategy instead of unleashed as a world-changing reality.

As the understanding of calling changed over time, the interest outside the faith-based context has grown. The literature review shows that having a calling has morphed for those outside of the faith-based context into finding a job that aligns your greatest gifts and passions with the needs of others. This democratization of calling has obscured the original meaning but has also helped elevate it into the consciousness of the culture. Calling is something to be desired, welcomed, and sought after.

While calling has undergone a mutation throughout the years, calling's impact continues to be felt and described by theologians and researchers alike. Calling is compelling in that new course of actions are taken because of it. Calling is clarifying in that it narrows focus of the individual away from many good things to the one best. Calling is strengthening in that it bolsters resilience to continue when the way forward becomes difficult. Evidence of calling's impact is also seen across disciplines. Calling is seen as a force that increases satisfaction, decreases burnout, and adds to the common good. Calling has an impact. Calling shows up in the lives of individuals and communities. Impact of calling is a clear example of God's truth being universal even if the one who gives it is not recognized (Sproul 87).

As such, the primary assumptions from this literature review driving this study going forward are three-fold. First, studying how the members of First United Methodist Church define calling is necessary. The research would assume that if understanding aligns with the Christian concept of calling, this would lead to confidence which would also lead to impact. The next step would be to assess if confidence exists within the membership that they, themselves, have a call from God and that they are actively exploring, pursuing, and executing on it. The final step is to research what impact(s) are

being identified as being associated with the understanding and confidence of calling.

The literature along with the biblical and theological review identifies that calling makes an identifiable difference for not only the individual but society as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the research methodology undertaken in the project. The nature and purpose of the project will be reviewed and the research questions will be explored along with the instruments used to do the research. Finally, the process used to analyze the data will be examined along with the cultural context and demographics of the participants.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

At the core of the church's mission is making disciples (Matt. 28.19). How this takes place and the resulting impact at the First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky is at the heart of this project. This research focuses on one area of discipleship and that is of calling. How someone understands calling and applies that to their life is at the core of the project.

The purpose of this project is to determine how members of First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky define calling, understand calling in their own life, and determining what, if any, impact calling has on their discipleship. My belief is that a deeper understanding and resulting application of calling leads to committed and effective disciples.

Research Questions

Research Question #1—How do members of FUMC, Lexington define calling?

The purpose of this question was to establish how participants understand the concept of calling. In order to collect the data for this question, a researcher-designed

survey entitled *FUMC—Call Survey* was employed. Questions 6-26 address definition of calling specifically. Congregants from within First United Methodist Church of Lexington were surveyed. Additionally, seven persons participated in a researcher designed semi-structured focus group entitled *FUMC—Call Focus Group*. Question one addresses definition of calling specifically.

Research Question #2—How confident are members of FUMC, Lexington in their calling?

The purpose of this question is to determine the link between participants and their calling. In order to collect the data for this question, a researcher-designed survey entitled *FUMC Call Survey* was employed. Questions 27-32 address calling confidence. Congregants from within FUMC, Lexington were surveyed. Additionally, seven persons participated in a researcher designed semi-structured focus group entitled *FUMC Call Focus Group*. Question 2 addresses calling confidence specifically.

Research Question #3—What impact does calling have upon members of FUMC, Lexington?

The purpose of this question is to ascertain the impact, if any, that is perceived by the participant as a result from living into their calling. In order to collect the data for this question, a researcher-designed survey entitled *FUMC—Call Survey* was employed. Questions 33-51 address impact of calling. Congregants from within FUMC, Lexington were surveyed. Additionally, seven persons participated in a researcher designed semi-structured focus group entitled *FUMC—Call Focus Group*. Question 3 addressed calling impact specifically.

Ministry Context for Observing the Phenomenon

The project draws from the specific context of First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky. The church has a long history of faithfulness as evidenced by its 240 years of existence. The current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, racial tensions in our country, and indeed world in 2020 along with the impending split of the United Methodist Church in 2021 makes for an unusual time for research. What impact any or all of these situations will have on the research is unknown, but it bears stating they exist and may have an impact.

Participants to Be Sampled About the Phenomenon

Criteria for Selection

For this quantitative research project, purposive sampling served to provide the best criteria for participant selection. “Purposive samples select people who have awareness of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes that are essential to your research” (Sensing Loc 2271). All participants of the study are congregants of First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky.

For the qualitative part of the project, a researcher developed semi-structured focus group was used. Participants involved in the survey portion of the research were asked if they would be willing to be part of a focus group. This was accomplished by including a question at the end of the survey asking the participant to email the investigator directly. Seven who responded by email affirmatively were invited to take part in an in-person focus group.

Description of Participants

Ninety-nine persons began the survey on calling and ninety persons completed it. Seventy percent of the respondents were female and 30 percent male. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents were over the age of sixty-five. Seventeen percent were between ages fifty-five and sixty-four. Twelve percent were between the ages forty-five and fifty-four. Five percent of the respondents were between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four and the remainder were between eighteen and thirty-four. All participants marked that they had been a Christian for over fifteen years.

The focus group was made up of seven persons of which six were female and one male. Three participants were age sixty-five or older while two participants were in the fifty-five to sixty-four age range and the remaining two in the forty-five to fifty-four range. All have been Christians for more than fifteen years.

Ethical Considerations

Each potential participant received a description of study in the form of an abstract along with an informed consent letter. Informed consent letters are attached as Appendix A.

Informed Consent was received by participants in the online *Ideas about Calling* survey by asking respondents to read *FUMC—Call Survey Informed Consent* and affirming the question, “Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.” In addition, each of the *FUMC—Call Focus Group* participants were asked to read and sign a second informed consent for that part of the research.

Confidentiality for the *FUMC—Call Survey* was ensured through the privacy protocols of Survey Monkey online survey tool, which can be found at

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>. In addition, responses were strictly kept confidential through the following measures: (1) Data from the research will be reported in the aggregate only; (2) Survey Monkey coded the data which further assured confidentiality; and (3) a login and strong password protected the data on the site itself.

Confidentiality for the *FUMC—Call Focus Group* was ensured by identifying that no name or any other characteristic which may identify the participant be disclosed. If a given participant was referenced in particular, he/she was identified by number. The chart listing numbers with the corresponding person was kept by the researcher under the confidentiality protocol listed below. Raw data from the focus group was not shared including transcripts and investigator's notes.

The investigator shared research findings in a colloquium with Doctor of Ministry colleagues and Asbury Theological Seminary faculty on Asbury's Wilmore, Kentucky campus. The investigator also shared pertinent results with the pastoral team of First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky. No raw data was shared but only aggregated results.

A password protected computer was used to store all data. Only the investigator had the password to the computer. Hardcopy data was locked in a fire safe and under sole possession of the investigator. All electronic data was completely deleted, and any hardcopy data was shredded within twelve months of the conclusion of the research project.

Procedure for Collecting Evidence from Participants

The research project was a pre-intervention. The project's objective was to measure and describe a situation, namely how do congregants within this context understand calling and its implications on their lives. Pre-intervention is a process of

discovery without the intent of prescribing. While some telling signs will hopefully point toward a plan of action and a strategy for achieving said objective, the focus of this research was to describe current reality and not a paint a vision of the potential future (Sensing Loc 609).

The project engages in both quantitative and qualitative strategies to collect data in order to create a thicker interpretation via triangulation (Sensing Loc 1989). The first instrument used was a researcher designed survey implemented through Survey Monkey. This aspect of the research was a quantitative focus which sought to investigate a topic within a context with breadth (Sensing Loc 2258). The survey is a collection of fifty-two questions all designed to identify the participants understanding of, confidence in, and impact of calling as outlined in the three research questions.

The second research instrument used was a researcher developed semi-structured focus group. This research component was qualitative in nature and was implemented through one-on-one interviews with survey participants who self-selected that they would be willing to be interviewed. This component was meant to add depth of understanding through specificity and nuance whereas the previous instrument was concerned about breadth (Sensing Loc 1629, 1640). A total of seven persons participated in-person interviews. Researcher notes along with a transcribed audio recording were used to discover themes and patterns which helped describe the lived reality of calling among participants.

Procedure for Analyzing the Evidence Collected

Attempting to establish meaning from the research was the core of the analysis process. This establishment of meaning was done through a variety of well-established

ways of viewing the data. In analyzing the data, themes, patterns, and overall understandings were looked for (Creswell 183).

The *FUMC—Call Survey* was analyzed through a variety of statistical measures. The arithmetic mean and median were determined to identify the general agreement and/or disagreement of each of the questions. The normal distribution was established to identify the spread of answers and to determine any significance variance. Finally, regression analysis was used to identify the correlation present, or lack thereof, between each question.

The semi-structured focus group was analyzed through a process of identifying, naming, and organizing common words and themes from researcher notes and transcribed audio recording of the session. The list of themes was then labeled by large overarching headings and the particular issues within each heading. For instance, the heading “Calling Impact” would contain T1, T2, T3, etc. Once the list was compiled per interview, they were then combined to codify and examine further.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

A grounded theory design, as described by J.W. Creswell, was followed in order to assure that the project was both appropriate and potentially effective (13, 229). “The value of grounded theory is in its ability to examine relationships and behavior within a phenomenon from an unbiased in-depth perspective” (Ke, Jing, Wenglensky). The research follows the views of the congregation members who participated through data collection, creating themes based on identifiable patterns and then describing reality based on collective expressions revealed in the research. The survey serves to describe

the breadth of understanding and the interview then stands to add texture, nuance, and depth (Sensing Loc 2258). Sensing says that within focus groups:

Through group interaction, data and insights are generated that are related to a particular theme imposed by a researcher and enriched by the group's interactive discussion. The synergy of the group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group had been interviewed separately (Loc 2939).

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Calling, as the research indicates, means different things and has different impacts upon individuals. The purpose of this project is to determine how members of First United Methodist Church of Lexington, Kentucky define calling, understand calling in their own life, and determining what, if any, impact calling has on their discipleship.

The following chapter identifies the demographics of the study participants. This chapter then presents quantitative data from the survey and qualitative data from the focus group. Major findings derived from the analysis concludes this section.

Participants

The Downtown campus of First United Methodist Church of Lexington worships 350 persons on average. An email was sent to five hundred members asking if they would take a survey about calling. Ninety responded and seventy-eight completed a valid survey which is a 78 percent completion rate and a 18 percent overall response rate from potential members. Of that group who filled out the survey, seven agreed to take part in a focus group. For the survey, 64 percent of the participants were women. Seventy-six percent of all respondents were age sixty-five or older. All of the survey participants have been a Christian for fifteen years or longer. For the focus group of seven persons, six were female. All participants were forty-five years or older and have been a Christian for fifteen years of longer.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

How do members of FUMC, Lexington define calling?

Twenty-one of the *FUMC—Calling Survey*'s total fifty-two questions revolved around how Lexington First members defined calling. The data can be seen in Table 4.1 below. The four questions with the lowest standard deviation were questions 6 (Ministers have a calling from God: .47), 12 (Some people never discover their calling: .43), 19 (People other than ministers have a calling from God: .45) and 26 (The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God: .43). All of these standard deviations were in the mid-forties and indicate solid agreement among participants for these questions. Out of these four questions, only question 12 (Some people never discover their calling) found the majority of answers in the "Agree" (79 percent) while the other three questions were overwhelmingly weighted to the "Strongly Agree" scale.

Standard deviations range from .43 to .79 with six questions having more than a .73 standard deviation. Questions 24 (All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call: .73), 23 (Calling comes from God only: .76), 21 (I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables: .75), 16 (Without a call life would be less than fulfilling: .76), 13 (Not all Christians have a calling: .79), and 9 (Calling is most important early in life: .74) had the greatest dispersion of answers. Even with this dispersion, no answer had less than 63 percent of answers on one side of the scale between "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree." In other words, a significant uniformity existed in either the agreement or disagreement of the answer. One final thing to note about these six questions with the largest dispersions, question 9 (Calling is most important early in life) saw almost equal number "Strongly Agree" (8 percent) and "Strongly Disagree" (10 percent). No other

question saw a difference of less than 7 percent between “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree.”

Three questions received percentages above 65 percent for “Strongly Agree.” The questions receiving the highest percentage of “Strongly Agree” answers are questions 6 (Ministers have a calling from God: 67 percent), 19 (People other than ministers have a calling from God: 72 percent), and 26 (The experiences in my life, good and difficult, can be used by God: 82 percent). In contrast, two questions received percentages above 20 percent for “Strongly Disagree.” The questions receiving the highest percentage of “Strongly Disagree” answers are question 18 (There is only one call in life : 22 percent) and 20 (Calling is predominantly about finding the right job: 24 percent). This lines up well with the focus group which mentioned job and/or career only once in their discussion about calling.

The focus group spent time responding to the question “How do you define calling?” This qualitative aspect of the research showed that the predominant understanding of calling as a “feeling” which was mentioned over fifteen times by five out of the seven participants. This feeling, which was defined as calling, leads to doing something for God and for others. One participant (P2) described calling as an “urge to do something with your life.” One participant (P3) mentioned calling as impacting “who we are” along with what we do. As evidenced by the group, calling shapes desires to align with a greater purpose within and outside an individual’s life.

The focus group aligned calling with gifts, talents, personality, and passions which was mentioned by four of the participants. One participant (P1) said “personality is the key to living into your call.” This lines up with the quantitative aspect of the research

as question 8 (Calling comes from my gifts and passions) received an 86 percent “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” response.

The group agreed that God gives calling. In fact, all the participants either mentioned this directly or indirectly. One person went as far to say that “listening (to God) is the key to finding our call.” This finding lines up well with survey question 15 (Discovering your call is a process) which had 95 percent of responses either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree.” One additional thing to note was that the group believed that calling applies to all persons whether they are people of Christian faith or not. In fact, one participant (P2) mentioned that “calling outside of faith happens for a reason or season.” The group saw that calling was aligned with God’s sovereignty and, therefore, a force for good given to all persons. This finding is supported with the survey results which saw 63 percent of responses in either the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” category when asked in question 24 (All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call.)

The other piece of agreement among the focus group, which has been mentioned previously, was that calling had to do with our responsibility to others. All seven of the group mentioned an impetus of actions toward others when it comes to calling. One member stated directly that “calling is about loving God and loving our neighbor.” Survey question 11 (Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world) supports this agreement as 90 percent of responses were in the “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” category.

One final note about this initial section of research focused on the definition of calling among members at First United Methodist Church of Lexington was that there were zero “No Response.” While the other two sections did have respondents opt not to answer a particular question, the first section about calling definition did not.

Table 4.1 – Research Question 1								
No.		Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
6	Ministers have a calling from God. (d)	1.26	0.47	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
7	Calling affects my relationship with God.	1.54	0.56	40%	56%	4%	0%	0%
8	Calling comes from my gifts and passions. (d)	1.81	0.64	23%	63%	13%	1%	0%
9	Calling is most important early in life. (d)	2.65	0.74	8%	17%	64%	10%	0%
10	Calling comes from beyond ourselves. (d)	1.47	0.55	45%	53%	1%	0%	0%
11	Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world. (d)	1.75	0.62	26%	64%	9%	1%	0%
12	Some people never discover their calling. (d)	1.78	0.43	18%	79%	3%	0%	0%
13	Not all Christians have a calling. (d)	2.62	0.79	6%	27%	51%	15%	0%
14	Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)	1.72	0.69	31%	55%	13%	1%	0%
15	Discovering your call is a process. (d)	1.50	0.57	42%	53%	3%	0%	0%
16	Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)	1.70	0.70	31%	55%	12%	1%	0%
17	Calling mostly concerns what I do in life. (d)	2.11	0.68	13%	53%	33%	1%	0%
18	There is only one call in life. (d)	3.09	0.66	3%	1%	73%	22%	0%
19	People other than ministers have a calling from God. (d)	1.22	0.45	72%	28%	0%	0%	0%
20	Calling is predominantly about finding the right job. (d)	3.02	0.66	3%	9%	64%	24%	0%

21	I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables. (d)	2.76	0.75	3%	23%	59%	14%	0%
22	Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)	1.84	0.69	22%	64%	10%	4%	0%
23	Calling comes from God only. (d)	2.01	0.76	19%	49%	29%	3%	0%
24	All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call. (d)	2.17	0.73	10%	53%	33%	3%	0%
25	Calling concerns who I am. (d)	1.82	0.59	21%	69%	9%	1%	0%
26	The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God. (d)	1.14	0.43	82%	17%	1%	0%	0%

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

How confident are members of FUMC, Lexington in their calling?

Six of the *FUMC—Calling Survey*'s total forty-six questions revolved around how Lexington First members understood their personal calling and their confidence of being in it. The focus group also discussed the question in its time together. The data can be seen in Table 4.2 below. Question 28 (I am living out my call) had the smallest standard deviation of any question, not only in this section, but the entire study at .38. The majority of answers, 85 percent, were "Agree" while 13 percent were "Strongly Agree." The lack of strong conviction was noticed during the focus group with one of the participants saying "you don't always know" when asked about how confident of call personally. In addition, only one of the focus group participants spoke directly of a call on their life with specificity. This person described teaching a Sunday School class as evidence of confidence in living out their calling. In fact, this entire section of questions leans toward "Agree" as the primary answer verses "Strongly Agree" which is noticed in

the other two sections. Finally, adding to the evidence of conviction, or lack thereof, two of the four largest percentage answers for the category “Agree” are within this section in questions 28 (I am living out my call) and 32 (I am discovering how to answer God’s call on my life.)

Section two also had three questions with standard deviations greater than .82. In fact, three of the five largest standard deviations in the entire study were witnessed in this section. Question 30 (I have done a bible study and/or read a book about calling) had the largest dispersion in this section with a standard deviation of .89. While the majority of responders answers were affirmative to either having done a study about, thought about, or talked about calling, a quarter of responses or more in each of these categories indicated they have not. This response is seen readily in the standard deviation.

This section also showed the highest percentage of questions with a “No Response.” Five out of the six questions had a “No Response.” Section 1 had zero “No Response” answers and Section 3 had five “No Response” answers out of a total of nineteen and twenty-one questions respectively. However, upon closer review of the data, four of the five “No Response” came from one responder.

Table 4.2 – Research Question 2								
No.		Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
27	I have a calling from God. (c)	1.42	0.55	50%	47%	1%	0%	1%
28	I am living out my call. (c)	1.85	0.38	13%	85%	3%	0%	0%
29	I have thought a lot about calling. (c)	1.90	0.83	26%	44%	27%	3%	1%
30	I have done a bible study and/or read	2.01	0.89	23%	38%	32%	5%	1%

	a book about calling. (c)							
31	I have talked to others about my calling. (c)	1.95	0.82	22%	49%	24%	4%	1%
32	I am discovering how to answer God’s call on my life. (c)	1.82	0.60	19%	71%	8%	1%	1%

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What impact does calling have upon members of FUMC, Lexington?

Nineteen of the *FUMC—Calling Survey’s* total fifty-two questions revolved around how Lexington First members defined calling. The data can be seen in Table 4.3 below. The focus group also discussed the question in its time together.

This section on the survey showed two of the largest dispersions in questions 51 (I serve at church and in the community __x__times per month) and 48 (I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God) with standard deviations of 1.13 and .81 respectively.

Only one question, 50 (I believe serving at church and in the community is important) had a standard deviation in the .40 to .49 range which has been the lowest range in this survey. This question also was the only question in Survey Section 3 with a majority of responses in the “Strongly Agree” category with 68 percent.

Three percent of responses in question 36 (My call has made a difference in the lives of others) were “No Response” answers. This question is far and away the largest percentage of “No Response” answers in not only Section 3 but all of the survey sections. No other section had more than 1 percent of responses marked as “No Response.”

While the responses aligned with the rest of the survey in terms of a majority of the responders choosing either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” for all but two of the questions, no question had responses weighted more heavily toward “Strongly Agree.” The “Agree” response was the majority of the responses in all but question 45 (My call has made me more committed to my family) which saw “Agree” with a 47 percent response rate verses 44 percent who “Strongly Agreed” and question 50 (I believe serving at church and in the community is important) which is described previously.

The focus group, reflecting upon the question of calling’s impact, described calling along the terms of feelings and desires predominantly again. “Calmness is a sign of calling” one participant (P4) stated as another (P3) mentioned a “sense of peace” that comes with calling in her experience. Four of the responders mentioned the word “persistence” in their answer. A person who is living out of their calling is more likely to not give up but rather “carry me through difficult times” as one of the focus group members (P2) expressed. To a person, the group agreed that calling developed a person’s faith. In fact, one responder (P5) mentioned “leap of faith” as the means by which you know a call is being lived out.

Once again, as stated above, no details were given in terms of calling’s impact except for one person expressing a teaching experience. Practical manifestations of calling were not otherwise mentioned by the group.

Table 4.3 – Research Question 3								
No		Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
33	My call has made a difference in my life. (i)	1.50	0.57	42%	57%	0%	1%	0%

34	My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)	1.58	0.67	40%	52%	8%	1%	0%
35	My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)	1.54	0.63	40%	56%	3%	1%	1%
36	My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)	1.71	0.57	23%	74%	0%	1%	3%
37	My sense of well-being is tied to how well I am fulfilling my call. (i)	1.81	0.64	22%	66%	10%	1%	1%
38	My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)	1.61	0.64	36%	57%	6%	1%	0%
39	My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	1.62	0.62	35%	60%	5%	1%	0%
40	I am overall contented with my life. (i)	1.70	0.60	29%	61%	10%	0%	0%
41	I am overall satisfied with my past. (i)	1.87	0.51	15%	75%	10%	0%	0%
42	I am excited for the future. (i)	1.61	0.61	35%	58%	6%	0%	1%
43	My call has made me more generous	1.72	0.58	26%	69%	5%	1%	0%

	with my talents. (i)							
44	My call has made me more generous with my financial resources. (i)	1.73	0.59	26%	68%	6%	1%	0%
45	My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)	1.55	0.69	44%	47%	9%	1%	0%
46	My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)	1.67	0.67	33%	56%	10%	1%	0%
47	My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	1.79	0.62	23%	66%	10%	1%	0%
48	I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God. (i)	1.51	0.81	45%	51%	0%	1%	1%
49	I attend church monthly _____ times. 1=once, 2=twice, 3=three times, 4=every Sunday each month.) (i)	3.63	0.55	0%	4%	25%	73%	0%

50	I believe serving at church and in the community is important.	1.25	0.47	68%	32%	0%	0%	0%
51	I serve at church and in the community _____ times per month. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use the scale to indicate how often per month you attend. 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always) (i)	2.88	1.13	3%	16%	53%	19%	10%

After reviewing the raw data and making observations within each section, this report now turns its attention to the relationships between each question. The research used correlation coefficient as a tool to determine if any correlation existed between how calling was defined in Section 1 of the survey and its impact as seen in Section 3. In addition, correlation was used to ascertain relationship(s) among and between calling confidence in Section 2 and its impact as evidenced in Section 3 of the same survey. Finally, all the questions were examined for correlation, regardless of section, with one another. The raw data for the correlation analysis can be found in the appendices.

A correlation range of .50 to .69 either positive or negative is described as moderate while .70 to 1.00 either positive or negative as strong. All other observations of coefficients in the 0.0 to .49 range either positive or negative were determined to be weak.

The analysis of this survey shows minimal correlation between defining call and impact. The same can be said for confidence in call and impact as posed in this study except for a broad generalization. This does not mean there isn't any correlation, but it does mean that this study did not show any meaningful correlation.

Question 25 (Calling concerns who I am) shows the most correlation with the impact section with six moderate correlations ranging from .55 to .60 as shown in Figure 4.4 below. No other question in section one on definition of call had more than five moderate correlations. No strong correlation (.70-1.00 positive or negative) existed in any of the twenty-six questions on definition of calling to the nineteen impact of calling questions.

Q-No.	Question	Correlation with Q25
45	My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)	0.60056
47	My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	0.58695
46	My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)	0.58047
39	My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	0.57929
38	My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)	0.56050
33	My call has made a difference in my life. (i)	0.55731

Strong correlation, .73, exists between question 25 (I have a call from God) from Section 2 of the survey to question 33 (My call has made a difference in my life). While the evidence is not coming through in the particulars (Q49 - attendance, Q48 - giving), people who feel they have a call on their life also feel it has made a difference.

Persistence was mentioned in the focus group by six of the seven responders. The word persistence was described by one focus group member (P3) as the strength to continue through “difficult stages of your faith journey.”

Calling impacting the faith journey was a major topic of conversation with the group. One member (P5) said calling helps us “take the leap of faith.” The group agreed that calling acts as a faith accelerator inciting leaps of faith and jumps into the unknown from which secondarily brings impacts such as peace, joy, and love. This statement is a key insight from the focus group. For instance, the group agreed that calling does not bring peace, but instead develops the strength needed to exercise faith. From faith, described by the group as the leaps into the unknown, comes the peace.

Q-No.	Question	Correlation with Q27
33	My call has made a difference in my life. (i)	0.731726
36	My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)	0.589922
39	My call has made me more aware of God’s will for my life. (i)	0.571158
35	My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)	0.502973

Both questions 39 (My call has made a difference in my life) and 27 (I have a calling) highly correlate to question 33 (My call has made a difference in my life) with coefficients of .73 and .73 respectively. These two questions (Q39 and Q27) are only moderately correlated to one another with a correlation of .50. These questions (Q39 and Q27) appear to be two drivers of responders identifying that a call has made a difference. Since the common denominator is “My call has made a difference in my life” it could be that the other two questions are seen in the same light in terms of impact but not seen in the same light as knowledge. This may be why very little correlation exists between Sections 1 (definition) and 2 (confidence) with section 3 (impact).

The one place of significant correlation in terms of strength and number is with question 33 (My call has made a difference in my life). Table 4.6 below shows fourteen questions that question 33 is either moderately or strongly correlated with. The responders who felt that their call made a difference saw impact in a variety of ways. This is not what the study set out to discover. The research was focused on calling confidence as a driver of discipleship impact. Responders who said they had a call were more likely to also say that their call had made a difference in their life. Beyond the generalization of question 33, no significant correlation existed with any of the questions asking for more detail such as question 48 (I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering) and question 49 (I attend church __x__ times per month).

Q-No.	Question	Correlation with Q33
27	I have a calling from God. (c)	0.731725726
39	My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	0.730304357
35	My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)	0.637001961
36	My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)	0.632506686
32	I am discovering how to answer God's call on my life. (c)	0.621150872
34	My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)	0.614555999
38	My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)	0.598762168
47	My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	0.589540525
16	Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)	0.582179987
25	Calling concerns who I am. (d)	0.55731282
31	I have talked to others about my calling. (c)	0.535776618
22	Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)	0.523935443
29	I have thought a lot about calling. (c)	0.52140558
14	Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)	0.509890029

Question 44 (My call has made me more generous with my financial resources) does not have a strong correlation with understanding of calling as only nine instances of correlation above .50, but question 44 does have a moderately stronger correlation of the

impact in question 33 (My call has made a difference in my life) (63 percent), question 34 (My call has made me more committed to the church) (65 percent), and question 36 (My call has made a difference for others) (68 percent). Regardless of why they are generous, the responders see generosity as moderately impacted by calling.

Question 38 (My call impacts my relationship with others) has the third highest instances of moderate correlation with eleven instances of .50 or higher correlation. Basically the same question written differently (Q14 - Calling impacts my relationship with others) had only a .61 correlation with question 38. There appears to be misunderstanding the question for the results not to be similar.

The correlation of understanding and experiencing call had very little, if any, correlation with giving or attendance. Question 43 (I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God) has as its highest correlation (.37) with question 44 (My call has made me more generous with my financial resources). Calling and generosity of resources appear to have very little impact on one another in this survey,

Question 44 (I attend church __x__ times per month) shows the same lack of correlation and, in fact, out of the forty-three potential correlations, only ten of these correlations were positive which leaves thirty-five as negative. Stating this another way, over 75 percent of the questions showed a negative impact with church attendance. While I am careful to not make sweeping statements beyond the bounds of this small study, it is nonetheless factual for this study that church attendance was not impacted by any aspect of call listed.

Giving and attendance were almost divorced of call in any meaningful way in the study. Regardless of how one defined call or if one thought call was making a difference, church attendance and giving were driven by something else.

This phenomenon may be because attendance and giving are less about a feeling of purpose and more about a compunction or obedience. “It’s just what you do” may be a better way to view attendance and giving in this research. Obedience and on-going concern of the institution may ultimately be better drivers of generosity rather than mission.

Summary of Major Findings

After the above review of the survey and focus group, the following are major findings for further consideration and understanding.

- 1) Survey responders indicate a knowledge of calling.
- 2) Survey responders’ knowledge about call and its impact is not strongly correlated.
- 3) Survey responders indicate a confidence that they have a call.
- 4) Confidence in call and its impact is not strongly correlated.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

First United Methodist Church in Lexington's members are in community for the purpose of discipleship which is described as following Christ and growing more like him in thought, word, and deed. This research project examines the impact of Christian calling on discipleship. Specifically, this research project attempts to draw a line between the definition and confidence of calling and its impact on discipleship. In other words, does knowing that a call exists and that a person has a call make a difference in their thoughts, words, and deeds?

The following chapter records major findings from the project and integrates them into discoveries from the project's literature review and theological and biblical framework as well as personal observations. The chapter concludes by reviewing limitations of the study, unexpected observations, and ideas for future study.

Major Findings

Major Finding #1—Survey Responders Indicate a Knowledge of Calling

The survey participation rate of over 20 percent of the target group is a sign of the congregation's interest in topic of calling. In addition, the focus group filled within the first day of sign-ups which also indicates potential interest and energy. Acknowledging that the groups' interest may have also been driven by a personal relationship with the researcher (i.e. their pastor) is appropriate, but my experience over the past fifteen years in this context has been that the members of the church are willing to say when they are

not enthused about something. This topic generated genuine interest and energy based on fifteen years in the context.

Beyond interest and energy for the concept, the respondents demonstrated an understanding of calling commensurate with the literature review and biblical/theological framework. This observation is made from survey results and focus group responses aligning with what has been outlined in the research concerning calling. Case in point, a majority of survey responders answered “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” to questions in ways consistent with an understanding of calling. For instance, when asked about if calling comes from beyond ourselves in question 10 of the survey, 98 percent responded either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.” The focus group also demonstrated an understanding of calling through their answers. One focus group participant, identified as Participant 1, summarized the discussion around the question by saying “We are called to love God and love our neighbor.”

The biblical review demonstrates call being initiated by God (eg. Gen. 1, 1 Sam. 7, Isa. 6, Matt. 4). Os Guinness states that “there is no calling unless there is a caller” (20). The research group aligned itself with both parts of the literature review that calling begins with God. Marva Dawn summarized the research group well when she wrote, “Recognizing that our calling is an invitation to participate in God’s Kingdom work also changes our choices about what we do and how we do it” (Loc 192).

In another instance, the survey asks in question 19 if people other than ministers have a calling from God. A resounding 100 percent answered “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.” This closely aligns with the research. For instance, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is but one example from Scripture in Luke 1 of non-clergy having a calling. The literature

review showed a growing interest in calling outside of a faith-based context which also affirms that calling is beyond a clergy-specific phenomenon (Duffy and Dik; Bellah et al.; Serow).

These are three examples of the alignment the survey and focus group showed between the understanding of calling by the responders and the biblical and literature review. For these reasons, this research concludes that the portion of the congregation who responded to the survey have a basic understanding of call.

Major Finding #2—Survey Responders’ Knowledge about Call and Its Impact is not Strongly Correlated

The prior chapter describes in detail the correlation between all questions of call definition and call impact. As a reminder, a strong correlation was deemed to be a correlation coefficient between .70 and 1.00 either positive or negative. None of the twenty-six questions on definition of calling had a coefficient greater than or equal to .70 either positive or negative to any of the nineteen questions on calling impact.

Both the literature review and biblical/theological framework of this research show a strong correlation, however. The clearest evidence of calling impacting thought, word, and deeds was found biblically.. The stories of Abraham in Genesis 12, the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 7, and the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1 as well as the Apostle Paul in Acts 9 all demonstrate that a call from God changes life’s trajectory for the individual being called.

The Chapter 2 literature review described that from the earliest period of the church to the recent period, scholars cite the impact of calling upon discipleship. In fact, a large block of scholars, theologians, and ministry leaders such as Gordon T. Smith, Os

Guinness, Karl Barth, John Wesley, and Martin Luther all have written about calling and its importance on personal and corporate life. The very idea of calling has also moved away from the church realm and is now well planted in areas such as behavioral research (Duffy and Dik), human resource management (Bellah et al.), and even career development studies (Serow). Signs from the literature review and the biblical/theological review point to calling as important and impactful.

Major Finding #3—Survey responders indicate a confidence that they have a call.

The survey responses showed over 97 percent either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that responders: (1) have a call; (2) are living out their call; and (3) are discovering how to answer God’s call on their life. Therefore, a majority of the survey responders evidently feel as if they not only have a call on their life, but their call is an active part of their life. They are confident, in other words, of their calling. The focus group described confidence in their call as a feeling. They lacked specificity in terms of what this feeling, however, was beyond its impact of purpose and persistence.

The biblical and theological framework indicates the possibility, and indeed reality, of a person knowing that they are called by God. Beyond the stories of persons previously named in the section above who understood they were called, mostly because of a direct encounter with God, the apostle Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 1.9, Colossians 3.15, and 1 Timothy 6.12 that people were “called into fellowship” with Jesus and one another. The communal aspect of call leads to affirmation and confidence for the church in Corinth like God’s voice did for the prophet Samuel in the Tent of Meeting.

The literature highlighted confidence in call being important as well. In fact, research is being conducted through survey tools such as *The Calling Questionnaire*

which seeks to measure calling confidence and its impact in three areas: work, family, and social (Tracy II). This work is evidence that even a broader group than faith-based identifies the importance of calling upon life. One aspect of this research attempts to define the calling confidence that resides in a person. Chase Jarvis describes calling as an “intuitive hint” that feels right which aligns with this studies’ focus group who consistently described calling as a feeling (9).

Major Finding #4—Confidence in call and its impact is not strongly correlated in this study.

While the survey participants described confidence in having a call, living into a call, and discovering their call, the survey did not find strong correlation between calling confidence and calling impact. The prior chapter describes in detail the correlation between all questions of call confidence and call impact. As a reminder, a strong correlation was deemed to be a correlation coefficient between .70 and 1.00 either positive or negative. None of the six questions on calling confidence had a coefficient greater than or equal to .70 either positive or negative to any of the nineteen questions on calling impact.

While the survey yielded little to no data which would lead to a conclusion of strong correlation between calling confidence and calling impact, the focus group did express that these two areas were related. As stated previously in the research, persistence was the one area that the focus group mentioned consistently as an impact of calling confidence. If you know you are called, they suggested, then you are less likely to give up when life gets difficult, the path to success dims, or naysayers are encountered.

The literature and biblical/theological framework also point to calling confidence as a determinative factor in behavior. For example, the apostle Paul receives his call and goes from chief persecutor to principal builder of the church (Acts 9-26). Exodus describes the impact of a call on Moses' life which moves him from outlaw and shepherd to receiver of the law and deliverer of Israel from Egypt.

Calling outside of a faith-based context shows an increase in job satisfaction and less burnout to name two of many impacts calling has on an individual (Duffy et al.). The amount of research and its specificity on call as a catalyst suggests that the concept of calling has a wider audience. Calling is being researched and written about across the continuum of groups from faith-based to academic institutions and employers. The research shows that there is something compelling about a person who is empowered by a transcendent purpose which creates a difference in what they do and how they do it. Knowing you have a call and living into it, what has been described in this research as calling confidence, leads to impact.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The direct line between calling and impact was not evidenced in this study. What the research hoped to show was that calling impacts discipleship. The assumption being tested was that as a relationship with God and others, stewardship and even church attendance all benefited positively from calling being understood and as confidence grows in a personal call. This conclusion cannot be drawn, however, from the survey or focus group part of the study although this conclusion can be drawn from the literature review as well as biblical and theological framework. However, at least two implications from this research project which are worth noting.

The first implication surrounds how the term call has changed the farther time moves from the close of the canon of Scripture. The literature review highlighted that calling began as an invitation to a relationship with God and a community. Calling is now more focused on purpose in life and the resulting satisfaction. Christians have moved from calling being focused on “whose and who we are” to a focus of “what we do” (Palmer 15). This occurrence is an important point and word of caution. Deeming satisfaction in life as only being what one accomplishes is against what Scripture reveals, but that is exactly where the movement of calling has gone. This drift began most clearly with the Puritans idea of work (Placher 372) and now is fully embraced by audiences outside of faith (Duffy and Dik). Calling may be on its way, if not already there, as a means of increasing productivity and satisfaction instead of a doorway into deeper discipleship. “Who am I” and not “what do I do” is the deepest and, therefore, demanding question answered about calling (Palmer 15). Calling, in today’s society, may be being used to serve the false theology of exceptionalism instead of Kingdom realities of grace (Dawn Loc 204; Brueggemann, *Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks* 35). The first implication then is an urgent reminder that how a person understands calling is an indication of where their faith is placed.

Secondly, the idea of calling is of interest within and outside the Christian community. Calling will be a topic that is full of potential for personal and corporate impact. The number of responders to the survey and the excitement of the focus group to talk about the topic affirms that calling is an important topic within the bounds of Lexington First United Methodist Church. The biblical and theological framework shows a number of case examples as were discussed such as Abraham, Isaac, and Paul. The

literature review shows that theologians throughout, from Luther to Pope John Paul II and all points in between, have taken time to thoughtfully reflect upon calling and its impact for the Christian faith. The number of studies being conducted outside of the Christian faith have grown in recent years the literature review showed. Researchers such as Dik and Duffy describe the interest and energy calling has upon a myriad of psychological disciplines (428–36).

This research reveals calling as a potential avenue for evangelism of the Christian faith. The research documents an interest and energy in calling by those outside the faith community. This research has also shown that calling has been a major driving factor for the Christian faith throughout its existence. Calling is, therefore, important to both groups. Quite frankly, calling may be non-threatening as a conversation starter between both communities.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study included how calling is perceived outside of Lexington First United Methodist Church. Other churches who have different leadership and experiences may very well provide other answers to the questions posed in this research. Alongside that, how others outside of a Wesleyan understanding of theology interpret and apply the concept would be an additional layer of limitation.

Another limitation also mentioned below is the instrument(s) used. One-on-one interviews or journals may have provided different responses especially due to the number of nuances inherent in the topic.

Unexpected Observations

At this point in the paper, the major unexpected observation was the lack of strong correlation in this research project between calling understanding and confidence with calling impact. This would not have been so surprising except for the fact that the preponderance of outside evidence reviewed indicates that correlation indeed exists.

Several things may have led to the findings not aligning with the wider research. Perhaps the research tool was too limiting in terms of impact implications. Other impacts may exist that would have been seen as directly coming from calling and confidence if the list were broader. Along with this, the survey questions may have been too general or vague to allow for correlation. Using a tool that allowed for short stories or biblical examples may have helped the survey responders better identify the impacts that come from calling. If so, the survey may not have been the best tool to test assumptions about calling and its impact. A focus group supplemented by one-one-one interviews may have yielded a different level of specificity about impact.

There may be something else going on that the survey identified for future consideration. Perhaps calling starts off as a feeling or intuitive hunch as mentioned above before calling ends up creating impact. Maybe there is a second step between confidence and impact. The assumption was a *quid pro quo* relationship between calling understanding, confidence and impact. Maybe the process works more as a *tertium quid*, not a direct line between two things, but rather there is a third step directly relating to the other two sides of the equation.

Viewing the survey and focus groups as an initial discovery process into calling without any assumptions might have been useful. By doing so, one can see a level of

understanding about call but not the corresponding seeing of impact. Both research instruments, survey and focus group, yielded a positive result about the groups understanding of call and affirmed that the group “felt” called themselves. The disconnect was when the group was asked what difference calling was making. They knew intuitively calling must be making a difference but had trouble identifying specifics. Both the survey answers and the focus group stated unequivocally that calling makes a difference, but there was not a level of specificity noted by the focus group or correlation in answers as noted by the survey. The initial assumption for the project was that if a person knew about calling and then felt calling personally, they would also have a sense of the impact upon their lives. This assumption is not a correct assumption. The reason as to why would lend itself well to further study along a series of lines of inquiry.

First, impact might be identified and, therefore, understood only well after the events happen. Soren Kierkegaard said that “Life is understood backwards but lived forward” (146). Perhaps that phenomenon is taking place within the survey and focus groups.

The prophet Samuel, in 1 Samuel 3, did not realize the impact of his call the evening that God spoke to him in the Tent of Meeting. Over the course of his lifetime did one see the difference that his call would have on him personally and the life of the Israelites. Paul, in Act 8, received his call on the way to Damascus, and it was three or more years of preparation before this call became clear in its direction and the impact was even a time after that.

Secondly, Parker Palmer writes about the process of self-discovery that leads to understanding vocation (15). Palmer argues that a life of reflection moves calling from a

list of things one must do to a life one has been created to embrace (10). This move from achievement earned to gift received is the place where he finds the greatest impact of calling. This correlation may be yet another confounding element which was highlighted in the lack of correlation found in the study as it challenges the primary assumption(s) of this research that understanding and confidence in call leads to seeing impact. Palmer might say that calling offers an invitation to reflection as opposed to a direct line to result (36). If this is so, not seeing any correlation in the survey and lack of specificity in the focus group may highlight the need for more reflection.

Third, Michael Polanyi writes that knowledge is at times tacit. In other words, knowledge is easier to understand than to explain or in Polanyi's words, "We know more than we can tell. (4)" Tacit knowledge may also be described as "know-how" instead of "know-what." Riding a bike is an example tacit knowledge. Most people cannot describe the physics or the physiological knowledge that takes place to sit upon two wheels and balance, but it happens and most people can do it. When learning to ride a bike, having someone trusted beside the one trying to learn is often the key. Someone who has accomplished the task and has belief in the one learning is often the recipe for learning this skill. Impact possibly lives in a pre-verbal state. If so, then a community of trust and others to emulate is an important step in converting the "know-how" to "know-what." Marva Dawn asserts that until language exists for an experience, the experience is often not understood (Loc 533). The case could be made that calling's impact needs fruit, time and community before language arises to bring about concrete understanding. This could explain why the results of the survey and focus group inconclusively linked calling definition and confidence to impact.

Recommendations

If the study were to be undertaken again, conducting the research in focus groups alongside one-on-one interviews or even journals would be helpful. Perhaps the level of specificity about the impact of calling would grow if individuals would have time to tease out their stories in a longer format and have the help of someone to ask appropriate questions to elaborate and clarify.

Additionally, the participants themselves were in the best position to interpret the results of the story. The very ones who answered the survey, if asked appropriately, would have helped to describe the lack of correlation between understanding and confidence in calling and its impact. This approach would have better identified for the researcher some of what is now speculation. For instance, why participants attend church and what leads to their giving of resources would have been a good discussion since neither seem to be driven by calling based on the survey. Allowing the group to interpret the results would have given way to a greater understanding of how calling works.

The topic is also ripe for a dive into what might be the *tertium quid* connecting understanding, confidence, and impact. A small group study over a period of time that would allow trust to be built might be a good way to identify the additional connecting element. Rather than looking for impact, as this research set out to do, reviewing the literature and defining possibilities of what might be the missing piece that leads from understanding and confidence in calling to impact may have been helpful.

Postscript

While the findings of the project did not support my assumption(s), they did provide a great deal of insight about the nuances of calling that I had not previously

considered. The topic of calling has broadened in my perspective. I know more about what calling is and how calling works. As a result, the topic has grown in breadth and width. I now know how much more there is to learn.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey Informed Consent Letter Template

FUMC - Call Survey

Link for Survey Monkey - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/jtoddnelson>

The purpose of this survey is to discover your ideas about calling and its impact on your life. The survey is part of a research project for a Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. The questionnaire is a list of fifty questions that will ask you to choose your agreement or disagreement to the statement on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being strongly agree; 2 being agree; 3 disagree; and 4 strongly disagree. The survey will be completed and submitted electronically. Your answers are confidential. The research will share only in the aggregate. You will not be asked to include your name, however there are a few demographic questions at the beginning which will also be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and effort!

Consent Acknowledgement

FUMC – Call Survey Informed Consent

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Todd Nelson from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you attend First United Methodist Church of Lexington and are 18 years of age or older.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to take the enclosed survey. There is no compensation for participating.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Todd Nelson. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

Again, you can ask Todd Nelson questions any time about anything in this study. Todd can be reached at 859-229-4523 or by email at jtoddnelson@gmail.com.

Signing this paper means that you have read this, or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later.

You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Informed Consent Template

FUMC - Call Focus Group

The purpose of this focus group is to discover your ideas about calling and its impact on your life. The focus group is part of a research project for a Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. There will be three questions beginning our conversation which are listed below. The research will share results of the focus group only in the aggregate. Thank you for your time and effort!

Consent Acknowledgement

FUMC - Call Focus Group Informed Consent

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Todd Nelson from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you attend First United Methodist Church of Lexington and are 18 years of age or older.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. There is no compensation for participating.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number will be used instead of your name. Since you will be with others who will hear your comments in the focus group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed but it will be strongly encouraged. The focus group will also be recorded and kept and the recording will be kept stored on a laptop requiring a code to be accessed which will only be known to the investigator.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Todd Nelson. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

Again, you can ask Todd Nelson questions any time about anything in this study. Todd can be reached at 859-229-4523 or by email at jtoddnelson@gmail.com.

Signing this paper means that you have read this, or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later.

You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX C

Survey Questions

FUMC – Call Survey

Consent and Demographic Data

1. Consent Question
2. Age greater or equal to 18
3. Gender
4. Age_18-22 _23-30 31-35 _36-40 41-45 _46-50 51-60 _61-70 _70-80_80+
5. I have been a Christian for 1-5; 6-15; 15+ years.

Calling Questions

(d)- define calling RQ1: I – confidence in personal calling RQ2; (i) – impact RQ3

6. Ministers have a calling from God. (d)
7. Calling affects my relationship with God. (d)
8. Calling comes from my gifts and passions. (d)
9. Calling is most important early in life. (d)
10. Calling comes from beyond ourselves. (d)
11. Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world. (d)
12. Some people never discover their calling. (d)
13. Not all Christians have a calling. (d)
14. Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)
15. Discovering your call is a process. (d)
16. Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)
17. Calling mostly concerns what I do in life. (d)

18. There is only one call in life. (d)
19. People other than ministers have a calling from God. (d)
20. Calling is predominantly about finding the right job. (d)
21. I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables. (d)
22. Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)
23. Calling comes from God only. (d)
24. All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call. (d)
25. Calling concerns who I am. (d)
26. The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God. (d)
27. I have a calling from God. (c)
28. I am living out my call. (c)
29. I have thought a lot about calling. (c)
30. I have done a bible study and/or read a book about calling. (c)
31. I have talked to others about my calling. (c)
32. I am discovering how to answer God's call on my life. (c)
33. My call has made a difference in my life. (i)
34. My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)
35. My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)
36. My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)
37. My sense of well-being is tied to how well I am fulfilling my call. (i)
38. My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)
39. My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)
40. I am overall contented with my life. (i)

41. I am overall satisfied with my past. (i)
42. I am excited for the future. (i)
43. My call has made me more generous with my talents. (i)
44. My call has made me more generous with my financial resources. (i)
45. My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)
46. My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)
47. My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)
48. I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God. (i)
49. I attend church monthly ____ times. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use the scale to indicate how often per month you attend. 1=once, 2=twice, 3=three times, 4=every Sunday each month.) (i)
50. I believe serving at church and in the community is important. (I)
51. I serve at church and in the community ____ times per month. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use the scale to indicate how often per month you attend. 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always) (i)
52. Would you be willing to be interviewed for this project about your understanding of calling and its impact on your life? (1=yes, 4=no, 2 and 3 are not applicable)

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Questions

FUMC - Call Focus Group Questions

1. How would you define calling?
2. How has your call impacted your life?
3. How confident are you in your call?

APPENDIX E

Observation Schedule Correlation Coefficients for Survey Questions

Correlation Coefficients for Questions 6 – 16

Survey Question	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
6 Ministers have a calling from God. (d)	1.00										
7 Calling affects my relationship with God.	0.31	1.00									
8 Calling comes from my gifts and passions. (d)	0.17	0.03	1.00								
9 Calling is most important early in life. (d)	0.07	0.19	0.21	1.00							
10 Calling comes from beyond ourselves. (d)	0.29	0.36	-0.05	0.08	1.00						
11 Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world. (d)	0.16	0.19	0.53	0.25	-0.07	1.00					
12 Some people never discover their calling. (d)	-0.06	0.20	0.05	0.14	0.04	0.06	1.00				
13 Not all Christians have a calling. (d)	-0.26	-0.20	-0.14	0.20	-0.21	-0.20	0.08	1.00			
14 Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)	0.20	0.47	0.06	0.19	0.39	0.19	0.18	-0.33	1.00		
15 Discovering your call is a process. (d)	0.08	0.33	0.21	0.16	0.23	0.12	0.15	-0.13	0.43	1.00	
16 Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)	0.34	0.46	0.09	0.17	0.42	0.04	0.18	-0.30	0.65	0.39	1.00
17 Calling mostly concerns what I do in life. (d)	0.12	0.15	0.40	0.39	0.14	0.26	0.08	0.01	0.27	0.21	0.31
18 There is only one call in life. (d)	0.15	0.13	0.07	0.50	0.02	0.06	0.05	0.20	0.06	0.17	0.25
19 People other than ministers have a calling from God. (d)	0.22	0.35	0.08	-0.08	0.41	0.00	0.16	-0.24	0.31	0.30	0.29
20 Calling is predominantly about finding the right job. (d)	-0.03	-0.04	0.36	0.45	-0.12	0.32	0.06	0.30	-0.02	-0.03	-0.08
21 I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables. (d)	-0.01	-0.24	0.21	0.15	-0.09	-0.02	0.15	0.37	-0.13	-0.11	-0.05
22 Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)	0.24	0.40	0.11	0.09	0.23	0.26	0.11	-0.44	0.48	0.12	0.43
23 Calling comes from God only. (d)	0.29	0.22	0.00	0.16	0.29	0.30	-0.13	-0.26	0.07	0.11	0.15
24 All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call. (d)	0.02	0.14	0.18	0.07	0.13	0.16	0.02	-0.21	0.18	0.13	0.16
25 Calling concerns who I am. (d)	0.25	0.34	0.26	0.20	0.28	0.29	0.10	-0.41	0.55	0.29	0.52
26 The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God. (d)	0.19	0.18	0.01	-0.19	0.13	0.05	-0.12	-0.32	0.28	0.12	0.25
27 I have a calling from God. (c)	0.41	0.45	0.12	0.19	0.38	0.29	0.00	-0.42	0.47	0.35	0.51
28 I am living out my call. (c)	0.34	0.13	0.13	0.10	0.03	0.27	-0.02	-0.08	0.09	0.05	0.13
29 I have thought a lot about calling. (c)	0.33	0.44	0.04	-0.07	0.31	0.12	-0.05	-0.29	0.38	0.34	0.43
30 I have done a bible study and/or read a book about calling. (c)	0.33	0.26	0.15	0.00	0.18	0.13	-0.24	-0.18	0.26	0.15	0.24
31 I have talked to others about my calling. (c)	0.33	0.21	0.12	0.02	0.23	0.11	-0.22	-0.23	0.30	0.25	0.35
32 I am discovering how to answer God's call on my life. (c)	0.36	0.39	0.05	0.11	0.16	0.22	0.00	-0.31	0.34	0.31	0.41
33 My call has made a difference in my life. (i)	0.40	0.41	0.06	0.10	0.28	0.21	-0.04	-0.33	0.51	0.36	0.58
34 My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)	0.23	0.31	0.10	0.08	0.32	0.24	0.20	-0.24	0.41	0.33	0.36
35 My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)	0.33	0.32	0.03	0.06	0.25	0.18	-0.01	-0.24	0.47	0.21	0.34
36 My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)	0.30	0.34	0.11	0.02	0.15	0.33	0.11	-0.22	0.42	0.24	0.45
37 My sense of well-being is tied to how well I am fulfilling my call. (i)	0.29	0.29	0.12	0.19	0.20	0.14	0.05	-0.13	0.38	0.24	0.41
38 My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)	0.30	0.45	0.08	0.15	0.15	0.20	0.13	-0.26	0.62	0.32	0.42
39 My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	0.44	0.36	0.11	0.10	0.22	0.24	-0.06	-0.30	0.45	0.43	0.48
40 I am overall contented with my life. (i)	0.05	-0.05	-0.04	0.09	-0.03	0.14	-0.22	0.12	-0.10	-0.07	-0.14
41 I am overall satisfied with my past. (i)	-0.04	-0.11	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.10	0.02	0.26	-0.10	-0.13	-0.06
42 I am excited for the future. (i)	0.10	0.04	0.08	-0.05	0.14	0.10	-0.28	-0.06	0.01	0.08	0.11
43 My call has made me more generous with my talents. (i)	0.27	0.28	0.17	-0.03	0.25	0.26	-0.06	-0.32	0.36	0.14	0.36
44 My call has made me more generous with my financial resources. (i)	0.11	0.33	0.14	0.03	0.12	0.33	0.26	-0.28	0.45	0.11	0.39
45 My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)	0.17	0.30	0.03	0.17	0.31	0.29	0.09	-0.26	0.41	0.10	0.33
46 My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)	0.14	0.36	0.14	0.09	0.13	0.37	0.16	-0.24	0.41	0.12	0.33
47 My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	0.16	0.19	0.24	0.01	0.17	0.30	0.09	-0.26	0.39	0.15	0.40
48 I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God.	-0.01	0.09	-0.05	-0.15	-0.10	0.11	0.07	-0.07	-0.01	0.00	0.04
49 I attend church monthly ____ times. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use ____)	-0.08	-0.17	-0.03	-0.05	-0.09	-0.17	0.17	0.24	-0.24	-0.10	-0.22
50 I believe serving at church and in the community is important.	0.33	0.44	-0.05	-0.10	0.35	-0.02	0.05	-0.21	0.28	0.32	0.34

APPENDIX F

Correlation Coefficients for Questions 17 – 27

Survey Question	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
6 Ministers have a calling from God. (d)											
7 Calling affects my relationship with God.											
8 Calling comes from my gifts and passions. (d)											
9 Calling is most important early in life. (d)											
10 Calling comes from beyond ourselves. (d)											
11 Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world. (d)											
12 Some people never discover their calling. (d)											
13 Not all Christians have a calling. (d)											
14 Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)											
15 Discovering your call is a process. (d)											
16 Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)											
17 Calling mostly concerns what I do in life. (d)	1.00										
18 There is only one call in life. (d)	0.24	1.00									
19 People other than ministers have a calling from God. (d)	0.12	-0.07	1.00								
20 Calling is predominantly about finding the right job. (d)	0.29	0.42	-0.27	1.00							
21 I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables. (d)	0.24	0.20	-0.16	0.38	1.00						
22 Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)	0.21	0.02	0.20	-0.02	-0.26	1.00					
23 Calling comes from God only. (d)	0.01	0.22	0.06	0.10	-0.29	0.46	1.00				
24 All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call. (d)	0.03	0.26	0.16	0.08	0.06	0.24	0.16	1.00			
25 Calling concerns who I am. (d)	0.25	0.16	0.34	0.02	-0.16	0.50	0.30	0.26	1.00		
26 The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God. (d)	0.07	-0.02	0.32	-0.16	-0.13	0.16	0.15	0.25	0.28	1.00	
27 I have a calling from God. (c)	0.18	0.04	0.35	-0.06	-0.19	0.59	0.32	0.26	0.45	0.31	1.00
28 I am living out my call. (c)	0.09	0.20	0.09	0.15	0.04	0.33	0.24	0.16	0.19	0.04	0.46
29 I have thought a lot about calling. (c)	0.16	0.10	0.35	-0.24	-0.25	0.31	0.26	0.16	0.33	0.22	0.52
30 I have done a bible study and/or read a book about calling. (c)	0.06	-0.01	0.20	-0.13	-0.02	0.30	0.27	-0.07	0.23	0.06	0.32
31 I have talked to others about my calling. (c)	0.10	0.03	0.22	-0.12	-0.02	0.32	0.28	0.13	0.34	0.16	0.44
32 I am discovering how to answer God's call on my life. (c)	0.06	0.25	0.20	-0.08	-0.07	0.36	0.34	0.10	0.54	0.20	0.51
33 My call has made a difference in my life. (i)	0.14	0.12	0.34	-0.13	-0.15	0.52	0.24	0.20	0.56	0.21	0.73
34 My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)	0.21	0.02	0.28	0.01	-0.09	0.45	0.25	0.16	0.50	0.11	0.49
35 My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)	0.07	0.08	0.27	0.05	-0.09	0.37	0.17	0.12	0.41	0.11	0.50
36 My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)	0.00	0.21	0.20	0.14	-0.03	0.40	0.22	0.29	0.38	0.19	0.59
37 My sense of well-being is tied to how well I am fulfilling my call. (i)	0.40	0.08	0.14	0.09	0.06	0.39	0.06	0.25	0.42	0.12	0.43
38 My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)	0.26	-0.11	0.27	0.00	-0.09	0.54	0.09	0.09	0.56	0.24	0.45
39 My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	0.18	0.09	0.23	-0.03	-0.09	0.43	0.20	0.06	0.58	0.15	0.57
40 I am overall contented with my life. (i)	-0.17	0.01	-0.04	0.12	-0.03	-0.14	0.09	-0.21	-0.09	0.04	0.02
41 I am overall satisfied with my past. (i)	0.03	0.12	0.01	0.06	0.13	0.03	-0.01	0.19	-0.10	0.05	-0.05
42 I am excited for the future. (i)	0.04	-0.06	0.25	-0.02	-0.13	0.04	0.13	-0.10	0.19	0.10	0.30
43 My call has made me more generous with my talents. (i)	0.01	0.00	0.25	-0.02	-0.13	0.31	0.24	0.20	0.41	0.19	0.39
44 My call has made me more generous with my financial resources. (i)	0.16	-0.04	0.23	0.04	-0.19	0.37	0.12	0.09	0.48	0.13	0.32
45 My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)	0.13	-0.04	0.25	0.02	-0.21	0.54	0.32	0.16	0.60	0.08	0.49
46 My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)	0.19	-0.06	0.19	0.05	-0.07	0.46	0.17	0.16	0.58	0.09	0.37
47 My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	0.24	0.00	0.24	-0.01	0.00	0.48	0.20	0.10	0.59	0.13	0.36
48 I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God.	-0.07	-0.05	0.01	-0.16	-0.14	0.05	0.07	0.03	0.09	0.07	0.14
49 I attend church monthly ___ times. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use 1-5)	0.03	0.07	0.00	0.13	0.12	-0.07	-0.07	-0.06	-0.13	-0.07	-0.24
50 I believe serving at church and in the community is important.	0.13	-0.19	0.55	-0.32	-0.11	0.20	0.12	0.05	0.34	0.34	0.44

APPENDIX G

Correlation Coefficients for Questions 28 – 38

Survey Question	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
6 Ministers have a calling from God. (d)											
7 Calling affects my relationship with God.											
8 Calling comes from my gifts and passions. (d)											
9 Calling is most important early in life. (d)											
10 Calling comes from beyond ourselves. (d)											
11 Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world. (d)											
12 Some people never discover their calling. (d)											
13 Not all Christians have a calling. (d)											
14 Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)											
15 Discovering your call is a process. (d)											
16 Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)											
17 Calling mostly concerns what I do in life. (d)											
18 There is only one call in life. (d)											
19 People other than ministers have a calling from God. (d)											
20 Calling is predominantly about finding the right job. (d)											
21 I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables. (d)											
22 Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)											
23 Calling comes from God only. (d)											
24 All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call. (d)											
25 Calling concerns who I am. (d)											
26 The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God. (d)											
27 I have a calling from God. (c)											
28 I am living out my call. (c)	1.00										
29 I have thought a lot about calling. (c)	0.32	1.00									
30 I have done a bible study and/or read a book about calling. (c)	0.42	0.52	1.00								
31 I have talked to others about my calling. (c)	0.43	0.64	0.73	1.00							
32 I am discovering how to answer God's call on my life. (c)	0.56	0.48	0.52	0.55	1.00						
33 My call has made a difference in my life. (i)	0.41	0.52	0.43	0.54	0.62	1.00					
34 My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)	0.29	0.40	0.33	0.43	0.52	0.61	1.00				
35 My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)	0.47	0.43	0.38	0.50	0.52	0.64	0.65	1.00			
36 My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)	0.37	0.47	0.25	0.43	0.54	0.63	0.53	0.69	1.00		
37 My sense of well-being is tied to how well I am fulfilling my call. (i)	0.35	0.34	0.23	0.32	0.39	0.50	0.35	0.38	0.39	1.00	
38 My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)	0.31	0.33	0.33	0.38	0.52	0.60	0.54	0.53	0.41	0.62	1.00
39 My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	0.43	0.46	0.52	0.57	0.64	0.73	0.56	0.64	0.55	0.56	0.54
40 I am overall contented with my life. (i)	0.14	-0.11	0.00	-0.01	0.10	0.08	0.02	0.13	-0.02	-0.12	0.07
41 I am overall satisfied with my past. (i)	0.17	-0.06	-0.13	-0.05	-0.06	-0.03	-0.12	0.00	-0.03	-0.02	-0.04
42 I am excited for the future. (i)	0.10	0.32	0.24	0.35	0.24	0.32	0.12	0.23	0.15	0.15	0.10
43 My call has made me more generous with my talents. (i)	0.45	0.37	0.31	0.39	0.43	0.46	0.44	0.68	0.48	0.36	0.36
44 My call has made me more generous with my financial resources. (i)	0.33	0.30	0.22	0.29	0.38	0.42	0.50	0.55	0.38	0.36	0.50
45 My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)	0.17	0.27	0.15	0.23	0.22	0.50	0.50	0.43	0.33	0.33	0.51
46 My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.24	0.33	0.47	0.56	0.51	0.39	0.34	0.57
47 My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	0.23	0.23	0.24	0.32	0.35	0.59	0.53	0.48	0.36	0.36	0.49
48 I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God.	0.27	0.27	0.06	0.10	0.22	0.09	0.22	0.21	0.09	0.01	0.17
49 I attend church monthly ___ times. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use 1-5)	-0.16	-0.28	-0.28	-0.32	-0.22	-0.21	-0.23	-0.14	-0.30	-0.13	-0.18
50 I believe serving at church and in the community is important.	0.19	0.33	0.24	0.30	0.36	0.49	0.43	0.45	0.29	0.38	0.47

APPENDIX H

Correlation Coefficients for Questions 39 – 50

Survey Question	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
6 Ministers have a calling from God. (d)												
7 Calling affects my relationship with God.												
8 Calling comes from my gifts and passions. (d)												
9 Calling is most important early in life. (d)												
10 Calling comes from beyond ourselves. (d)												
11 Calling is about my gifts meeting a need in the world. (d)												
12 Some people never discover their calling. (d)												
13 Not all Christians have a calling. (d)												
14 Calling impacts my relationships with others. (d)												
15 Discovering your call is a process. (d)												
16 Without a call life would be less than fulfilling. (d)												
17 Calling mostly concerns what I do in life. (d)												
18 There is only one call in life. (d)												
19 People other than ministers have a calling from God. (d)												
20 Calling is predominantly about finding the right job. (d)												
21 I see my current circumstances as a random set of variables. (d)												
22 Regular Christians have a calling from God. (d)												
23 Calling comes from God only. (d)												
24 All persons, Christians and non-Christians, have a call. (d)												
25 Calling concerns who I am. (d)												
26 The experiences of my life, good and difficult, can be used by God. (d)												
27 I have a calling from God. (c)												
28 I am living out my call. (c)												
29 I have thought a lot about calling. (c)												
30 I have done a bible study and/or read a book about calling. (c)												
31 I have talked to others about my calling. (c)												
32 I am discovering how to answer God's call on my life. (c)												
33 My call has made a difference in my life. (i)												
34 My call has made me more committed to the church. (i)												
35 My call has made me more generous with my time to others in service. (i)												
36 My call has made a difference in the lives of others. (i)												
37 My sense of well-being is tied to how well I am fulfilling my call. (i)												
38 My call impacts my relationship with others. (i)												
39 My call has made me more aware of God's will for my life. (i)	1.00											
40 I am overall contented with my life. (i)	0.03	1.00										
41 I am overall satisfied with my past. (i)	-0.09	0.39	1.00									
42 I am excited for the future. (i)	0.26	0.44	0.17	1.00								
43 My call has made me more generous with my talents. (i)	0.52	0.12	0.10	0.20	1.00							
44 My call has made me more generous with my financial resources. (i)	0.55	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.68	1.00						
45 My call has made me more committed to my family. (i)	0.46	0.07	0.10	0.19	0.44	0.53	1.00					
46 My call has made me more committed to my friends. (i)	0.55	0.13	0.08	0.18	0.44	0.63	0.81	1.00				
47 My call has made me more committed to my neighbor. (i)	0.54	0.12	0.15	0.28	0.50	0.60	0.65	0.73	1.00			
48 I regularly give a percentage of my income to the church as an offering to God.	0.10	0.10	-0.05	0.15	0.23	0.38	0.01	0.16	0.11	1.00		
49 I attend church monthly ____ times. (Instead of agree or disagree, please use ____)	-0.26	0.05	0.22	0.04	-0.23	-0.17	-0.14	-0.18	-0.10	-0.05	1.00	
50 I believe serving at church and in the community is important.	0.44	0.04	-0.09	0.28	0.41	0.29	0.32	0.33	0.34	0.09	-0.10	1.00

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