

Exploring the Call

Greater Ohio Year 1 Cohort Training

**A year to explore what it means to be called by
God to become his servant as a full-time
ordained minister of the gospel.**

Lesson 1: The Call of a Lifetime

One of the most important questions every person asks is, "What will I do with my life?" That question is appropriate for any person getting ready to face the future and imagining him/herself in a career, second career, or retirement. But for a Christian discovering what God wants him or her to do in life is much deeper because it is a spiritual matter.

No time, resources, or effort spent exploring the possibilities of God's will are ever wasted. Wherever your journey of exploration takes you, God will honor your dedication and interest.

All Christians are called to minister to others. But the Bible tells us that God specifically calls some to equip His children and lead them in making an impact upon the world. Serving in ministry is one of the greatest things you can do with your life. The church is the primary tool that God uses to accomplish His will on earth. Because ministers are called to serve the church, ministry is a high calling. Why? Here are four reasons:

1. **First, ministry is a high calling because it deals with eternal things.** The things of this world will pass away. But the ministry is a vocation that is totally committed to things that will last through all eternity. The eternal Word of God, the eternal destiny of men and women's souls, and the eternal investment of our time, talents, and resources are the sole focus of one who is called to ministry.
2. **Second, ministry is a high calling because it comes from God.** The Bible teaches us that God specifically calls and appoints some people to serve the body of Christ. These people are given a call to lifetime service that requires special training, commitment, skills, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.
3. **Third, the call to ministry is a call to serve something that is very important to God-the church.** The local church is God's plan to reach the world, make disciples, and empower His people for ministry. Your call to ministry is not just between you and God. It is a three-way relationship between you, God, and His Church. God uses many tools to achieve His will, but the Church is His primary tool.
4. **Fourth, ministry is a high calling because it is a call to be a divine representative.** One of the greatest privileges of ministry is that a person is called to serve as a representative. The call is a high call to represent God to others, to represent people to God, and to represent the Church to the world.

That is why the ministry is one of the best ways to invest your life, find fulfillment, and experience happiness.

But let me be clear about a couple of important things. The call does not come to everyone in the same way. Some hear it through a driving passion. Others discover it through an inner peace. Some find it through prayer and Bible study, while others hear it through one of God's messengers. Whatever the manner, the important thing to remember is that the call is confirmed through spiritual exploration.

Also, there is no test you can take to find out if you are called to ministry. The call is only confirmed in your heart after prayer, deliberation, and exploration. God rarely gives you a blueprint of your life all at once. His purpose is revealed in bite-sized portions as you take the time to discover it for yourself.

That's what this first year of our DBMD program is all about: giving you access to resources and people to help you explore the call! So take time to dig into each of the lessons and work through the exercises we suggest. Pray about what you are learning. Talk with your pastor and spiritual leaders about what God is speaking to your heart. But most importantly, listen to God's Holy Spirit as He leads and directs your path.

In our next lesson, we are going to continue the journey by answering the question, "What is ministry?" In the meantime, I want to encourage you to continue exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

Set up a moment to talk to your sponsoring pastor this week and bounce the following questions off him or her. Make sure to take notes so that you can respond in our facebook group with your discoveries.

1. How do I know if it is God who is speaking to me about vocational ministry?
2. How can I find out if I am called to general ministry or to vocational ministry?
3. If God doesn't give me a blueprint to follow or a test to reveal, how will I ever know if I am really called to vocational ministry?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or sponsoring pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. What makes you think that you might be called to vocational ministry rather than general ministry?
2. Why is it important to understand the eternal nature of the call?
3. Can you describe what makes you think that you are called?
4. How has God spoken to you about being called?
5. What experiences have you had in divine representation? (i.e., representing God to others, people to God, and the Church to the world)

Lesson 2: What Is the Ministry?

Have you ever wondered if there was a difference between the ministry a pastor does when visiting a person in the hospital and the ministry a computer programmer does visiting the same person? In this session we're going to talk about the difference between *doing* ministry and being *in* the ministry.

In the New Testament, the word *ministry* originates from the word -"serve" or "service." At its basic level, ministry is anything you might do to serve someone else. However, most believers use the term to describe service that is distinctly Christian in living out the life of Christ or contributing to the kingdom of God. When you are being Christ-like and reaching out to others, you are ministering to them. In the same way, you may give advice to friends without being a licensed counselor, or you may offer first-aid to an accident victim without being in a full-time medical profession.

However, a person who answers God's call and dedicates his/her life to equipping the church and serving the body of Christ are said to be "in the ministry." All Christians are called to ministry, but some are called to THE ministry.

Some people refer to the "general ministry" as that which all Christians are called to do, while referring to the "equipping ministry" as that which pastors serve as a profession. Here are a few points that characterize ministry as a calling and profession.

1. **The ministry is something to which a person is called by God to serve.** While a Christian does not need a definable call to live out the mandates of Christ, the Bible shows us time and time again that someone serving in the ministry should have a divine call to do so. Keith Drury distinguished between these two calls in his book, *The Call of a Lifetime*, when he said, "Everyone-especially parents-teach sometimes, but some people enter the vocation of teaching. Likewise all Christians minister, but some are called by God into the vocation of the ministry." The only reason you need to enter the ministry is a clear and distinguishable call from God. Sometimes that call comes later in the journey of exploration, but the important thing is to hear it.
2. **The ministry requires special qualifications, skills, and training.** The Bible mentions several personal, public, family, and ministry qualifications that a person called to ministry should have. We find these in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In addition to this, the Wesleyan denominations require some kind of formal theological training in areas of theology, biblical interpretation, preaching, and church leadership as well as supervision through a District Board of Ministerial Development.
3. **The ministry usually requires ordination.** Ministry in most churches involves the official endorsement of a reputable denomination or organization. These organizations fulfill the biblical pattern of an authority structure that confirms your call, qualifications, accountability, integrity, effectiveness, and readiness to minister. Future lessons will address what ordination is and why it is necessary, but for now all you need to know is that ordination is a common distinctive of

full-time ministry.

4. **The ministry is a call to prepare Christians for the general ministry.** That is what the Bible means when it says in Ephesians 4:11-13, *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

Those called to full-time ministry accept the responsibility of recruiting, training, equipping, and releasing God's people in ministry. Being called to the full-time equipping ministry does not make you better than other Christians. As a matter of fact, it makes you obligated to God to serve and lead others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

The following questions are found in the Participant's Guide. These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How do I know if I have a definable call? I'm not even sure what it means.
2. What are the special qualifications, skills, and training needed for vocational ministry?
3. Why is ordination important? I mean, what does it matter if people endorse you?
4. How do I know if I can accept the responsibility of the call to ministry?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. What do you think being in the ministry is really about?
2. How is serving in "the ministry" different from "doing ministry" or serving in general ministry?
3. Why do you think the Bible gives specific qualifications for those called to full-time ministry? Why don't those qualifications apply to all Christians?
4. Have you experienced being used by God in equipping other people around you?
5. Have you ever given any thought to the obligations involved in a life of service and leadership?

Lesson 3: What Pastors Do

Whether you are called to ministry or not, the important thing is that you are exploring the possibilities of God's will.

In leading people through the rigors of becoming an ordained pastor one of the first questions students who are exploring call often ask is, "What do ministers do throughout the week?" The old adage is that pastors only work on Sundays for a couple hours but nothing could be further from the truth. This lesson answers that question and gives a birds-eye view of what most pastors do in a given week.

However, there's one thing you need to understand. Most of a pastor's ministry takes place within the context of the local church. That's not to say ministry outside the local church isn't important.

The local church is at the center of God's plan to win, disciple, and equip people for ministry. The church is also the place where Christians gather for worship, are disciplined, are trained for service, and are sent out to reach lost people. That is why Ephesians 4:11-13 tells us that God has called certain people to serve the church and prepare them for service.

Although there are some ministries that exist outside the sphere of the local church, the Bible tells us that the church is central to God's plan. If you don't like or enjoy the local church, the ministry isn't for you. Why? Because the church is the launching pad for ministry.

This brings us back to the question: "What does a pastor do?" The answer will be different for each church, so we'll focus on six of the most important things a pastor does in any given week.

1. **Pastors work with people.** Pastors work with people as much as mechanics and carpenters work with tools. Whether it's
 - counseling someone who is in need, grieving, or discouraged;
 - meeting and leading staff or volunteers;
 - training teachers or small group leaders;
 - organizing a church service, funeral, or wedding;

make no mistake about it...

Pastors work with and through people! As a matter of fact, a pastor's success is more often a result of his ability to work with people than it is his gifts or abilities. So if you feel called to the ministry and have a hard time getting along with and working with people, start praying now that God will help you in this important area.

2. **Pastors care for people.** Pastors care for people's spiritual well-being and help them when their faith needs affirming, encouraging, or reassuring. In any given week, several people in a church of any size will experience physical, emotional, and spiritual setbacks. It's common for pastors to minister to people suffering from terminal illness, divorce, loss of a job, death, or personal tragedy. When life begins to unravel at the seams, people look to pastors for strength and encouragement.
3. **Pastors teach God's Word:** Acts 6: 1-4 teaches that a pastor's main responsibility is to teach the Word of God. It's common for pastors to preach and teach several times a week. Even if your role as an assistant pastor does not involve much preaching, you will probably be doing lots of teaching. This will require several hours of study for each separate message. Again Acts 6: 1-4 teaches that we should not allow other obligations to distract us from this important task. Whether you're a lead pastor, children's pastor, or youth pastor, you will be teaching God's Word and helping people apply it to their lives. That is why the phrase "the primacy of preaching" is often used in relation to this important responsibility.
4. **Pastors disciple people.** Growing in faith by learning and living God's Word is what the Bible calls "discipleship." Discipleship is an important stepping stone in a person's spiritual journey. Discipleship is the personal activity of studying the teachings of Jesus, applying them to life, and becoming more like Him through a growing relationship with God. Pastors do this by providing for the systematic study of God's Word through Bible studies, small groups, and Sunday school. They may not be teaching every class, but they are responsible to make sure discipleship is happening.
5. **Pastors equip people for ministry.** Ephesians 4:12 tells us the reason God gives pastors to a church. He gives them to equip, train, and release the people to do the work of ministry. Some churches mistakenly believe that the pastor is the only person who should be doing the important things of ministry. Pastors even mistakenly believe that they should micromanage every task of ministry instead of training, equipping, and releasing God's people. But the truth is that pastors should spend a lot of their time energy and resources helping people serve in the areas that are strategically aligned with their spiritual gifts. They do this by providing spiritual gift inventories, training people on how to develop their gifts, and releasing them to ministries both in and outside the church. That's why it is so important for today's pastors to know where to access the best training, resources, and networking for volunteers serving in the church.
6. **Pastors give leadership to the church.** First Timothy 5:17 tells us that pastors are to give general oversight to the church and its ministry. That means that a pastor makes sure the church has a vision from God and is using its resources to achieve that vision. This involves planning church services, administration, managing staff and volunteers, organizing ministries, using resources wisely, and ensuring that your church is actively involved in outreach to your community.

Does it seem like a lot? That's because it is. That is why it is so important for pastors to be balanced and good stewards of their time. This week, make an appointment with your pastor and ask him to walk you through his or her normal work week. Try to identify areas where you need to develop abilities or invoke desire.

In our next session, we're going to talk about the call to be a missionary. Until then, keep growing, keep learning, and more importantly keep exploring.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

The following questions are found in the Participant's Guide. These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How can one person accomplish all that is mentioned in this lesson?
2. What kind of study habits should I establish to be successful in the ministry?
3. Why is a commitment to, a love for, and an appreciation of the local church so needed for someone called to ministry?
4. What is your normal work week like? Can you walk me through your normal schedule and tasks?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific pod cast might apply to him/her.

1. Of the six core responsibilities mentioned in lesson 3, which ones do you think would be the hardest for you? Why?
2. Have you ever had an opportunity to work with and through people? Tell me about a time when you did.
3. Do your friends turn to you for help, advice, or comfort when they are going through a struggle? What do they see in you that causes them to do this?
4. Tell me about a time when you had the responsibility to teach others. What was your preparation time like? How did the people respond to your presentation?
5. Tell me about someone that you have discipled. What did you do? How did it go?
6. How are you at equipping or training others? Have you ever trained someone and then released them to do a job?
7. Can you describe a time you provided leadership to a group of people? What was it like?

Lesson 4: What Is a Call to Ministry?

What is a call to ministry, and how do you know if you are experiencing it?

The call of God can be defined and explained in many different ways. For the sake of simplicity, let's define it this way:

“The call of God is an inner conviction that God has called you to a life of serving and equipping the church of Jesus Christ.”

Now let's get practical and take a look at some important characteristics of the call of God in its working gloves. There are six points that I want to talk with you about today.

First, the call of God is an inward call. Although God's call may come in many different ways and forms, it is always something that you feel deep in your heart. The Bible confirms this reality when it says in Isaiah 30:21, *"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"* I like to call it a "loud whisper" that starts in your spirit and gradually works through your thoughts and emotions. Although it may begin to manifest itself in outward ways, it begins with an inward passion, a consuming interest, an overwhelming desire, and an inescapable urge to follow God's call.

Second, the call of God is a growing call. As the call of God takes root in your spirit, it begins to grow and mature from a curious interest to a growing passion and then to an inescapable conviction. The important thing to remember is that it gets stronger, not weaker. That is one of the things that may help you distinguish between a *burden* for ministry and a *call* to ministry. The call of God grows with time.

I witness this characteristic in my weekly meetings with a small group of young people who are exploring the call of God to ministry. One young man started participating in his denomination's "Fine Arts Festival," which is like a Christian version of American Idol except it involves every area of ministry you can imagine. He entered the short sermon competition at the age of 14 and loved it. At 15 he scored the highest in his state and advanced to nationals. At 16 he felt God was calling him to ministry and decided to spend his last two years of high school preparing for Bible college. Knowing he would have to work while in Bible college, he decided to take online ministry classes that would give him a head start in working toward his ministerial credentials. This would also enable him to work part-time in a church while attending Bible college after graduating from high school. He still participates in Fine Arts but with a greater focus, intensity, and commitment. Do you see the pattern? The call of God is intensifying its presence in his life as he explores its possibilities.

Third, the call of God pulls one toward involvement. As the call of God continues to grow in your life, you will find yourself gravitating toward ministry opportunities. Most young people exploring the call find that they want to be involved in ministry and enjoy hanging out at their church. The call begins to both pull and push them toward various kinds of ministry. You may find yourself teaching a youth or children's class at your

church, helping in kids' church, serving on a worship team, or leading outreaches. It is very common for young people to feel compelled to go on missions trips, volunteer for devotional talks, or even take correspondence courses in ministry.

I see this time and again in the groups of young people I meet with. As the call develops in their lives, I begin seeing them everywhere ministry takes place. On their own initiative, they seem to find ministry opportunities-whether in church services, youth meetings, at the altars praying with other kids, within the walls of the church, or at outreaches. You might be experiencing this as well. If you are, don't worry! It's a good thing. Keep following and involving yourself in a variety of ministry opportunities in your church. They will only help you discern where God is leading you.

Fourth, the call of God is confirmed by the church. Remember, your call is not just between you and God. It is a three-way relationship between you, God, and His Church. This is one of the ways you can tell if the call is from God or not. If it is from God, it will begin to be confirmed in small ways through the church. This confirmation may be subtle at first. God may prompt people to notice your ministry gifts and affirm them. Ministry leaders may see something special in you and begin involving you in their ministry. Opportunities for ministry within the church will present themselves as God begins to open doors. If the church seems unwilling to receive your ministry, it may be an indication that you are not called or need to work through other issues in your life. The point is that God will confirm your call through the church.

Fifth, the call of God is a divine call. The call of God is just that: a commission from God. The fact that your friends or parents are in the ministry does not mean that God has called you. Even if others say they believe you are called to the ministry, that is not good enough. A person who feels called to the ministry needs to know that God has given him or her an indisputable, undeniable, and irresistible call to a lifetime of service.

Sixth, the call of God is a call to empower the church. Being in the ministry is all about equipping God's people for ministry. That's what Ephesians 4:11-12 means when it defines the reason God calls people to ministry:

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service. "

God does not call people to be lone ranger who are disconnected with the local church. He calls them to train, equip, and release god's people into ministry. The acid test of whether you are living up to your calling is whether you are recruiting, training, equipping and releasing God's people into ministry in the local church.

The fact that you are in our program is evidence that God is doing something powerful in your life. You may not yet know if you have a burden for ministry or a call to ministry. That's all right. The important thing is that you continue the journey.

In our next lesson, we'll talk about some common ways that God calls people into the ministry. Until then I want to encourage you to continue" .exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. What is the difference between a burden for ministry and a call to ministry?
2. What constitutes an indisputable, undeniable, and irresistible call to lifetime service?
3. How do I know that what I feel is not just a common interest or a burden for ministry?
4. My youth group needs help and I am willing, so my youth leaders keep asking me to do more. Is this being pulled toward involvement or just people getting the job done?
5. Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. The lesson mentioned six characteristics of the call of God-inward, growing, involved, confirmed, divine, and to empower. Did any of them resonate with you as you heard them explained? Which ones?
2. Has the call to ministry been confirmed or encouraged by a respected spiritual influence in your life? What did that person say? How did it impact you?
3. Can you say that the sense or awareness of God's call has been growing in your life? How?
4. Have you at any point ever heard God speak to you about being called to ministry?

Lesson 5: Called to Be A Missionary?

Is God calling you to be a missionary? The Bible teaches us in Ephesians 4:11 that God calls some people to take the gospel to other cultures and establish local churches. In New Testament times these people were called apostles. Today we call these people missionaries. The session will answer three simple questions about the call to missions.

- How does God call Missionaries?
- What do missionaries do?
- How can I start responding to a missionary call?

1. How does God call missionaries? God calls missionaries in very much the same way He calls others to a life of ministry. Missionaries speak of several ways the call of God began to take hold of their hearts.

- Most missionaries report that their call began with a strong burden for a nation or people group.
- Some said they became deeply moved when they heard a missionary speak or when they heard sermons about missions and unreached people groups.
- Others said they experienced an unexplainable urge to go on missions trips and experience other cultures. When they returned home, they could not wait to get back!
- Some said they felt challenged when they heard missionaries describe life overseas and the living conditions of lost people.
- Many told me they were pushed by a passion to make a difference with their lives while also being pulled by a burden for lost people.
- However, most, if not all, have told me that their hearts just would not allow them to consider the possibility of doing anything else with their lives.

It's important for you to remember that God doesn't call everyone in the same way. Unfortunately, there is no test that you can take to find out if you are called to be a missionary. The call is only confirmed in your heart after prayer, deliberation, and exploration. It can only be confirmed when you step out in faith and begin exploring the possibilities of God's call.

2. What do missionaries do? Missionaries bring the gospel to those in other cultures who don't know Christ. They are usually sent or sponsored by a reputable missions agency. After you meet your educational requirements for ministry and are commissioned by a denominational or missions sending agency, you will need to find a place to start living out your call. Although there are thousands of ways to serve, missionary activity usually falls into one of the following categories.

- The first category is called field missions. Field missionaries live with and among the people they are trying to reach in foreign lands. Their work is usually related to evangelism, church planting, or strengthening existing churches overseas. They can focus on people groups who have absolutely no exposure or access to the gospel or on more established but unevangelized fields of ministry. They are to missions what the Marines are to the armed forces. They are the "boots on the ground" and are deeply immersed in the culture they are trying to reach. They live, eat, breathe, and work among the local

people. Their focus and life passion is that of the Apostle Paul, who said in Romans 15:20-21:

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand. "

There is a great need for field missionaries. If God has called you to this kind of ministry, you should feel honored and blessed.

- A second category is called educational missions. Educational-driven missions usually has a focus on training future leaders in Bible colleges overseas. These missionaries are usually assigned to some kind of overseas Bible college that is training foreign nationals to reach their own people. Some do this while living stateside, through correspondence or online training. A few of these missionaries may be temporarily assigned to serve as a "missionary in residence" at an American Bible college. While they are there, these missionaries help those studying to be American pastors and missionaries to understand missions and how it relates to the local church.
- A third category is para-missions organizations. These organizations specialize in specific areas of missions work that overlap geographic regions. They usually do not focus on any one particular nation or people group. They include ministries like translators, publishers, humanitarian and medical ministries, correspondence programs, construction ministries, and just about any other application of missions work you can think of.

Para-missions ministries are probably the fastest growing area of missions work in the last ten years. But it has its unique set of advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that although these missionaries do a lot of travel, they usually live stateside in the American culture and close to family. Their children and families live much like many other American families and do not have to adjust to foreign cultures. In a technology-driven age, they are able to administrate much of their work over the Internet and avoid the expenses of living and working in foreign cultures.

This kind of ministry has its own set of challenges as well. It is not relational and tends to be more project-driven. The missionaries can lose touch with the culture because they are not living among the people they are trying to reach. Also, many American pastors are becoming concerned over the increasing amount of missionaries who are now residing stateside. The trend has attracted some who seek the comforts of Western living but lack the commitment or ability to live and minister in foreign lands. As a result, American churches are beginning to limit the number of missionaries and length of their support for those serving in this type of ministry. As the trend increases, funding and financial support is getting harder and harder to realize.

- A fifth category is missions administration. Most missionaries are part of an

organization that helps to support, guide, and coordinate their needs while they are on the field. Those who serve in these organizations are usually seasoned missionaries who have a deep understanding of the nature of modern missions. These missionaries provide leadership and coordination to missions activity, and their roles are usually administrative in nature. Most of the time they are based out of regional centers in the United States or in larger cities overseas. Administrative missions can range from denominational structures to a headquarters office that runs a para-missions organization. If you ever serve in this capacity, it will most likely be after you have proven yourself on the field and exhibited excellent leadership capabilities.

As a student exploring the call of ministry, you don't need to be overly concerned about these areas now. You just need to discover which one seems to align with your call. Should you be called to be a missionary, chances are that you will serve in many of these roles at some point in your career. The important thing is to know that if God is calling you to be a missionary, there is an opportunity custom-designed for you.

3. How to I respond to the call? If you feel God is calling you to be a missionary, there are a number of things you can do to explore that call while you are in high school.

- **Give to missions.** If you're called to missions, then you need to live out that calling in each area of your life. By this time you should have already established the discipline of tithing. Now it's time to start worshipping the Lord through missions offerings that are above and beyond your tithe. Ask God to help you determine an amount of money that you can give each month through your local church to support missions activity around the world.
- **Get involved in your local church.** Chances are that your church supports missionaries. Meet with your pastor and volunteer to help your church in its missions efforts. You can do this by volunteering to read, file, and update others on all the monthly correspondence your church receives from its missionaries on the field. You can also help by writing letters or sending email to your church's missionaries to see how they are doing, what they may need, and discover any prayer requests they may have. You can offer to oversee your church's bulletin board that updates the members on what your missionaries are doing, how their missions dollars are working, and what they can pray about. Offer to help the children's or youth groups' missions education efforts. Your pastor may have other ideas, but you won't know unless you ask.
- **Go on short-term missions trips.** By far the best way to begin exploring the call of God to missions is by doing it! Your denomination's missions agency probably already has information on short-term missions trips that you can take in the summer. These will give you the opportunity to actually go on the field, help a missionary, and see what their ministry is like. Contact your denomination's missions office and see what opportunities are available.
- **Start looking for a Bible college.** Although formal education is not required for

short-term missions involvement, you will need a good Bible education if you plan on being a career missionary. Many Bible colleges offer degree programs in cross-cultural missions. Start shopping for a Bible college that will help you get the preparation you will need to obey God's call. You will want to check your denomination's website as a starting place.

- **Talk to missionaries.** When missionaries come through your church or campus, take the initiative to invite them out for coffee and talk to them about their call and ministry. Ask them questions about their call and what advice they would have for you as you explore your own.
- **Connect with mentoring experiences.** One of the most important things you need to begin doing is to connect with mentors who share a call to missions. The Wesleyan Church has an entire agency dedicated to our missions involvement called Global Partners. You can reach their web site with pages of information about how you can get involved in missions. Their web address is: <http://www.globalpartnersonline.org/>

But the most important thing you can do is to continue exploring this call to see where God leads you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. What are the differences between a missionary's experience of God's call and the experiences of other Christians?
2. How is our church involved in missions?
3. Are there ways I can be exposed to missions involvement in our church?
4. Can you give me the names and phone numbers of a couple missionaries who are home on furlough so I can call them and ask them questions about their own call and ministry?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Have you ever stepped out in faith to explore the possibility of a calling to missions? Tell me about your experience and what you learned.
2. Did any of the areas mentioned in the "What do missionaries do" list pique your interest or curiosity? Which ones seemed exciting to you? Which ones did not?
3. Do you have experience in any of the missions activities mentioned in "How to respond to the call?" Share some of them and how it impacts your thoughts about the calling.
4. Do you feel a strong desire to learn about a particular geographic region or people group? What group or area is it? How do you think you can learn more?

5. If I were to give you the names and phone numbers of a couple missionaries who are home on furlough, would you have time to call them and interview them about their ministry before our next meeting?

Lesson 6: How Does God Call People?

Do all people receive God's call in the same way? Is one way more authentic than another? These are the kinds of questions we're going to explore in today's lesson.

The ways God calls people has varied throughout history and is unique from person to person. Oswald Chambers said in his book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, "The realization of the call in a person's life may come like a clap of thunder or it may dawn gradually." God calls people on an individual basis. It is important for you to understand that no two callings are alike.

With that said, I would like to talk about some of the common ways we see God's call experienced in His Word. Although your own call may be different, these patterns may help you recognize His voice.

Sometimes people experience a dramatic manifestation in the calling. These calls seem to burst on the scene of life in a dramatic fashion. When this happens, the call of God can be accompanied by a sign, miracle, or unmistakable supernatural manifestation of God's power. Although I can assure you that most calls are not experienced in this way, there are a few people that, for some reason or another, need this kind of experience. In the ninth chapter of Acts, the Apostle Paul received this kind of call. He experienced a bright light from heaven, was knocked to the ground, heard God's voice, and was temporarily blinded. This kind of call is given to people whose future ministry may require a definite and undeniable marker for confirmation. Unfortunately, many people mistakenly feel they are not called UNLESS they have a similar experience. The important thing to remember is that when push comes to shove, experiences can't replace the inner, inaudible voice of God calling you to ministry.

To some, God's call is more like an ever-present call. In this case, those who were called realized and accepted their call at such a young age they can't remember when they were not called. In Jeremiah 1:5, the prophet Jeremiah tells us that God called him before his birth. Obviously, the call of God seemed to be ever-present in his own life. He could not remember a time when he was not called. Sometimes God uses environmental influences like family background or a familiarity with ministry to make His calling known at an early age.

Other times people experience the call of God through a growing conviction. In this instance, a better description of the call of God is that it *grows* rather than *arrives*. It manifests itself in a gradual and progressive way until all doubt is removed. It may start with a curiosity and interest in ministry. Then it grows as you become aware that God has strategically designed you with talents, spiritual gifts, and abilities that complement a life of ministry. After that, you may discover that experiences in ministry leave you fulfilled and content. Finally at some point, all doubt is removed and you become convinced that God is calling you into the ministry.

For some reason, this seems to be the most common way God calls people to the ministry. Alice Cullinan did an extensive survey of how ministers were called. In her book, *Sorting*

it Out, she reported that 66% of ministers said their call to ministry was gradual in nature, while only 33% said their call occurred at a specific time they could pinpoint. If you are experiencing this kind of call and find yourself wishing it was more dramatic, be encouraged in knowing you are in the good company of most ministers.

Some people experience a missionary call. In this situation, God uses other people to direct someone into ministry—people or organizations who have established themselves as trusting and godly authority figures. The call comes in the form of being asked or commissioned by the church before you sense a personal call to ministry. It is important to know that sooner or later confirmation does come to your own heart through the inner voice of God's Spirit. Barnabas experienced this kind of call several times in his life as recorded in the eleventh chapter of Acts. The Jerusalem church commissioned him to relocate to Antioch and check out the revival among Gentiles there. Over a year later, the church at Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. In this kind of call, confirmation comes from a tremendous trust in those who commission you and the inner voice of conviction.

God calls others through a divine intersection. These calls are sometimes discovered by what seems like coincidence. It happens when God directs you to an opportunity that seems to be designed just for you! These "open door" experiences find you ready, gifted, and prepared for your finest moment. In a sense, you discover your ministry sweet spot and sense that you are exactly where God wants you to be.

Maybe you identify with a few of these in your own life. If you do, keep stepping forward and exploring the call. With that said, let me say three very important things.

First, if God is calling you, it is important to be secure in your call. Resist the temptation to compare your call with others. Also don't long for a calling other than the one God has provided. He knows His will for your life, where you're going, and what He needs you to be. Trust that He has strategically aligned you with the perfect calling to complement your unique situation.

Second, most ministers will tell you that their call was unique and involved elements of each of the experiences I have described.

Third, whatever way God chooses to call you, the important thing is that the call is confirmed in your own heart. Nothing can or should replace the inner, inaudible voice of God calling you to ministry. Be open, attentive, and willing to explore.

In our next lesson, we'll talk about some common misconceptions about the call of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. Why does it seem like so many ministers talk about their calling in a dramatic way when the lesson says that is probably the most rare form of calling?
2. Can you describe each of the five most common ways God calls people?

3. More than one of these has happened in my life. What does that mean?
4. What does the inaudible voice of God sound like?
5. What do I do if I have never heard the inaudible voice of God?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. The lesson mentioned five of the most common ways God calls people, including a dramatic manifestation, an ever-present, growing conviction, missionary, and intersection. Which of the five ways mentioned in the lesson have you experienced in your own life?
2. What unique experience have you had that might be different from what was talked about?
3. Have you heard the inaudible voice of God calling you to ministry? If so, tell me about what God said and how you know it was God.
4. How did what you heard in the lesson help you navigate through the circumstances of your own journey?

Lesson 7: Misconceptions About the Call

The fact that you are working through this lesson tells me that God is doing something exciting in your life! It tells me the Holy Spirit is leading you to explore the possibility of a call of a lifetime. In our last session we talked about some of the common characteristics of God's call to ministry. Today, I want to talk with you about some of the common misconceptions about the call of God. There are many, but let's just focus on the five most common.

The most common misconception is that God always calls someone in a dramatic way. People mistakenly think that God will call them through an audible voice, miraculous sign, or some prophetic experience. God does use these things, but most of the time His call is less dramatic and more practical. I struggled with this when I was a teenager. After being saved from a life of drugs and alcohol, I was overcome with a powerful interest in and curiosity with ministry. However, I did not think this inner work was enough and made the mistake of thinking I needed some dramatic experience to confirm my call. I started going to every revival service in town hoping the evangelist would give me some kind of prophetic confirmation. I shared this with my pastor, and he helped me understand that God's call is more often confirmed by the inner work of His Spirit deep within our hearts. It was then that I understood God was indeed calling me and I needed to respond. Don't make the mistake of thinking a lack of drama means your call is less certain.

Another common misconception is that everyone is called to vocational ministry. This belief fails to distinguish the difference between every Christian's obligation to do ministry and a person's call to serve in ministry. While every Christian is called to do the work of ministry, God does not call everyone into a lifetime of vocational ministry with the purpose of "preparing God's people for the works of service." Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that God specifically calls apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to service the body of Christ. God has always called a few men and women to serve His people in a vocational manner. We see examples of this in the ministry of the Patriarchs, Moses and the Old Testament priests and Levites, judges, kings, prophets, and rabbis. We also see it in the New Testament in the call of apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, overseers, and evangelists.

One misconception about the call of God is that God only calls a certain type of person to ministry. It is easy for us to build false perceptions about the kind of person or mold God uses in ministry. If you have seen God use someone in a powerful way, you can make the mistake of thinking that's how you should be. Know that God uses all kinds of people in all kinds of ways. God calls both introverts and extroverts. He commissions those who tend toward intellectual tasks as well as those who navigate through feeling and intuition. I know people in the ministry that God uses in incredible ways because they are powerful and decisive leaders. But I also know others who are powerfully used because their nature is cooperative, accommodating, and trusting. God uses the adventurous and the risk adverse. He calls those who are people-focused as well as those who are task-driven. God calls those who like to lead as often as He calls those whose gift is following. He calls the fast-paced and the relaxed; the fat and the skinny. Why? Because the needs of ministry are as diverse as the people within them. God never has

and never will limit his tool chest to one tool. He has a vast array of people He calls to achieve many unique tasks.

The last misconception about the call of God that I want to talk about is very common. It is a belief that God calls everyone the same way. The ways God calls people have varied throughout history and are different from person to person. Some are called in a dramatic way with all the "shock and awe" that Paul experienced on the Damascus Road. Others experience a call that resembles the growth of a mighty redwood tree. Its progression is slow, steady, and certain, but nonetheless powerful. Some can never remember not feeling a call of God. Their call seemed to be from birth or early childhood. There are some whose call can be associated with God speaking or moving through the church or authority figures in their life. Like Barnabas in the New Testament, they are set apart for a specific task outlined by the church. Others experience the call when their gifts are suddenly strategically aligned with a need or opportunity. They walk through the open door and find God's calling on the other side. Many even experience a combination of everything mentioned above.

The important thing to remember is that no two calls are exactly the same. Don't compare your call to others as a way of confirming it. God knows your heart, what you need, and what He has planned for you. Because those things are different than others, your call will be different as well. So don't get caught up on these common misconceptions. Instead lift your sails and get caught up in the wind of exploration.

In our next lesson, we are going to talk about "The Company of the Called."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. Why does it seem so hard to know God has called you?
1. How does my continued work on these lessons indicate anything about a calling in my life?
3. How do I distinguish between a call to *do* ministry and a call to serve *in* the ministry?
4. None of these misconceptions mentioned have happened in my life, but I do have some questions about my experience. Can we talk about that?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Have you struggled with any of the misconceptions mentioned in the lesson?
2. Why do you think it is not always good to validate our own spiritual experiences by comparing them with others?
3. Can you tell me about an unusual experience you have had that makes you feel or think that you are called?
4. If you had to explain the difference between us all being call "to do ministry" and a "personal call to ministry," how would you do it?

Lesson 8: The Company of the Called

Is being called to ministry something recent, or is there a biblical precedent and history behind it? If you feel called to ministry, I want you to know that you're in good company. You are part of an impressive line of men and women who have been called throughout history to serve God in fulltime ministry.

Today we will focus on the biblical history of God's call upon men and women called to ministry. God has always risen up spiritual leaders to meet the needs of His people in a unique time and place. One of the clearest descriptions that I have ever read outlining the history of God's call is in Keith Drury's book, *The Call of a Lifetime*. Let's highlight Keith's main points and identify the similarities with what God is doing in your own life.

We first see the call of God in the life of the Patriarchs. The Bible shows us that God called men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job. Even though the Ten Commandments, synagogues, temples, and priests had not yet come into being, God called these men to provide spiritual leadership to their family's clan. In very much the same way, God still calls men and women to pick up the mantle of spiritual leadership by being an example to those around them.

Then the call of God fell upon Moses. The call and ministry of Moses provided a transition from patriarchs to priests. Moses' call required him to provide spiritual and administrative leadership over God's people. He represented God to the people and became the conduit by which they would receive the Ten Commandments. Today, thousands of years later, God's called are still serving under the mantle of Moses and speaking for God to the people and interceding for them.

After Moses, priests and Levites became recipients of God's call. As God's people were led out from Egypt and slavery, God commissioned members of the tribe of Levi to serve as priests. The Levites were called to lead the people in worship, care for the portable tabernacle, and officiate at the sacrifices. In a similar way, God still calls men and women to lead his people into worship and officiate over the spiritual rites of communion, baptism, marriages, child dedications, and funerals.

Following the priests, the call of God was expanded to the judges and kings. When the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land, they were ruled by judges and eventually by kings. The judges and kings were primarily military and political leaders, although some were very powerful spiritual leaders as well. The priests and Levites still officiated at the tabernacle and later in the new temple, but the judges and kings provided general leadership to the entire community. Today, God still calls special people to take the mantle of providing administrative leadership in managing the church, its resources, staff, and various ministries.

The call of God was also given to the prophets who overlapped many of the offices I have already mentioned. As leadership within the nation of Israel became increasingly specialized, God called prophets who crisscrossed the nation, speaking God's words to the people. The nature of their message varied and depended on the specific need of the time.

Whether it was a message of rebuke, encouragement, warning, or predication, these ancient preachers were used by God in both the Old and New Testaments to deliver a relevant word from God to His people. Today, God still calls and anoints men and women to speak a timely and relevant word to His people.

Scribes were called of God to give careful attention to the accurate translation of the Scriptures. Today, ministry still involves a call to study the Scriptures and encourage God's people to know the Scriptures.

As God's people became too scattered around the world, their distance from the temples did not allow them the privilege of worshipping there. Smaller temples called synagogues were established in local communities where rabbis taught the word of God and synagogue leaders organized times of prayer, Scripture reading, and study, as well as worship. Ministry still involves men and women who are called of God to provide local worship centers where people can worship and grow in their faith.

In the New Testament, Jesus appointed apostles to expand the church and exercise authority to appoint leaders in new churches. They advanced the gospel beyond Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the globe. Still today, God is calling missionaries and evangelists to take the gospel to those who have never heard and establish churches where none existed before.

The New Testament also records God's call upon men and women to serve as pastors and teachers to give leadership to local churches and to equip God's people. Today, God is still calling people to serve the local church by providing leadership, relevant teaching, and ministry equipping for God's people.

What do all these examples teach us? They show us two important things:

First, you are not alone. God often calls people like you to serve His purposes in a particular time and place.

Second, although the titles of those whom God has called may change, the responsibilities remain strikingly similar. As a matter of fact, the responsibilities of the called are so important to God that He has preserved them in each and every age.

Others have faithfully paved the way before you and await you to follow. If God is calling you to the ministry, you will be joining the greatest fraternity on this side of heaven. You will become part of a sacred community that does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of the people of God. There is no greater bond of relationship than that which exists between those who have been called by God. Each one will have a unique call, gifting, and circumstance. Your success will not be in competing with each other but in serving as partners with each other.

But do not forget that there are others behind you who await a faithful example. You stand in good company ... the company of the called!

Know this: although your own exploration may be a new journey for you, the call is as

old as the ages. Why? Because God still has a passion to reach every generation with the message of Jesus Christ. And He needs people like you to help Him!

In our next lesson, we'll look at some things that can help you confirm the call of God and know if it is real.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. Why isn't the terminology more similar through history for the different jobs God calls people to do and the way that He calls them?
 3. Can you tell me how some of these points are translated into today's terms?
 4. Which one of the areas mentioned is most like today's pastor?
 5. What does it mean to be part of a sacred community?
- Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. God has been calling people to serve Him in leading His people for thousands of years. Do you think: He will ever stop? Why or why not?
2. As you listened to the different examples mentioned in the lesson, which one seemed most like you?
3. Why do you think: it is important to realize that you are not alone?
4. Can you describe some of the different callings you see being lived in ministry today?

Lesson 9: Things that Confirm Your Call

Have you ever asked yourself:

- How can I be certain I am called?
- How do I confirm that it is indeed God calling me?

Do any of those questions sound familiar? If so, you're not alone. God's Word is filled with examples of men and women who were uncertain whether God was calling them or not. It is during these times that we seek something tangible to confirm God's call upon our lives.

The good news is that God always confirms His call. Why? Because He knows three very important people need your call confirmed: you, the people you lead, and the church. So let's talk about a few of the common ways God confirms His call upon your life.

One way God confirms His call is through divine confirmation. The first sign of confirmation will be a private confirmation in your own heart. We have talked a lot about how God speaks to a person's Spirit and moves upon that person's heart when He is leading. It happens in different ways, but the most important confirmation a person can have is an inner confidence, desire, and burden to follow God's call into the ministry. It is common for this call to begin surfacing in times of prayer, Bible reading, and meditation. Although it comes at different stages, you should have a divine confirmation long before your ordination process. In our next lesson we will talk more about how the call is confirmed through spiritual disciplines as well.

A second way God confirms His call is through ecclesiastical confirmation. This confirmation is usually in the form of some kind of licensing, ordination, and recognition of your call from a church denomination. If it is a reputable organization, they will take this step seriously and use an extensive process of application, testing, interview, and a solemn ordination service. This process will ensure:

- the genuineness of your Christian experience;
- the sufficiency of your spiritual, moral, emotional, and societal maturity;
- the reality of your divine call;
- the correctness of your doctrine;
- the adequacy of your preparation and abilities;
- the commitment to the policies and programs of the church.

We will talk in future lessons about the importance of this, but the important thing to remember is that if God has called you, your call will be evident to godly leaders who serve in authority over you. When you seek their confirmation, they will either say yes, no, or wait. Whatever it may be, ordination is the most important public confirmation you can receive.

A third way that God confirms His call is through a confirmation of the will. In other words, ministry is something you want to do and anticipate. You and I have probably heard a few ministers who describe their call to ministry like a child forced to go to the

dentist. But is that a fair portrayal of the God you have come to know? I have never liked the pessimistic and dramatized image of God calling us to something we tried to avoid or disliked. No ... I believe God calls us to that which He knows we will be most satisfied and fulfilled. The Bible tells us that God wants us to *want* to be in ministry when it says,

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be" (1 Peter 5:2).

If your desire and anticipation of future ministry is increasing as time goes by, thank God! It is a confirmation that you are headed in the right direction.

The fourth way that God confirms His call is through results. Most people who feel a call to ministry do not wait until ordination before they start ministering to others. It is important that you start ministering while you are in training. Whether it is teaching children, serving as a youth sponsor in your church's youth ministry, or somewhere else that compliments your gifts, dive in and get your feet wet. If God has called you, you will most likely start seeing tangible results. What are the results? People are encouraged and moved to pursue God with a greater intensity. Some will grow in their faith and move further through the levels of spiritual maturity. Changed lives and maturing faith is a powerful confirmation of your call.

A fifth confirmation of God's call is perseverance in trials. If you are called to serve in ministry, you can expect that your call will be tested. Your test will come from the devil, God, or your own consequences. It may be through a disappointing ministry experience, life crisis, or failure. Testing may come through conflict, betrayal, or strained ministry relationships. It often comes through obstacles and delays in the work of God. During these times it is important for you to remember that testing reveals the strength of your commitment and the depth of your call. You might say the call of God is like a kite, which rises against the wind instead of with it.

So keep moving forward and looking for road signs and confirmation of your call. It can only bring you closer to God's will for your life. In our next lesson we'll talk about running from God. Until then, keep exploring.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How do I know if what I have experienced is divine confirmation or not?
2. If God is calling me, why does that call need to be confirmed by man?
3. Do I have to wait for the formal process of licensing to know for sure if I am called to ministry?
4. What if there are other things I am interested in doing? Does that mean I am not called?
5. Is *wanting* to be in the ministry and *willing* to be in the ministry the same thing?
6. How do I know if the tests I am experiencing have to do with the call of God or just being a Christian?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Tell me about any experience you have had that you think might be a divine confirmation.
2. Do you find yourself dreaming with anticipation about being in ministry? Where do you think this desire comes from? What are you passionate about? In other words, what excites you about ministry?
3. Can you tell me about some ways that you are involved in ministry right now? What are some other things you have done in past years?
4. Have you experienced any opposition to being in ministry?
5. How might your calling be experiencing a time of testing?

Lesson 10: Running from God

Today we're going to talk about something to avoid ... running from God's call. The call of God is one of the most exciting and fulfilling ways to spend your life. Unfortunately, some people are reluctant to obey or answer God's call upon their lives. Maybe you're struggling with the call of God right now . You may be one of those people who are more regretful than excited about the call of God. If you are, hear me out. Why not? You have nothing to lose, right?

If you aren't running from God's call, I still want you to listen to this lesson. It will give you a greater appreciation for what God is doing in your life. Wherever you may be, the important thing is understanding why you may be tempted to run from God. Studies show there are several reasons. Let's find out why.

The most common reason people run from God's call is a feeling of unworthiness.

There may be several things that contribute to this feeling.

- As the American population grows more and more unchurched, it is common for people to have a totally unchurched background. Some of them have no experiences or prior understanding to even know what a minister does or why, for that matter.
- Others have such a high esteem for ministers and such a keen sense of their own limitations that they feel inadequate and unable to live up to the standard.

If you are experiencing these feelings, you're not alone. It is normal to feel unqualified or unworthy of God's call. When God called Jeremiah, Jeremiah thought he was too young. Sarah thought she was too old. Jonah said he didn't want to do what God was asking. Moses said he was not good enough at public speaking. Ezekiel said he was overwhelmed. Isaiah said he was unworthy. Amos said he was not qualified. Paul, Peter, and even Mary, the mother of Jesus, felt the same way. The important thing to remember is that God would not call you if He did not think you could overcome any of your perceived obstacles.

Some people run from God's call because they think they don't know the Bible well enough. Although some people have prior experiences that give them a better knowledge of the Bible, others have no familiarity whatsoever. Many have come to Christ with no Bible knowledge at all. You may be running from God's call because of the fear of what you don't know about the Bible. The good news is that ministry, like any other vocation, requires formal training. After that training you will have the knowledge, confidence, and experience you need to follow God's call upon your life.

A third reason people run from the call of God is because they lack guidance. The call of God is a lot like an infant. In the child's early stages, he must be nurtured and fed. There are many examples of this kind of call-mentoring in the Bible.

- Elisha was mentored in his call by the prophet Elijah.
- Samuel was willing to receive instruction from Eli in 1 Samuel 3: 1-10 about his call.

- The Apostle Paul and John Mark were mentored by Barnabas.
- Apollos received advice from Priscilla and Aquilla.
- Timothy and Titus were advised by the Apostle Paul in their call.

The good news is that it is never too late to nurture the call that is within you. You can connect with an experienced minister who can give you advice along your journey. You can read books and even continue listening to this lesson. God will provide the mentoring you need, if you will trust Him with your future.

The fourth reason people run from the call of God is a fear of the unknown. God rarely gives you a blueprint of your life all at once. His purpose is revealed in bite-sized portions as you take the time to discover it for yourself. Some people forget that the call of God is a lot like salvation in that it requires faith and trust. They think God delights in crossing our will, dragging us where we do not want to go, and making us unhappy. Nothing can be further from the truth. Genesis 12: 1 tells us that God called Abraham to follow Him to a place he had never seen. The unknown is not a bad thing when God is leading you through it. He was faithful to Abraham, and He will be faithful to you.

Perceived financial limitation is the fifth reason people run from God's call. The fear of not having the financial resources for Bible college, not being able to provide for a family, or being deprived of the comfortable things of life may keep one from exploring the call of God. All of us desire financial security and want to provide for our families.

I remember one middle-aged man who met with me and poured out years of regret and remorse for running from God's call years before. "I have never been good trusting God to provide for my needs," he said. It was a sad moment. After being in the ministry for over 20 years, God has always met my needs. I know He would have done the same thing for him.

You don't have to live with the same sense of regret years from now when there is little you can do about it. You can trust God to meet your financial needs. The Bible reassures you of this in Philippians 4: 19,

"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

The important thing is to remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33,

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

The sixth reason people run from the call of God is to avoid a repeat of past experiences. Sometimes these people:

- have had negative or painful experiences in church or the ministry that they don't want to repeat.
- may have found high school very difficult, and the thought of Bible college is undesirable.
- experienced hurt or disappointment from someone in the ministry.

- want a different lifestyle than ministry can provide.

If you are working through this lesson and running from God, I want to encourage you to reconsider. Be willing to follow the Lord even if you don't understand fully what that commitment means or where He is taking you. Leave the results to Him. You can trust God with your life. I have a feeling He can handle it.

In our next lesson, I want to talk to you about some important spiritual disciplines and how they relate to the call of God. So reengage in the journey and keep exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. It seems like I will never be good enough. How do I get past feeling unqualified and unworthy?
 2. There is no one I know who can teach me about my calling or the ministry. What can I do instead?
 3. Are people in the ministry not supposed to care or worry about finances?
 4. How do I know if some bad experiences in my past are negatively affecting my view of the call?
 5. Does this mean that the only way to pursue the call of God is by faith?
- Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Have you ever felt unworthy of a divine call? Why?
2. Do you feel like there are things in your past that would hold you back from answering the call of God?
For you, what is the hardest part about following God into the unknown?
3. The lesson gave several examples of people in the Bible how were mentored in the maturity of their divine call. Why do you think that is important?
4. How important to you is being financially secure? Is making a large salary important or a personal goal?

Lesson 11: The Call of God and Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are like lenses that allow us to magnify and focus our attention on God, His truth, and His plan for our lives. You may know them by their more common names, like prayer, fasting, worship, meditation, and many others. We won't have time to cover all of them, but let me mention a few that can help you discover and confirm the call of God on your life.

1. The first discipline that will help is worship. Worship is the practice of engaging one's mind, soul, and spirit with the greatness of who God is. Worship makes God real in our lives by focusing on Him and praising Him for who He is and what He has done. If you want to become sensitive to God's will:

- Turn up the volume of your worship.
- Tune everything else out. Think about what your mouth is saying in worship.
- Don't worry about what others may think of you.
- Instead of thinking of your church's worship team as the performers and you as the audience, start thinking of yourself as the performer and God as the audience.

Worship makes us sensitive to the things of God. That's why it's important in finding His will.

2. The second discipline is fasting. Fasting is the practice of denying our physical desires in order to focus on God and His sustenance. The purpose of fasting is to experience the revelation of God's sustaining power and refocus on our dependence on Him. Fasting is most effective after a day or two. It is best when done in conjunction with several other spiritual disciplines, like prayer, Bible study, and solitude. Starting with one day and working from there is the best way to work yourself into this valuable discipline.

3. The third discipline is submission. The purpose of practicing submission is to release yourself from the need to always get your own way. It frees us up from ourselves and helps us yield to God. But there's one tough thing about this discipline. We can only develop the ability to submit to God by learning how to submit to man. God has placed several authority figures in your life, like parents, teachers, youth pastors, and principals. As long as they are not requiring you to do anything illegal or immoral, try submitting to their authority instead of pushing back and challenging them. Each time you submit, you are strengthening your ability to yield to God. You will need that skill if you are called to ministry.

4. The fourth discipline that will help you is Bible study. Bible study is studying the teachings of Jesus with the purpose of applying them to your life. The importance of reading, studying, and meditating on the Word of God cannot be overemphasized. The Bible is the primary way God speaks to us. That is what Psalm 119: 105 means when

it says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." As you read the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will reveal divine truths to you, show you how to apply God's Word to your life, and teach you how to identify His will. But God cannot speak to and through the Scriptures if you are not reading them. I'm not talking about studying the Word of God in Sunday school, a church service, or a small group. I am talking about you being alone with God and your Bible in your bedroom, at the park, or in a coffee shop.

5. The fifth discipline is solitude. Solitude is the practice of being absent from others to be present with God. It helps us silence the internal and external noise so we can allow our hearts to hear more clearly the voice of God. There are many distractions that cause background noise in your life, like cell phones, text messaging, music, and all kinds of other things. I want to challenge you to do something hard but rewarding. Sit in the park, go for a walk, ride your bike alone, or get in your car and do nothing but listen to God in the quiet. You'll need that to find and confirm His call.

6. The sixth discipline is prayer. Prayer is communicating with God. That means you are not just talking but listening. Have you ever tried to talk to someone who is obsessed with hearing his own voice? It's frustrating, isn't it? I think that's how God feels sometimes when we pray. So be patient, quiet, and sensitive enough to listen when you pray. In his book *experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby said, "Prayer is designed more to adjust you to God than to adjust God to you."

As you engage in the spiritual disciplines, God's will becomes clearer to you. That is why spiritual disciplines are so valuable in discerning God's call. Pick one each week and give it a try. In our next podcast I want to talk to you more about how prayer can help you find God's will about ministry. So continue your journey exploring the call!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How can spiritual disciplines help me to discover and confirm God's calling?
2. How does submitting to people help me submit to God? What does this have to do with ministry?
3. How do you approach Bible reading? What methods or schedules do you use?
4. Can you help me understand how solitude helps me to explore and know the call to ministry?
5. How does engaging in these disciplines help God to become clearer in my life?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about

how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Can you tell me how you engage God through the discipline of worship?
2. Have you ever tried fasting? What type of fasting did you do? How did it impact your life?
3. What are you currently doing to develop the discipline of daily Bible reading?
4. Describe your prayer life. When do you pray? What do you do? How often?

Lesson 12: God's Will through Prayer

You've been engaged in this journey because you are exploring the possibilities of serving God in full-time ministry. If you're like I was when God called me, you have more questions than you have answers. Wouldn't it be great if you could just text God to find out His will for your life? The good news is that the Spirit of God provides a direct and supernatural line of communication to discover God's will and it's called: Prayer!

The Apostle Paul talked about his own experience in this matter in Romans 8:26-27 when he said,

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

Let me give you four ways that prayer can help you in your exploration.

Prayer helps you overcome weaknesses. Paul tells us that "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" (v. 26). The context of Paul's statements show us that he is not talking about a temporary weakness. Paul is not talking about a weakness that is overcome through regaining strength, skill, or ability. The Greek word that he uses for "weakness" means a lack of ability and capacity.

You may ask: "How can I know God's will when I have so much going against me?" Maybe you're:

- confused about what the call of God is.
- worried your own flesh is going to distract you.
- trying to distinguish who that little voice belongs to: God, yourself, or your parents.

The good news is that Paul tells us that when we pray in the Spirit, the Spirit helps us in these weaknesses.

Prayer helps you pray for the right things. Let's face it. Sometimes prayer can be difficult. Even Paul agrees in this passage and tells us there were times he did not know what to pray for or about. The soul is a deep and tangled web of motive, desire, and passion. Our prayers can be polluted by our own desires, impure motives, or an inability to see Kingdom priorities. But Paul assures us that *"the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express"* (Romans 8:26).

Prayer helps you discover God's will. Listen closely to what Paul says about prayer and the will of God when he says,

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words

cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26-27).

This passage mentions three things that prayer brings into strategic alignment.

1. "our hearts" (passions, desires, and ambitions);
2. "the mind of the Spirit" (the purposes of the Spirit);
3. "God's will"

Prayer enables the Spirit to empower you. There is one little word in this passage that has a whole lot of meaning. It's the word "helps" that Paul uses when he says, "*the Spirit helps us in our weakness*" (v. 26).

The word he uses for "helps" is a very colorful word in the Greek language (*synantilambanomai*). Like many Greek words, it is put together from a few shorter words. In other cases, the word used to describe the Holy Spirit's activity in our life is taken from two words:

Parakletus: helper
Comforter: advocate

But the word that Paul uses for "helps" is taken from three words:

Sun: alongside, or together with
Anti: for, or in the place of
Lambano: to take a hold of

The third word meaning "bearing or taking hold of" is what makes this description of the Spirit's activity different from many other ones in the Bible. All together the word refers to a person coming alongside another, taking hold of a heavy load and helping him bear it. **THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS PICTURED AS COMING ALONGSIDE US IN THE MIDST OF OUR WEAKNESS AND SHOULDERING THE LOAD.**

That is why praying is so valuable to you during this time when you are exploring God's call to ministry. When you are praying, something deeply spiritual is happening. The Spirit of God is giving you strength over your weaknesses, helping you pray for the right thing; bringing your spirit into alignment with the will of God; and helping you carry the load.

In our next podcast, we're going to talk about some common red flags and warning signs regarding the call of God to ministry. The Spirit of God wants to lead you, strengthen you, and journey with you as you explore the call!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. What roles has prayer really played in your ministry and exploration of ministry?
2. What does our denomination believe about praying in tongues?
3. Do you believe prayer really works? Tell me your experiences?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Describe your prayer life?
2. What answered prayer requests have you experienced in your life so far?
3. Have you experienced God coming along side you in your exploration of the call to help you sort through your thoughts surrounding the call?
4. How do you plan to keep prayer a vital part of your spiritual journey as you move into ministry?

Lesson 13: Red Flags and Warning Signs

We have talked a lot about what the call of God is like, but today I want to talk about when a call is NOT a call. I want to talk with you about five red flags and warning signs that your call may not be a call at all but something else. Let's start with the first one.

Be careful when your call is externally driven. The call of God does not begin with others. Instead it is like a "loud whisper" that starts in your spirit and gradually works through your thoughts and emotions. Although it may even begin to manifest itself in outward ways, it begins with an inward passion, a consuming interest, an overwhelming desire, and an inescapable urge to follow God's call. If your call originated from a well-meaning but overzealous person in your life and does not continue to grow in your heart, you probably are not called to the ministry. The call is initiated by the Spirit, not by a camp speaker, youth leader, or pastor. It should not be driven by the expectations of family members who are either in the ministry or would be flattered by you being in ministry. It should and must come from God and be birthed in your heart by the Spirit. If it's not, then it's not the call.

Be cautious when your call is based on feelings. Feelings can be misleading and unreliable. Why? Because they are a reflection of your emotional state, physical condition, patterns of thinking, environment, and situation. Feelings often change and fluctuate. They are easily influenced by what others think and by changing circumstances. They often push us to make hurried decisions before we have had time to think through a situation, seek advice, or pray about God's will. If your call seems to have a fluctuating energy and a sporadic instability of feelings, you will want to be cautious.

Be skeptical when your call is fueled by guilty obligation. It is common for some people to feel called to ministry because they feel obligated to God. They may feel unworthy of some tremendous act of God's undeserving goodness. Some return to God after straying into a life of rebellion, sin, and addiction. Feeling guilty and unable to forgive themselves, they feel they owe God a "life debt" of service. I am not saying that God does not call people from horribly dark situations. What I am saying is that a feeling of guilty obligation is not a call to ministry-it's more a reason for praise and faithfulness.

Be leery when your call is pushed by a need for power and control. There are some people who envy the influence over others that those in ministry seem to have. These are usually people who have an unhealthy need to be in control of people and outcomes. In trying to fix the world they become controlling pastors, dictatorial leaders, and workaholic ministers called by nothing other than their thirst for influence.

Be wary when your call is pulled by a need for recognition. All of us need to feel significant and needed by others. A neglected childhood, disappointing experience, or feeling of failure can create an unhealthy need for recognition, acceptance, and approval. Sometimes this need becomes so dominant in a person's life that it directs their career choices. Some make the mistake of seeing the ministry as a way to gain affirmation, prestige, and the approval of men. If you are pulled into ministry by this need, or if you're on a quest to feel good about yourself, you are setting yourself up for failure. If that is you, it is time to stop, pause, and seek God for a more significant confirmation.

You may be facing your own confusion regarding the call of God. If you are, confess this to God and ask for His help and direction. There is no reason for you to be embarrassed about the uncertainty in your life. One of the most important things to remember is that the Spirit wants to reveal God's will to you even more than you want to discover it. If at any point you come to the realization that God has not called you to the full-time ministry, that is not a negative thing. As a matter of fact, that is a positive thing. It means you have discovered God's will and now have become more focused on your future.

Remember God's promise of Psalm 32:8 when it says, *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."* In our next lesson, we're going to talk about why it is so important to talk with pastors about their call. I will also be giving you some great questions you can ask to get the conversation rolling. Until then, continue exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. People have been telling me for a long time that I should go into the ministry, but I am not sure if it originated in me or them. How can I know for sure that my calling is not externally driven?
2. I kind of like being in charge of things. What can I do to make sure that I am not motivated by an unhealthy need for power or control?
3. It seems that I might be motivated by one of the areas mentioned in this study. Does that mean that I am definitely not called?
4. Could I have a tendency toward any of these areas mentioned in the lesson and still be called into the ministry?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Do you only feel called after a great worship experience, or is the call consistently felt in your life?
2. Have you ever felt an obligation or duty to go into the ministry? If so, why? Where do you think that feeling might come from?
3. How do you feel when people give you recognition for something you have done? What does it cause to happen in you? How do you respond?
4. Do you think that any of the areas mentioned in the lesson might be true in your life? If so, can you share with me about it?
5. The most important thing about exploring God's call to ministry is to remember that your goal is to find God's will, NOT necessarily get into the ministry. That means you win either way. If you discover God is calling you to ministry, you have direction. If you discover that God is not calling you into ministry, you also benefit from having direction. Does this process of exploration create pressure for you either way?

Lesson 14: Talking With Pastors About Your Call

One of most beneficial things you can do in exploring God's call upon your life is to talk with other ministers about their own call to the ministry. I know that may seem intimidating, but it will be very beneficial to you. You may also be surprised to know that most pastors actually enjoy talking about their call to ministry. With that said, I would like to answer three questions you might have about interviewing pastors about their call to ministry.

- Why is talking with pastors so beneficial?
- What kinds of questions should I ask them?
- What should I do with all the information I get?

Let's start by addressing the first question.

Why is talking with pastors about their call beneficial to me? Talking with pastors about their own call to ministry is extremely beneficial for several reasons.

First, it will help you interpret the circumstances of your own call. Should God be calling you to the ministry, you need to understand something very important. You're not alone. That is why you need to connect with others and learn from their experiences. Not everyone is called to the ministry in the same way. Hearing the different ways and circumstances that God has called others will build your faith, confirm what God is doing in your own heart, and help you discern what God is saying to you. I felt the call of God almost immediately after being saved from a life of drugs and alcohol. As a non-churched teenager, I didn't know people who were called to the ministry. Lacking a church background, I did not have any context to help me interpret my own call. Talking to others and asking them specific questions about their own call helped me understand that each call was unique.

But there is a second reason why you should talk with others about their call to ministry. You may not realize it, but talking with others about their call is a blessing to them. The call of God is not just a historic occurrence in a minister's past. It is a deep reservoir of continued blessing in the life of a minister. When ministers revisit the circumstances surrounding their call, they experience a renewed sense of purpose, dedication, and vision. By asking others to share the circumstances of their own call, you are also providing an opportunity to bless them.

Talking with others will also help you solidify God's call upon your own life. Every minister has moments when trying circumstances causes doubt or wavering about the call. That is normal. God uses these times to help us reconnect with our call at different stages of life and ministry. If you're like any other person who has served in ministry, you will have times of testing, trial, and yes, even doubt. Talking with others helps you solidify your call so you are more prepared to face these difficult times. I have been in the ministry for over 20 years now, and I still love asking other ministers to tell me the story about their call to ministry. So talk with as many ministers as you are able. It will only help.

You're probably wondering what you should ask them when you meet. Let's talk about a few great questions that will help you launch some meaningful conversation. Let me share some questions that have helped me stimulate some great discussion over the years. If you email these questions to the person you are planning to talk with before your meeting, that person will be better prepared to answer.

- What were the experiences through which God first spoke to you?
- Who had a significant influence upon your call and why?
- Who did you first tell about your call, and how did that person help you?
- How did you tell your family, and how did they respond?
- Were there any initial hindrances or obstacles you faced? What were they?
- How did you begin moving toward the fulfillment of your call?
- Looking back, were the original impulses that caused you to enter the ministry realistic?
- Have you matured into a new awareness of God's call? If so, how?
- How have you kept a vision of the higher purpose of ministry despite all of the mundane tasks involved?

Now let me give you a little advice. How you request a meeting with these ministers will determine the quality of that time. Don't stop them in the hall or interrupt them by stopping by the office without prior notice. Call them beforehand and set up a time and place to meet. A coffee shop or somewhere close to their office will work best. Ask them to pick a place convenient for them. Be sure to tell them why you want to meet, and email them the list of questions a couple days before your meeting. That way they will come to your meeting prepared and ready to speak into your life.

What are you supposed to do with all the information you get from these people? If you meet with several pastors, it will not take you long to figure out that there is no standard way that God calls people to the ministry. Each story will have a unique set of circumstances and influential factors. Let me give you some advice to help you sort through all that you hear.

First, remember that God knows what each person needs to respond to the call to ministry. He designs the call to meet those needs and get that person where he/she needs to be. Don't think your call is any less authentic because it does not seem as dramatic or early in life as someone else's. Instead of trying to duplicate the circumstances of someone else's call, try to identify what the circumstances of that person's call reveals about God and His passion for lost people.

Second, try to learn from these experiences. Identify what was encouraging to others and what hindered them in their journey to discern the call. Look for circumstances that are similar to your own and what you can glean from them. Try to anticipate similar situations you may face and what you can learn from the experiences of others. Look for something you can learn.

Third, look for what God is doing through others. Did you see any common denominators in the stories you heard? What were the differences, and why? Do these things reveal

anything about what God is doing in your own generation? These are the kinds of questions that will help you learn from God's call on the lives of others.

The call of God is a wonderfully powerful thing. No money can purchase it, and no imitation can replace it. When it happens, it is worth everything and becomes the most valuable asset in your life. That is why it is important for you to learn from others and allow the circumstances of their call to help you discern your own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. It's intimidating to talk: to ministers, so how do I do it? What if I freeze up and forget what I wanted to say? What if they don't understand?
2. My pastor doesn't talk: much with young people, so why would he want to talk: with me about this?
3. How can someone's story from 30 years ago help me with my story today?

NOTE TO MENTOR:

Be prepared to answer any of the suggested questions mentioned in the lesson and listed below.

- What were the experiences through which God first spoke to you?
- Who had a significant influence upon your call and why?
- Who did you first tell about your call, and how did they help you?
- How did you tell your family, and how did they respond?
- Were there any initial hindrances or obstacles you faced? What were they?
- How did you begin moving toward the fulfillment of your call?
- Looking back, were the original impulses that caused you to enter the ministry realistic?
- Have you matured into a new awareness of God's call? If so, how?
- How have you kept a vision of the higher purpose of ministry despite all of the mundane tasks involved?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Do you find it intimidating to talk: with ministers and ask them questions? Why? How might you overcome this?
2. Have you ever sat with a minister and asked him questions about his call to ministry? What was the result of your conversation?
3. Who are some ministers that you know well enough to ask questions like those mentioned in the lesson?
4. If you have not yet interviewed a pastor about his/her call to ministry, make a point to do so this week and be prepared to share what you learned from the interview.

Lesson 15: Can Women Be Ministers? (part 1)

Can women be ministers? Can they be ordained? Why do some denominations limit the opportunities women can have in ministry? Today we're going to talk about the all-important role of women in ministry.

If you are a female who is exploring the call to ministry, you have probably already wondered about this. Believe it or not, the role of women in ministry can be a controversial subject in some churches and denominations. That is why I would like to address this red-hot issue in the next two lessons.

In this lesson we'll look at the reasons why some people believe women should not be ordained into the ministry. In our next lesson we will talk about why others believe women should be ordained into the ministry, as well as practical ways young women can begin preparing right now.

However, you need to know something right up front. The Wesleyan church does NOT believe there are biblical grounds to limit the role of women in ministry. The Wesleyan Church has experienced firsthand the fact that God does indeed call, bless, and empower women for ministry. One of the core founders of the Wesleyan movement was Phoebe Palmer who was a Spirit-filled, God-called, and woman. As many of you will know, our former General Superintendant of the entire denomination was a woman.

With that said, let's start by looking at why some people do not believe women should be ordained into the full-time ministry. The main reason is that they believe the Bible discourages women in ministry. There are only two passages in the entire New Testament which might seem to prohibit women in ministry.

The first is 1 Corinthians 14:34, which says, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says."

However, there a problem with this isolated interpretation. Instead of identifying the specific situation that Paul is addressing, proponents of this view try to equate Paul's demand for silence as him addressing the call to ministry. The entire context of this passage is addressing the disorderly, chaotic, and confusing use of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church. That is why Paul would later close this thought unit with the admonition, "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" in 1 Corinthians 14:40. Apparently, there were women in the Corinthian church who made a significant contribution to the problems. Paul chose to address the specific situation and the individuals involved. Paul is NOT addressing a woman's call, qualification, or ordination to the ministry. To lift this verse out of its proper context is a step away from sound biblical interpretation.

The second verse that is often used to prohibit women from serving in the ministry is 1 Timothy 2:12, which says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

Paul is again addressing the subject of orderly worship to a church in the wings of chaos. Ephesus had several problems that seemed to center around a group of influential women. Apparently these women participated in disorderly worship and misguided public prayer (1 Timothy 1: 1-2); distracted men in worship with immodest dress and materialistic apparel (1 Timothy 2:9); practiced gossip, idle talk: and non-productive discussion (1 Timothy 5: 13); embraced heresy and false teaching.

It seems that these issues were being initiated by a group of women who recklessly ignored social customs and usurped authority over the men in their lives. To correct the problem, Paul is using the authority of his apostleship to place a temporary restraining order upon their teaching ministry and vocal participation in worship.

However, some sincere but misguided believers cut verses 11-12 out from the context of a local church problem and try to paste it as a universal rule relating to all women in all times and in all cultures. When, in fact, Paul is giving Timothy advice about how to deal with heretical teaching and the behavior of women within the Ephesian church.

In light of Paul's obvious recognition of the ministry of women in nearly all of his writings, it seems obvious that he is addressing an isolated incident with a specific solution that is not meant to be universal. In other words, the situation in Ephesus did not warrant a prohibition of women in leadership everywhere. Otherwise, Paul's instruction would have been repeated in his other writings.

On the outset, Paul does appear to restrict women from speaking in the church in these two specific places in Scripture. However, Paul was addressing specific problems that involved immature women within the context of certain situations. Using these two Scriptures as proof texts to restrict ALL women from speaking publicly would be as unwise as using Paul's admonition to Christian slaves to be obedient to their masters in Titus 2:9 as a biblical endorsement of slavery.

So, if you are a young woman exploring the possibility of God's call to ministry, be encouraged in knowing that the problems of a few centuries ago do not speak to the authenticity of your own call.

In our next lesson, we are going to talk about why we believe that God does call, empower, and ordain women in ministry, as well as some practical things you can do to prepare. Keep reading, and more importantly ... keep exploring!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. If what is said in the lesson is true about these two verses, why have churches not allowed women to preach or lead in ministry?
2. How should I respond to a church or pastor who doesn't believe that women can be called to ministry?
3. If I am a female called to ministry, what can I do to overcome these common stereotypes?
4. Has a woman minister ever ministered to you? What was it like?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. How does Jesus treat women in Scripture?
2. There are women in ministry who have produced a lot of good fruit from their ministry. Do you think that God has helped them?
3. Have you heard anyone tell you that women cannot serve in a position of leadership or as a teacher? How did it make you feel? What did you think about it?
4. If God doesn't call women to ministry, why would so many women believe they have been called? Why have so many women been used in doing ministry?
5. What do you think about the verses mentioned in the lesson? Do you agree or disagree with the thoughts presented on them?
6. What do you think is the best way to be loving and Christ-like in your response to those who prohibit women from serving in ministry?

Lesson 16: Can Women Be Ministers? (part 2)

In our last lesson, we started looking at the question, "Can women be ministers?" Last week we looked at why the argument against women in ministry was lacking. This week we are going to discover why God has called and continues to call women into ministry, as well as some practical things women can do to start preparing for that call right now.

Before we start, I want to once again make something perfectly clear. The Wesleyan Church does NOT believe there are biblical grounds to limit the role of women in ministry.

With that said, let's start by looking at why we believe God calls women into ministry. There are several reasons why an increasing number of denominations ordain women for ministry. Let me mention a few:

First, we believe that Scripture, not culture, should be the rule of faith and conduct.

Last week we discovered that Paul's statements about women being "silent in the church" in 1 Corinthians 14:34, and women not being permitted to "teach or have authority over a man" in 1 Timothy 2: 12, were prescriptive solutions to isolated problems. These comments were addressed to certain women in specific situations and were not intended to be applied universally to all Christians in every culture. Paul was addressing a circumstance involving specific women who were contributing to a problem in a culture where women were considered second-class citizens.

Instead of allowing our Bible to transform our culture, we sometimes allow our culture to interpret our Bibles. There are two examples of this in the history of biblical translation. The first is found in Romans 16:7, when Paul mentions Junias and says he was "outstanding among the apostles." However, the earliest translations of the Bible have the female name "Junia," not the masculine form "Junias." Why? In the Middle Ages, the translators of the Bible changed the female name "Junia" to the male name "Junias" because of the cultural belief that women could not be apostles. We even have writings of Saint Jerome and John Chrysostom, written three hundred years after Christ, that speak of the noble qualities of this *woman*, Junia. In this case, cultural bias robs us of seeing a woman as not only being recognized as an apostle, but as an outstanding example of one.

A second example is found in Romans 16:1-2, where in closing the epistle, Paul recommends the ministry of a female deaconess by the name of Phoebe (FEE-bee). In calling her a deacon, Paul used the Greek word *diakonos*. It was the same word he used to describe other positions of leadership in the New Testament church. However, the bias of some modern translators have obscured Phoebe's position of leadership by choosing to translate the word "servant or helper" instead of "deacon." As a result, cultural bias blinds us from seeing Phoebe as she really was—a female deacon within the church of Cenchrea who had won the respect and admiration of the Apostle Paul.

Let me say it again—as believers, we must allow our Bibles to shape our perspective and not our perspectives to shape our Bibles.

Second, there have always been women who have been active in God's service. In addition to the Apostle Junia, who has already been mentioned, other examples would include:

- Miriam, a prophet among Moses' leadership community during the Exodus and mentioned in Exodus 15:20.
- Deborah, who was both a prophet and a judge who led the armies of God in successful battle in Judges 4-5.
- Huldah, a prophetess who authenticated the scroll of the law and helped lead a national revival recorded in 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34.
- Priscilla, who had a teaching ministry in Ephesus along with her husband, Aquila. Five of the seven times the couple is mentioned in the book of Acts, her name is given first. In one of those instances, she is even said to have taught the scholar Apollos and "explained to him the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26).
- In Acts we are told that Philip had four daughters who prophesied.
- As already stated above, Paul mentions a female named Phoebe who served as a deaconess in the church at Cenchrea near Corinth.

The Bible's "big picture" image of women is of God using them as leaders, apostles, prophets, advisers, teachers, and servants. There is overwhelming evidence throughout God's Word that He calls and uses women in ministry. Ignoring this overwhelming evidence and focusing on two texts that correct women is like using a text prohibiting divorce to speak about the joys of marriage.

Third, Spirit-tilled faith has always embraced women in ministry. The Bible makes it very clear that the gifts and the outpouring of the Spirit were given for ministry. Nowhere does God's Word limit the expression of these gifts to men. As a matter of fact, we find the opposite.

When the New Testament describes the Holy Spirit's sovereign distribution of gifts, we are told they are given for service without regard to gender. For example, the gift of prophecy is for both men and women. At Pentecost, Peter quoted the prophet Joel in predicting that "your sons and daughters will prophesy" (Acts 2:16-17). In Acts 21:9 we are told that Philip had four daughters who exercised the gift of prophesy in the Caesarean church. In 1 Corinthians 11:5, we are told that women prophesied in the early church. Romans 2: 11 tells us that "God does not show favoritism." He calls whomever He wants and gives gifts and ministries to whomever He chooses.

In light of this, what are some practical things a woman called to ministry can do? If you are a female who is called to ministry, here are some practical things you can do to continue exploring the call. Continue clarifying and confirming your call until it becomes a red-hot certainty. Our denominational colleges are committed to preparing young women for the ministry that God has called them to.

Be encouraged by the fact that most Spirit-filled, Bible centered churches and denominations value the contribution women can make in ministry. Even though your ministry might be limited by small cultural pockets within our nation or foreign cultures overseas, you do have a multitude of ministry opportunities.

Connect with other women in ministry and find a mentor who can help you develop in your call and ministry.

Be patient with others who interpret the Bible differently than you. In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter tells us that he did not totally understand everything that Paul wrote and taught. If Peter, who was a contemporary of Paul, found certain statements hard to understand, then we should not be surprised that those of us living nearly 2000 years later would also have trouble coming to the same understanding about Scripture. But like Peter, we must respect those who interpret the Bible differently in matters non-essential to salvation. Be patient and practice love as a Spirit-filled believer. Know that if God called you, He will always provide a ministry for you to serve in.

In our next lesson we are going to answer the question, "Why is ordination so important?" Until then, continue the journey and ... explore the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. If it is true that all these women were used in ministry, why did the church take a stand against women in ministry?
2. Now that we have discovered older texts that show the errors of the names, why haven't more opportunities opened up?
3. Why do they interpret the word *diakonos* different for a woman in Scripture than for a man?
4. Can a woman serve as a lead pastor of a church?
5. It seems like it is really hard for a woman to be in ministry. What should women in ministry expect?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. How do you think our culture can influence our interpretation of the Bible in either positive or negative ways?
2. What do you think of the Bible's "big picture" image of women in ministry as talked about in the lesson? Why do you think some churches have taken such a strong position against women in ministry?
3. If you are a female, what do you think God has called you to do?
4. Do you think it is easier, harder, or the same, for women to find opportunity in ministry as it is for men?
5. The lesson ended by reminding us how important it is to be patient with others who interpret the Bible differently in matters non-essential to salvation. When you engage with those who are opposed to women being called to serve in full-time ministry, what are some ways you can do this?

Lesson 17: Is Ordination Important?

If God called you to the ministry, why is it important to be ordained by a denomination or ministerial organization? That's the question I want us to explore today. Ordination can be defined as the public ceremony by which an ecclesiastical movement acknowledges the divine call, commission, and qualification of a person to serve in ministry. In a sense

it is a formal authorization for a person to be a minister and do ministry. The tradition of ordination is found all throughout the Bible. We see it symbolized through the act of laying on of hands. Those who were in spiritual leadership laid hands upon and prayed for those who were acknowledged to be called, qualified, and ordained to ministry. Moses did this with Joshua in Deuteronomy 34:9. The church leaders did it with Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:3.

In most denominations, ordination is only available to men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These are people who are fulfilling one of the types of equipping ministries described in Ephesians 4: 11. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Ordination is an important process that has a biblical precedent and should be taken with the utmost seriousness. There are several reasons why it should be important to you, to the church, and to God's people.

1. Ordination is important for accountability. Ordination is the act of having someone in spiritual authority over you recognize God's call upon your life. This person recognizes your authority to represent God to His people, to the world, and to the church. You remain accountable to this person in areas of moral wholesomeness, family health, doctrinal purity, ministerial ethics, corporate integrity, financial uprightness, and leadership standards. Even Paul, after receiving the call directly from God in a vision, submitted to baptism, the laying on of hands, and the leadership of the Jerusalem church. In the Wesleyan denomination this direct line of accountability is usually through a district and it's superintendant.

2. Ordination is important for credibility. Full-time ministry in most churches involves the official endorsement of a reputable denomination or organization. These organizations fulfill the biblical pattern of an authority structure that confirms your call, qualifications, accountability, integrity, effectiveness, and readiness to minister.

This confirmation is usually in the form of some kind of licensing, ordination, and recognition of your call from a church denomination. If it is a reputable organization, they will take this step seriously and use an extensive process of application, testing, interview, and a solemn ordination service. This process will ensure...

- the genuineness of your Christian experience;
- the sufficiency of your spiritual, moral, emotional, and societal maturity;
- the reality of your divine call;
- the correctness of your doctrine;
- the adequacy of your preparation and abilities;
- your commitment to the policies and programs of the church.

The important thing to remember is that if God has called you, your call will be evident to godly leaders who serve in authority over you. When you seek their confirmation, they will either say yes, no, or wait. Whatever it may be, ordination is the most important public confirmation you can receive.

3. Ordination is important for opportunities. Ordination opens opportunities of

ministry, participation, and contribution within the organization that has granted the credential. Those who are ordained are given the opportunity to minister, perform functions, participate in the privileges of membership, and receive a covering for civil benefits, such as a housing allowance and recognition as an employee of a non-profit organization.

4. Ordination is important for responsibility. Full-time employment in churches can usually be divided into two categories: ordained and non-ordained ministry. Most churches have employees who are not ordained. These people work in ministry without being ordained for ministry and usually serve in areas that support ministry functions. Paid secretaries, janitors, nursery directors, departmental directors, and musicians are examples of non-ordained employment opportunities in a church. However, ordained ministry usually carries greater authority and responsibility to God's people. In many denominations, ordination is so important that their churches require it to serve on the pastoral staff, perform weddings, baptize converts, serve communion, or represent the church at denominational gatherings. This is true of the Wesleyan church. The only exception to this is if a pastor is appointed under the direct supervision of the District Superintendent. Within the Wesleyan Church licensing also qualifies a student in training for many of the functions and rights of a pastor.

5. Ordination is important for the health of the local church. Ordination ensures that the pastoral leadership within the local church is comprised of individuals who are proven, qualified, genuine, and divinely called. It also helps to maintain a higher level of doctrinal purity within the body of Christ as well as an accountability structure outside of itself.

If you desire to serve in full-time ministry, one of the decisions you will have to make is whether you feel a call to ordained ministry or simply feel pulled to doing church work as a non-ordained person. As you are involving yourself in our Ordination Program we will assume that it is your desire to pursue ordination but remember, this is a process of discovery. As you begin this process if you decide ordination is not for you, there are many other ministry avenues we will be happy to help you pursue.

In our next lesson, we're going to go deeper and talk about how your unique gifts may reveal where God wants you to serve in ministry. In the meantime, keep praying, keep preparing, and most of all ... keep exploring

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. At what point does a person decide to be ordained?
 2. How does ordination create opportunity?
 3. Are all ministers ordained?
 4. If I plan to be in full-time ministry, is it required for me to be ordained first?
- Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. What would happen if every Starbucks coffee shop allowed anyone to work there without prior training, background checks, or systems of accountability to the store manager? Do you think the same principles should apply to leadership in the local church?
2. When you think of the ordination process, what are your greatest concerns?
3. Have you ever been to an ordination service? If so, what was it like?
4. How do you think ordination can create credibility for ministry?

Lesson 18: Custom-Designed for Ministry

Did you know that whether you're called to full-time ministry or not, God has custom-designed you for ministry? In this lesson we're going to talk about five ways God has prepared and shaped you for ministry. Why? Because God has shaped you for a specific purpose. That's what the Bible means when it says,

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

You have been designed for a purpose! That Kingdom purpose is more than a career. It is a special assignment from God that each one of us have in the spiritual world. There are five areas that give you a glimpse into how God has designed you for ministry. They are:

1. your spiritual gifts;
2. your passions;
3. your abilities;
4. your unique personality;
5. your experiences.

One of the best resources I know on these five areas is a book by Eric Rees entitled, *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life*. It goes into much greater detail and is a must-read for anyone exploring God's call to ministry. But for now, I would like to briefly cover these five areas to help you discover God plan for future ministry.

1. Unwrap your spiritual gifts. The Bible says that when you became a Christian, something miraculously instantaneous happened to you. You got a divine download! God supernaturally gave you spiritual gifts that you have to unwrap. That is what the Bible means when it says,

"God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you" (1 Peter 4:10, NLT).

There are five passages in the Bible that speak of spiritual gifts: Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 4:9-10. From these five verses we can pull together a list of the following 20 spiritual gifts.

- Administration
- Apostleship
- Discernment
- Encouragement
- Evangelism
- Faith
- Giving
- Healing
- Helping
- Hospitality
- Interpretation
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Mercy
- Miracles
- Pastoring
- Prophecy
- Teaching
- Tongues
- Wisdom

The gifts that God has given you were never meant to be stifled but to be used within the context of the local church. Your gifts reveal how God intends on using you in ministry.

That is why it is important that you know what they are.

2. Discover your true passion. Passion is the fuel of life. It is the source of energy that drives us to push through oppressive obstacles and explore unknown opportunities. God gave you unique passion for particular activities, subjects, and circumstances. Knowing what these are will help you find your place of ministry. There are a number of questions you can ask yourself if you want to identify where your passions are.

- Where do your dreams and desires take you?
- What motivates you to take action?
- What do you crave?
- What are needs that others have that you really enjoy meeting?
- If you could do anything in life, what would you do?
- What would you attempt to do for God if you had unlimited resources?
- What continues to bring energy and excitement to your spirit no matter what stage of life you are in?

When godly passions are aligned with spiritual gifts, you become a powerful force in the kingdom of God.

3. Identify your natural talents: Each one of us has natural abilities and talents that come easy to us. That is what the Bible means when it says, "*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*" (Romans 12:6, NIV). I like the way *The Message* translates this same passage when it says, "*God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well*" (Romans 12:6).

Your talents are not spiritual gifts, but skills, abilities, and talents that come natural to you. For each and every one of us it might be different. Maybe for you it's...

- Analyzing
- Building things
- Coaching
- Communication
- Competing
- Coordinating and planning
- Directing and managing
- Encouraging
- Learning and discovery
- Performing
- Recruiting
- Hospitality or entertaining
- Designing
- Writing
- Computers and technology

God has given you the abilities and talents that you will need in ministry. They can be a road sign pointing you in the right direction.

5. Know your personality. The personality God has given you reflects qualities custom-designed by God for you to fulfill a unique and valuable purpose in the Kingdom. If you are going to find your purpose, then you need to know how that fits in with your temperament.

- Each one of us relates to people differently. Some are:
 - Outgoing: they gain energy from being around others.
 - Reserved: they gain energy from being alone.
 - Self-expressive: they are open with their thoughts and feelings.
 - Self-controlled: they keep thoughts and opinions to themselves.
 - Co-operative: they easily trust others and accept their opinions.
 - Competitive: they challenge others with their opinions and try to win them over to their own.

- But there is another way we are all different. We all relate to circumstances differently.
 - Some of us are adventurous and enjoy risk, while others are risk adverse and avoid risk.
 - Some are people focused and enjoy working with and talking with people, others are more task oriented and enjoy completing tasks and projects.
 - Some are followers and like supporting the direction of others, while others are leaders who enjoy setting direction.
 - Some are team-oriented and enjoy working with and through others. On the other hand, others are more independent and like flying life solo and working alone or with small groups.
 - Some love routine and predictability, while others like variety, change, and spontaneity.

In order to fulfill your Kingdom purpose, you will need to embrace ministry opportunities that are in alignment with how God created you. Fulfillment lies in finding a ministry that allows you to express the most of who you are and how God has wired you.

5. Value your experiences. You are part of a wonderful conspiracy. God is using all your past experiences to bring about good. Your past has a purpose. That is why the Bible says,

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

As God slowly molds the masterpieces of our lives, He uses all our experiences-both painful and joyful-to help us heal the hurts of others. God has placed a multitude of experiences in your life to help mold you for ministry. He can, and will, use the experiences in your background to help heal the hurts of others in His church.

How has God designed you for ministry? If you want to know, look at your:

- Spiritual gifts
- Passions and interests
- Abilities
- Personality and temperament
- Pastor experiences

If you would like to take a S.H.A.P.E. assessment Pastor John Baker can administer the testing and evaluation for you. I would also suggest you talk to your local pastor who probably has many different tools to help you explore your gifts and talents for ministry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How do I figure out what spiritual gifts have been placed in my life?
2. Can you learn how to be used in spiritual gifts like you do with natural abilities?
3. How can I figure out my personality and the way it will affect the call of God?
4. Will my past experiences determine the calling in my life?
5. Of the five areas mentioned in the lesson, is anyone part more important to the call of God than the others? Why or why not?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Can you identify some of the spiritual gifts God has placed in you?
2. What is it that you feel passionate about?
3. What is the difference between natural abilities and spiritual gifts?
4. Could you share with me the natural talents God has given to you?
5. When you reflect upon your spiritual gifts, passions, natural talents, unique personality, and experiences, what light do they shed upon the kind of ministry that God may have for you in the future?

Lesson 19: The Three Faces of Ministry

What are the most common jobs in ministry? Does everyone have to be a senior pastor? Have you ever asked yourself this question?

Most of full-time ordained ministry falls into three categories...

- Church ministry
- Para-church ministry
- Bi-vocational ministry

Let's start by talking about local church ministry. Someone serving in local church ministry usually serves in one of the following capacities.

The most common position is that of **solo pastor**. A solo pastor is someone who serves without any support staff in a small- to medium-sized church. The solo pastor is like a family doctor who serves as a general practitioner. Most denominations report that the vast majority of their churches have an average attendance of less than 75 people. The budget in these churches usually allows for only one pastor who supervises lay leaders that help lead the church's ministries in volunteer roles. The Wesleyan church falls perfectly within those averages.

The second-most common position in the local church is **lead pastor**. A lead pastor is someone who supervises one or more staff ministers and additional support staff. Most of the time, lead pastors gained their experience serving as staff pastors or leading a church through growth when they were once a solo pastor. It is unlikely that you will serve in this capacity until you have gained a few years of experience.

A **youth pastor** is another common position in churches. A youth pastor's role will vary depending on the size of the church. In a small church, the youth pastor serves as an assistant to the senior pastor in addition to preaching and leading the youth ministries. In a medium-sized church, the youth pastor's ministry is pretty much focused on leading the many facets of a complex youth ministry. In larger churches, it is common for the youth pastor to lead his own youth staff. This staff may consist of positions like a junior high pastor, intern director, and secretary.

The **staff pastor** is another common ministry position in the local church. These positions are usually confined to churches that average over 700 people to the mega church with thousands of attendees. In these churches, the pastor-to-people ratio is usually somewhere near one pastor for every 150 people. Staffs are large and diverse. In this setting, the staff pastors are usually those who have been trained in specialized areas, like children, young adults, outreach, singles, discipleship, small group, Christian service, assimilation, spiritual formation, music, worship, missions, small groups, administration, and executive pastors. Although this type of ministry offers the benefit of focus, it can be vulnerable to the likelihood of changes in the economy, culture, church philosophy, or senior leadership. If you are headed for a staff ministry, it would help if you knew before your junior year of college what kind of specialized training and experience you will need to get to prepare you for this task.

Increasingly more medium sized churches (those ranging in 150-300) are opting for a **worship pastor or a children's pastor** instead of a youth pastor. With the changing needs of society many churches are finding that specialized help with children and worship are more highly valuable than youth ministry. Often times in these positions there is one lead pastor and one support pastor. In this case, both pastors will carry a wide range of responsibilities for the church and seldom or focused solely upon the role to which they are hired.

The next area of ordained ministry is the para-church ministry. Para-church ministries operate outside the command structure of the local church and can overlap denominational lines. They consist of ministry organizations that are involved in things like mass evangelism, campus ministry, urban and foreign missions, education, political activism, media, counseling, rehab ministries, homeless shelters, chaplaincy, denominational headquarters, and many others.

Examples of some of these ministries would include, Teen Challenge, Navigators, Convoy of Hope, The Gideons, Campus Crusade for Christ, Samaritans Purse, Compassion International, Prison Fellowship, and our educational institutions.

In the past few years, we have experienced an explosion in para-church organizations. They are appealing to those who long for social impact, narrow focus, and simple accountability structures. But it is important for you to know that most people who work in para-church ministries first gained their experience in a local church and often hold their credentials within a denomination. Within the Wesleyan Church the placement of these individuals is title: Ordained on loan (the minister is on loan to the para-church ministry but still falls under the accountability structures of the Wesleyan church).

The third area of ordained ministry is bi-vocational ministry. Bi-vocational ministry is where the minister needs to engage in either part- or full-time secular employment for personal financial support. This kind of ministry usually involves a church or ministry with one or more of the following situations:

- A limited budget
- A smaller community
- A smaller congregation or support base
- A church-planting pastor or staff

Each and every one of these ministry settings is needed, viable, and vital to the kingdom of God. No one form is better or more relevant than the other. The important thing is to be where God wants you, when God wants you, and how God wants you to get there. And the only way to do that is to continue exploring the call!

In our next lesson, we'll talk about what it means to be involved in bi-vocational ministry. Until then, keep exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student

might have.

1. How does a person get into a para-church organization?
2. Is it pretty common for ministers to be bi-vocational?
3. Do you need to start out as some type of an assistant pastor, or do some people begin as a solo or lead pastor?
4. How does a person who starts as an assistant pastor move into being a solo/lead pastor? How do I figure out which of the types of ministry mentioned in the lesson is the best fit for the calling in my life?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Before hearing this lesson, did you ever think about the different possibilities for future ministry?
2. What types of ministries mentioned are you most familiar with? Least familiar with?
3. Did any of the types of ministry positions mentioned in the lesson sound interesting to you? Which ones?
4. Have you thought about training in a secular vocation career in case you need to be bi- vocational? What might be a good fit for you?

Lesson 20: What is Bi-vocational Ministry?

Up until our last lesson, we have talked a lot about being employed in full-time ministry. However, God also calls some people to work in ministry while also working either part- or full-time in a secular job to supplement their income. This is what is often called bi-vocational ministry, or as some say, "tent making." Today I would like to talk to you about what bi- vocational ministry is as well some of the pros and cons of this type of ministry.

What is bi-vocational ministry? Let me start by saying that bi-vocational ministers are in great company with men like the Apostle Paul as we will soon see. Bi-vocational ministry is when a person serves in a ministry while also being employed in a secular job. This kind of ministry usually involves a setting in which one or more of the following situations exist:

- A modest budget
- A smaller community
- A limited congregation or support base
- A church-planting pastor or staff

There are many examples of bi-vocational ministry in both the Old and New Testaments. Amos was a prophet and shepherd. Daniel was also a prophet, but his secular employment was as a government official. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem while serving as a governor. Luke was both a disciple and physician. Priscilla, Aquila, and the Apostle Paul were tentmakers. Some of the great leaders in modern church history have also been bi-vocational. St. Francis of Assisi, John Wycliffe, and William Cary were bi-vocational ministers.

Bi-vocational ministry has a few disadvantages that need to be mentioned. These almost always come down to time and self-esteem. Finding enough time to balance the demands of two jobs, family, health, and relaxation can be incredibly difficult. It requires incredible time management skills, organizational skills, and the ability to handle stress. Scheduling conflicts along with physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue are common in the world of bi-vocational ministry. These pastors must hold down a secular job while also finding time to study, lead their ministries, provide pastoral care, and stay creative. Those who are involved in bi-vocational ministry have to learn to be satisfied with doing their best even though their best may fall short of normal expectations. These disadvantages can make you feel like you are always behind and never good enough. If these feelings are not controlled by the Spirit, they can lead to laziness, victimhood, apathy, and excuse making.

On the other hand, bi-vocational ministry has many advantages. Bi-vocational ministry enables some churches to have a staff they would not otherwise be able to afford. It also enables new churches and ministries to be launched with qualified leaders. Bi-vocational ministers are also able to relate to church people and understand what it is like working in a secular workplace. *As a result, they remain more connected with non-churched people and have unique opportunities for outreach.* Knowing their pastor is also a volunteer causes church workers to serve with a greater level of commitment and sacrifice. The advantages can be liberating and fulfilling.

Bi-vocational ministry is needed, viable, and vital to the kingdom of God. Through the ages, God has repeatedly called and used bi-vocational ministers in a powerful way. How God provides for our needs is not as important as being where God wants you, when God wants you, and how God wants you to get there. If you intend on pursuing bi-vocational ministry, it is important to know without a shadow of a doubt that you have been called to that role. If you don't have that kind of confidence, you will always feel that you are falling short of God's will. For you, that may or may not be bi-vocational ministry. Either way, you will need to continue exploring the call!

In our next lesson, we're going to talk about the biblical qualifications of a minister. Until then, continue your journey.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How can a person be fully involved in ministry and work a secular job at the same time?
2. Are there certain kinds of secular employment that are more beneficial than others when working bi-vocationally in ministry?
3. Have you ever had to be bi-vocational yourself? If yes, what was it like?
4. Should I prepare for a secular vocation through a college or trade school while studying for the ministry?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. What do you think about the idea of being a bi-vocational minister?
2. Have you ever tried to juggle the schedule of being involved in multiple major things at one time?
3. How do you handle the stress of multi involvement?
4. Had you ever thought of being bi-vocational before hearing this lesson? Did you think of it as being an advantage in fulfilling the call of God? What do you think are the three most essential skills a bi-vocational minister must have to be successful?

Lesson 21: "Being" Over "Doing"

The ministry is a "being" profession. That means who you are is more important than what you do. The Bible makes it clear that a minister's moral and spiritual qualities qualify him more than gifts or natural abilities. This is at the heart of our ministerial program within the Greater Ohio District and that's why I would like to talk to you today about three things:

- The importance of character.
- The biblical qualifications of ministers.
- How to develop those qualifications in your life.

Character is very important in the ministry for several reasons. First, it determines your destiny. Second, because you will reproduce your character in the people you disciple. Third, character reveals your maturity. No matter what you do or where you go, your ministry will never expand wider or grow taller than the foundation of your character. Without character, your ministry will topple. With it, you will become a model of what others are to be.

The Apostle Paul describes the kind of character a minister should have in the New Testament. That is why I would like to talk to you about the biblical qualifications of a minister outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 we read,

“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.”

Titus 1 :6-9 tells that that,

“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Let's combine these two lists and identify each of the 20 qualities that make up a minister's character. As I review them, try to rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing a strong presence of these things in your behavior, and 1 representing qualities you need to work on.

1. **Above reproach** (1 Tim. 3:2,7; Titus 1:6): A minister should have a good

reputation with both believers and unbelievers.

2. **Husband of but one wife** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1 :6): A minister should be someone who has exhibited loyalty, faithfulness, and fidelity to one woman-his wife.
3. **Temperate** (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1 :6): One who is balanced, stable, steadfast, and dependable in following the teachings of Christ.
4. **Self controlled** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8): One who is sound in mind, discerning, sensible, and able to manage his emotions.
5. **Respectable** (1 Tim. 3:2): The way the minister lives should make the gospel attractive to others.
6. **Hospitable** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1 :8): A minister should be generous in the use of resources and able to make others feel welcomed, accepted, and needed.
7. **Able to teach** (1 Tim. 3:2): A minister is to be capable of teaching the Scriptures in a way that educates the mind, motivates the heart, and activates the will.
8. **Not given to drunkenness** (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7): Be free from addictive, obsessive, or compulsive behavior.
9. **Not violent** (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7): One whose anger does not erupt in physical, verbal, or vengeful outburst.
10. **Gentle** (1 Tim. 3:3): One who is sensitive, fair, and reasonable in their dealings with others.
11. **Not quarrelsome** (1 Tim. 3:3): One who is peaceable and not contentious, prone to debate, argue, or take offense
12. **Free from the love of money** (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7): Paul does not teach that they should be free from money, but from the love of money. In other words, the focus of their ministry should not be distracted by greed, covetousness, or materialism.
13. **Manage his own family well** (1 Tim. 3:4-5, Titus 1 :6): How a minister leads his family is an indication of how he will lead others. His children's reputation and lifestyle should not bring others to question the genuineness of his faith or priorities.
14. **Spiritually mature** (1 Tim. 3:6; Titus 1 :9): A minister should not be a new or recent convert, and should hold firmly to the teaching of Christ.
15. **Not overbearing** (Titus 1 :7) Not arrogant, self-willed, self-centered, or controlling.
16. **Not quick-tempered** (Titus 1:7): A minister should manage anger, annoyances, and irritations well.
17. **Loves what is right** (Titus 1 :8): A minister should have a passion to do what is right and to overcome evil with goodness.
18. **Upright and just** (Titus 1 :8): A minister should be fair, just, and unbiased in his/her relationship with others.
19. **Holy** (Titus 1 :8): Ministers should be devout in reflecting the holiness,

Christ-like-ness, and separation from the carnal things of this world.

20. **Disciplined** (Titus 1 :8): A minister should have the ability to be self-led and live a disciplined life.

Wow! There isn't a sincere minister in the world who is not challenged by this list. It can make us all feel unworthy, unqualified, and unfit for ministry. You might have noticed qualities that you possess. On the other hand, you might have noticed qualities you need to make improvement on to be at your best. Don't become discouraged by any weakness you see in your life right now. Remember what 2 Corinthians 12:9 says-it is in your weakness that God's power is made perfect. The important thing is that you continue growing in faith and character.

Let me conclude with some practical suggestions on this important point of character.

1. **Push yourself to grow.** Practice continual self-evaluation, introspection, and repentance. Always respond quickly and decisively to the Spirit's conviction, and initiate change when needed. Take this list and study one a day over the next 20 days to get a better understanding of each.
2. **Make yourself accountable to others.** Connect with others on your journey of character development. Close friends will see things in your life that you do not. They can help you avoid the pain of blind spots in your character or behavior.
3. **Stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the only one who is aware of weaknesses in your life that you and even your closest friends and loved ones don't see. The Spirit can give you spiritual night vision and reveal shortcomings to you through prayer, submission, and supernatural illumination.

In our next lesson we'll talk about why some kind of formal preparation is so important. Until then, continue exploring the call!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How can you develop the character you need for ministry? Are there certain things a person does to build character in their lives?
2. Does anyone in ministry ever meet all these qualifications that are mentioned in the Bible?
3. Have you mastered this list that we just heard about in the lesson?
4. What does making yourself accountable to others actually mean?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Why do you think it's easy to put more emphasis upon "doing" (ministry) than "being" (character)?
2. What are you doing to grow character in your life right now?
3. Who are the people you make yourself accountable to?
4. If you were lacking in any of the areas mentioned, how would the Holy Spirit be most likely to warn you? What are you doing to make sure you remain open to the warning signs?
5. From the list given in the lesson, can you tell me your areas of greatest strength and greatest weakness?

Lesson 22: The Importance of Formal Training

The call of God is a call to preparation. Many young people don't understand the need for ministerial training. They may ask, "Why isn't the call of God enough? Why should I waste time getting an education when people are dying and going to hell each day?" In this lesson, I would like to answer three important questions.

- Why is formal training important?
- What will it consist of?
- How can I get it?

Let's start with why formal training is important. The ministry is a profession that requires a knowledge base in order to minister on a spiritual level. Passion is good, but passion without education is what gives rise to false teaching, heresy, and cults. Billy Graham is one of the most well-known ministers of our lifetime-but so is the cult leader David Koresh. Mother Teresa

changed lives for many years in Calcutta, India-but Mary Baker Eddy changed lives by starting a false religion. William Carey is most remembered for his missions work in a foreign land-but so is Jim Jones. Passion without education does more harm than good.

When God calls a person to ministry, He first prepares them. After God called the Apostle Paul, He required him to spend three years preparing in the desert. Paul was obedient even though he had already completed rigorous training as a Jewish Pharisee. What about Jesus? He spent the first 30 years of His life preparing for three-and-a-half years of ministry. Things have not changed much. Like God, most churches and denominations require their ministers to have some kind of formal education. The extent and type of educational requirements vary depending on the group. Nearly all reputable denominations use a process to confirm that you have satisfied the minimal educational requirements. In most cases this involves: reviewing your educational history; evaluating your ministry experience; requiring you to submit an application in the form of paperwork; you will also be given a battery of tests to examine your temperament, your psychological fitness, your overall health. You will also be expected to attend several interview sessions in which we will assess your Bible knowledge, theology, church history, polity, and practical ministry preparedness. In our system you are also required as you well know to participate in a cohort group that will join with you as you prepare to enter ministry.

This might seem extreme, but let me assure you that it is not. After 25 years of ministry, I have seen one truth demonstrated time and again. A person rarely experiences a ministry deeper than his/her preparation. Your future ministry is a lot like a building. Its height, width, and length will never be able to exceed the structural strength of the foundation of preparation.

What will your formal training consist of? In the Wesleyan Church your training will include instruction in the following areas:

Bible: You will take courses to help you understand the books of the Bible, how they are related to each other, and what makes them different.

Hermeneutics: That is a fancy word that describes the skills needed to correctly interpret the Bible and understand biblical languages.

Theology: In other words, categories of truth on important things like God, man, sin, salvation, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, end times, and other subjects.

Preaching and teaching: You will learn how to isolate important truths, write sermons, and communicate God's Word to people.

Church history: How God has worked in, through, and with His people down through the centuries.

Discipleship: How to be intentional in helping people of all ages grow in their faith.

Church administration and leadership: You will be taught how to organize resources and people to minister effectively.

Church rituals: You will learn how to lead communion services and perform ceremonies like baptisms, weddings, funerals, and baby dedications as well as construct and lead effective worship services.

Pastoral counseling: You will learn the basic skills to help people work through the emotional problems they are facing. And many other important subjects that ministers must have a working knowledge and familiarity with if they are going to be successful.

Now let's talk about how you can get this needed training. A person called of God to ministry must undergo some kind of formal preparation in order to be ordained. In recent years, the Wesleyan church has greatly expanded the opportunities offered to students working towards ordination. They range from formal education at one of our approved colleges or seminaries to local web based programming. A listing of seminaries, colleges, and approved programs can be found on our denominational web site at: www.wesleyan.org

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. I grew up with a good pastor and good teachers in my church. Why isn't the training I received there sufficient for doing ministry?
2. I am not able to afford Bible college and not good at doing something on my own. Are there any other options for me to get proper training for ministry?
3. Schoolwork has never been something that I did well. Can I find another way to get into ministry without having to do bookwork and tests?
4. Does every Bible college train in all these different areas mentioned in the lesson?
5. Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Can you give me three reasons why formal training is important to God, to you, and to the church?
2. Why can passion without education be more harmful than good?
3. Have you had an opportunity to visit a University or College to experience what this training is actually like? If so, what did you observe and learn? If not, can you?
4. It is common for people to overcome past obstacles to formal learning when they are focused on a subject they are passionate about. Is learning more about the Bible something that excites you?
5. How can you expand the foundation for ministry now and during your formal training?

Lesson 23: What's the Difference?

We need a lot of discernment in sorting through the possibilities of God's call. One difficulty we face in exploring the call of God is understanding the terms involved. What is the difference between God's call, our spiritual gifts, a burden, and the leading of the Lord?

In this lesson, I would to talk about three common things we often confuse with the call of God. If we're not careful, the confusion between these things can cause us to either miss or mistake the call of God. What are those three things?

- Sometimes we confuse our spiritual gifts for the call of God.
- Other times we mistake burdens for the call of God.
- God's *leading* is another thing we can mistake for God's *calling*.

Let's start by talking about the difference between our gifts and our calling. The Bible tells us that God distributes spiritual gifts to the body of Christ when it says in 1 Corinthians 7:7,

"Each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that."

The four major lists of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11,27-31; Ephesians 4:11-12; and 1 Peter 4:9-11. Spiritual gifts are not synonymous with a full-time call to ministry. Some people make the mistake of confusing spiritual gifts with titles and callings. For example it is very possible for:

- a believer to have the gift of administration without being called to be a church administrator.
- someone to have the gift of pastoring without being a full-time pastor.
- a person to have the gift of evangelism without being an evangelist.
- a person to have the gift of missions without being a missionary.
- a believer to have the gift of teaching without being a teaching pastor.

It is important to understand that our spiritual gifts were given to benefit the body of Christ, but that does not mean we are automatically called to the ministry. Many of the adult teachers and small-group leaders in my church have the spiritual gift of pastor but are not called to the full-time equipping ministry.

The second area we need discernment in is distinguishing between the "leading" and the "calling" of God. The call of God is an inner conviction from God to a lifetime of full-time service. This call is confirmed by the Church. The call of God is permanent and reflects the "always" of God's will.

The leading of the Lord, on the other hand, is God's guidance concerning a specific area of your call. It can be an area of ministry you should be focusing on or even a church where you should be serving. The leading of the Lord is temporary and reflects the "now" of God's will.

Let me illustrate. When I was in Junior High while at a large Wesleyan Youth Conference on the University of Illinois Urbana campus I felt God calling me to ministry. At that time I felt that God was calling me to be a youth pastor. I went to Indiana Wesleyan to pursue education and

while there I entered into youth ministry. God had given me gifts and talents to be an incredibly effective youth ministry and that was all I ever imagined God calling me to. I even got married and my new wife felt just as called to youth ministry as I. After several years of youth ministry during a chapel service during my master's training I felt God change my call, I felt impressed that He was leading me to be a solo or lead pastor. Even though God's leading changed, His call upon my life did not. I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

Your calling is what God wants you to do with your life, while the Lord's leading is what, when, and how He wants you to live out that calling. If you don't learn to distinguish the difference between the Lord's call and His leading, you're going to confuse a lot of people, including yourself!

The third area is a need to discern between your burdens and your calling. Burdens are even more temporary than leadings. Burdens are things you are passionate about. Your passions are things that give you energy and pull you through life. They are important road signs, but DON'T confuse them with destinations. Too often we mistake our personal passions for God's call and try to incorporate them into our public ministry. Burdens can introduce us to God's leadings, but that is not always the case.

The only way to discern the difference between these things in real life is through prayer and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The more you explore His will and walk in His Spirit, the easier it becomes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How can I know that I am not mistaking my spiritual gifts for the calling?
2. The call of God seems like the same thing as His leading in my life. Is this normal?
3. I thought that the burden was part of the calling. Shouldn't the burden lead me to the right expression for the call of God in my life?
4. Will the call of God become clearer the farther I go in pursuing the ministry?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Can you tell me about any spiritual gifts that you have recognized in your life? How does this fit with the calling in your life?
2. Describe for me what is the Lord's leading in your life versus His calling on your life?
3. Share with me about the burden that creates such passion in your life. How does it impact the call of God that you feel?
4. What are the things you are passionate about at this time in your life?
5. What has God been speaking to you about concerning His call through times of prayer?
6. How does this help you define the call? Is it matched by experiences in ministry?

Lesson 24: What Can I Do Right Now to Prepare?

For some strange reason, we have a tendency to live with an eye on the future. As children, we couldn't wait to be teenagers. When we became teenagers, we longed to be in college. In college, we're anxious to get started building our career. Soon after that, we long to be married and start a family. It is not long after that that we start looking forward to retirement. You get the picture.

The disappointing thing about this tendency is that we often miss opportunities that God has for us in the present. That's what this lesson is all about—doing something now while you are planning for the future.

You might be thinking that the best thing you can do is sit back and let time tick away until the clock tells you to start college or some other kind of formal preparation process. May-be you feel tempted to just sit back and wait for the phone to ring with a call from a church that wants you to be their pastor. There are some very important things you can do right now while you are still in waiting to enter ministry. As a matter of fact, many of them will give you an advantage in maturity, preparation, and readiness. Let me give you a few suggestions.

First, tell others about your journey. Inform your loved ones, pastor, and church family that you are exploring the possibilities of God's call. The Bible teaches us in Proverbs 11:14 that, *"For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure."* Some young people never talk to anyone because they don't want to be humiliated or embarrassed later if they decide God is not calling them. This is a mistake. Until you are open with others about your journey, you are shutting the door to ways God may want to speak to you. The best way to approach this is to inform others you are "exploring the possibilities of God's call to ministry."

Second, connect with a spiritual mentor. It is important for you to connect with an experienced minister who can give you advice along your journey. As part of our system you must have a pastoral mentor. It is most likely going to be your local pastor but it might also be a youth pastor, a neighboring pastor, possibly even a college professor. Make an appointment with your lead pastor and tell him about your journey. If he is not available to meet with you on a monthly basis, ask him whom he would recommend. There are many examples of this kind of call mentoring in the Bible.

- Elisha was mentored in his call by the prophet Elijah.
- Samuel was willing to receive instruction from Eli in 1 Samuel 3: 1-10 about his call.
- The Apostle Paul and John Mark were mentored by Barnabas.
- Apollos received advice from Priscilla and Aquila.
- Timothy and Titus were advised by the Apostle Paul in their call.

We could go on and on, but the important thing is that YOU have the advice and mentoring of someone who has been in the ministry for several years. You could even ask that person to read this lesson with you and use it as a topic of discussion in your regular meetings. You might even ask them to walk back through these lessons with you.

Third, stay involved in ministry. The best way to explore your call is to make sure you are regularly involved in a ministry within your local church. Even if you float around to experience different ministries, it is important to stay engaged and committed to one that complements your gifts and passions. As the leader of our district student process and training, one of the things I

am always looking at in prospective students is what kind of ministry are you currently involved in. Most pastors I know are hungry for young men and women who will lead Bible studies, help program various events, who will rise up and help in worship. Don't wait until you are licensed or "official" get involved in some form of ministry right now!

Fourth, study the biblical qualifications of ministers. Ministry is a "being" profession. That means who you are is more important than what you do. The Bible makes it clear that a minister's moral and spiritual qualities qualify them more than their gifts or natural abilities. Spend some time studying the biblical qualifications of ministers outlined in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5 -9. Combine the two lists and try to identify the 20 different qualities that are mentioned. Study one a day for your personal devotional time.

Fifth, take a spiritual gifts inventory. One of the ways God confirms our call is to give us the spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, temperament, and experience that complement our future ministry. You need to discover what those things are because they will reveal the kind of ministry God has in mind for you. There are two great resources that can help you do that. The first is a book by Eric Rees entitled, *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life*. Part of the work you will be doing in year two of our cohort program will be to unpack your spiritual gifts, temperaments, and personality to help you discover how you best fit in ministry.

Anything you can do now to discover God's divine design in your life will also help you make better use of the opportunities God gives you in the future.

Sixth, volunteer for one-to-two-day practical internships. Use your holidays and spring and summer breaks from school to do some hands-on ministry in the local church. During this time, shadow different members of a church staff. Instead of getting bogged down in what this time will look like, ask them very simple questions to help give structure to your experience. "If you were going on vacation for a month and I was the only person who could fill in for you:

- What are the most important things I would need to do during that time?
- What experiences can you give me during these next few days to give me a feel for those things?
- What are things I would need to do to be better prepared the next time?

Seventh, participate in ministry events and festivals. The Wesleyan Church has a broad spectrum of youth events, youth conferences, summer camps, and denominational programs that you could participate in as a volunteer. I know our district summer camps are always looking for counselors. These events are an excellent training ground to prepare you for the public ministry.

Eighth, start building your ministry library. Books will be your tools. There are a few that you can obtain right now that will add value to your Bible study and give you a good head start. I would suggest Dallas Willard's [Devine Conspiracy](#). I would also pick up Richard Foster's [Celebration of Discipline](#). These are two great works which lays out a plan understanding of Christian Holiness. It would also be good to read James Bryan Smith's [Good and Beautiful](#) series (he was Dallas and Richard's student and rewrote their academic concepts in everyday language). I would also suggest that rather than building a physical library, you begin building

a virtual library. I have moved over to this and it is so valuable to be able to take my entire library with me in the palm of my hand.

Ninth, start to learn how to use online study tools. The greatest thing that 7 years of university taught me was how to be a lifelong learner. More than the knowledge they attempted to cram into my skull the skill of learning how to learn was worth every penny. Start now learning how to learn and one great tool to use are some of the Bible study tools available for free online. Blue Letter Bible is probably my favorite. Rather than investing hundreds of dollars in commentaries I have found that these online tools offer some of the best commentaries for free. My all-time go to commentary was Matthew Henry's but it is expensive and bulky. Another commentary that I really enjoy (it's more on the practical side) is David Guzik's commentary. Both of these commentaries are free on Blue Letter Bible. They also have many, many more tools, Bible studies, and commentaries. This is more of a scholarly web site designed to help the serious Bible student and pastor go deeper. They also have a full Lectionary and automatically links to Strong's Concordance.

Lastly, begin qualifying for ministry employment during formal study. If you're like most students, you will have to work while you are in college. Instead of working for Starbucks or McDonalds, why not work part-time for a church? Once you have gotten at least one year of college under your belt, many churches would be glad to have you join them for a part-time salary to help with ministry. This is huge and there are several advantages to doing this:

- You will have a laboratory to quickly practice what you are learning
- You will bring practical experiences into your education and have to contribute to the learning environment
- You will be more qualified than other students looking for employment in a church.
- You will earn money while you are in college doing something you love ... ministry. You will graduate from Bible college with more experience.

In our next lesson, I want to talk about a few small and simple things you can do to start building your ministry library. Until then, this is Pastor Gene encouraging you to continue exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. I don't think my pastor would want to do this mentor thing, and I don't know any other ministers. What else can I do?
2. How much can I learn in a two-day internship?
3. Does any minister live up to all these qualities mentioned in the biblical qualification section of the lesson?
4. Can you help me understand how I can get a pastor to hire me?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Give me the name of your pastoral mentor: _____
2. Are you afraid of letting others know you are exploring the possibilities of full-time ministry because you might be wrong?
3. Who have you shared with that you are exploring the possibility of God's call to ministry? What was their response to your disclosure?
4. What are three things you like about our mentoring meetings and what is one thing you still want to accomplish?
5. Have you ever participated in a summer camp as a mentor or counselor?
6. The lesson lists ten things you can do to start preparing for ministry right now
 - Tell others about your journey
 - Connect with a mentor
 - Stay involved in ministry
 - Study the biblical qualifications
 - Take spiritual gifts inventory
 - Do Short internship
 - Participate in a summer camp program
 - Start building your ministry library
 - Learn how to use online tools
 - Qualify for ministry employment opportunities

Which ones have you experienced, and which ones would you like to experience? Why?

Lesson 25

I would like to go a little different direction this week and take a week break from Exploring the Call. (I am putting on my DBMD chairman hat) I would like you to write a thoughtful response (yes a short paper) to answer this question: Did Judas go to hell? I would like you to address Free Will vs. Predestination and its consequences. Please email your response to me (pjbaker@lifesc.net) and to your local mentor.

Lesson 26: Starting Your Library

This week we're going to talk about something that is very important... starting your library! Mechanics, artists, doctors, salespeople, and every other profession have their own set of unique tools and ministers are no different. Ours are books, and it's never too early to start building your library. I started building my library when I was in high school and over the years I have collected and read a lot of books. At times I wasn't sure what I should look for, what books are worth holding onto, or what books are just good to read through and then give away. Then, over the past few years, my library has dramatically changed as I have moved more and more of my library over to the digital world which I love because my entire library is always with me as long as I have my I-Pad (gotta love technology).

As I began building my library I had to sort of learn along the way. I didn't have anyone guiding me and out of the many classes I took, no professor ever really took the time to explain or tell us what should be in our library or how we should build it. So, I hope in this lesson to give you some valuable advice that might help you as you begin investing in your own library.

You might be asking why a library is so important. Some younger ministers underestimate the importance of having their own library. They mistakenly think all they need is the inspiration of God and their own "gut" to lead the way. However, I want to draw your attention to a Scripture you may have never noticed. In 2 Timothy 4:13, Paul was an old man imprisoned in a damp and musty Roman cell. He was facing death and wrote a letter to his young protégé, Timothy, with two simple requests: *"When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments."*

Of all the things Paul could have asked for, he asked that Timothy bring his books. Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers that ever lived, wrote about this verse when he said, *"Even an apostle must read. He is inspired and yet he wants books. He has seen the Lord and yet he wants books He has been caught up in the third heaven, and yet he wants books. He had written a major part of the New Testament and yet he wants books"*. Even the Apostle Paul needed to keep growing, keep reading, and keep exposing himself to the thoughts of others.

Some people think that the Internet and modern technology have made libraries obsolete. Nothing can be further from the truth. I use technology tools for study. But I am in the ministry for the long haul and have learned the hard way that an overdependence on technology-based study resources has a downside. Program providers, software, computers, and data storage applications change so fast that they can become obsolete ten years later. I have discs from ten years ago that modern computers cannot recognize, but I have books that can last a lifetime. With that said, some books I read, they are good, but then I give away – simply reading them served their purpose but then there are other books that I cherish, that I write all over, that I highlight and underline and mark up with things I don't want to forget and that I will want to go back to over and over again and those I keep.

One of the things that helped pull me over to the electronic library was when Kindle (what I use for instance) began allowing you to take notes and highlights. What I love about e-books is that it saves me hours when I go back to reference something I read. I would remember that a particular point was made in a book but could not remember exactly where it was and then would spend an hour flipping through the pages and the highlights to find the comment. With

Kindle, all I have to do is search my notes or highlights and within seconds I am taken to the book, the page and the author's particular comment.

You will find that your library will begin to fill up with books in three major categories, in fact, I would suggest you need to keep building your library on these three fronts. I find many young pastors tend to focus their book collections on one of the three fronts and then their reading and study becomes lopsided.

Front #1 – Self-Help or Personal Development

Every pastor needs to keep an influx of materials coming into their lives that help them grow as a person. These books also give great advice as to how any pastor can also give help and direction to others. They focus on our emotional as well as our spiritual development sides. One of the most profound books on the emotional front that I have read is Peter Scazzaro's book: The Emotionally Healthy Church. If you haven't read it, read it! While there are many classics on spiritual health, for me, one of the most dynamic books I have read on the spiritual life is Dallas Willard's book: The Divine Conspiracy. Along with Richard Foster's book: Celebration of Discipline and Dallas' and Richard's student: James Bryan Smith and his triad The Good and Beautiful series these are some of the most complete works on spiritual development in what I would call a Wesleyan perspective on holiness.

Front #2 – Leadership and Church Development

Many pastors love to acquire and read books in this category but you need to keep well rounded in your reading so do not be tempted to only focus your reading in the leadership and church development areas. With that said, you need to always be brushing up on your skills in leadership and church development. There are so many books on this front, no one book stands out to me. One word of caution that I have learned over the years, don't sell out what God has called you to, to try and imitate what you read from pastors in other situations and settings. When you read a book from Andy Stanley or Dan Riland (which Dan is a sharp, sharp leader and one of the big reasons why 12 Stone is as large as it is – Kevin Myers is an incredible visionary and spokesman but Dan is the well-oiled machine that makes it all work) you have to carefully contextualize what you read. Some things you read are very applicable to your setting and others things, as good and enticing as they sound, simply won't work where you are. So as you build your Leadership and Church development aspect of your library, be careful to gain universal truths rather than direct applications.

Front #3 – Good Old Bible Study and Preaching Tools

This last area is probably one of the most unsung areas of a pastor's library but one of the most important. We are bears and holders of God's word and as an Ordained pastor you are commanded to "take charge of the word that has been entrusted to you, rightly dividing it..." Being the ambassadors of God's word the Bible is actually part of your ordination vows that you will one day take. Knowing, studying, and presenting God's word is the highest part of our calling and therefore a major part of your library should be given to acquiring great Bible study tools. The good news is, this part of your library does not shift with passing fads or changing church environments.

On this front, one of the best online sources that will save you hundreds of dollars is BlueLetterBible.com. I was introduced to this site when I was finishing my master's work over 8 years ago. The site has continued to advance and add more and more resources. This is

almost a one stop shop for all things Bible study and it contains many of the following items. So, let me explain the tools you will need to do good Bible study, sermon preparations, and teaching lessons...

First you will need a good commentary or two. For years, I have used Matthew Henry's. A new commentary I have begun use is David Guzik's commentary, both are on Blue Letter Bible (BLB.com). I have also used the Wesleyan Commentary but honestly it is not that great. Commentaries are written by biblical scholars who explain the context and meaning of the Bible in a verse-by-verse manner. While a running commentary at the bottom of your bible pages is okay, they usually lack great insight and scholastic study. One note about commentaries: they often will follow and present Biblical understanding or explanation from a particular theological slant (ie, Arminianism or Calvinism). Therefore, you need to be aware of this as you read and chose the commentaries you will use.

The second Bible tool you need in your library is a good Bible encyclopedia. These are a lot like a normal encyclopedia except they are limited to the subjects and topics related to the Bible. I recommend a five-volume set called, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. You can look up any topic, name, or city and get an expert description with related pictures. This set was put together by over 200 evangelical scholars, has over 1500 photographs and illustrations, 300 maps, and over 5000 pages of information. Christian Book Distributors is the cheapest place to get them; you can purchase it online for about \$45.

The third thing you want to get your hands on is a good background commentary. A background commentary does not explain the verse-by-verse meaning of the Bible as much as it does the background of the biblical times. These books are a cool mix between a commentary and a Bible encyclopedia. They help you understand how the historical and cultural setting sheds light upon a particular verse. Instead of just reading about Jesus turning the water into wine, it gives you pictures of the jars that were used, an explanation of the wedding customs, and any other helpful information.

The fourth thing you will want is a good concordance. A concordance lets you study how a particular word is used throughout the Bible. It is invaluable for topical studies on Bible themes, subjects, and word use. It is also incredibly helpful to locate in scriptures a particular verse simply by remembering one word.

The fifth basic tool that you will need is a good word study tool. A word study book allows you to easily access the alphabetized English equivalent of the Greek or Hebrew word from which it is translated. For example, when Jesus spoke of being "baptized" by the Holy Spirit, you can look up the English word "baptize" and see what particular word was used in Greek or Hebrew, as well as other words that may have been used in similar instances. This is a shining component of BLB.com. With just a few clicks you can look up all the occurrences of a particular word plus its Greek and/or Hebrew equivalents and then discover how the word would have been used in its original context and how scholars have translated the word in English. For years, I used Strong's Exhaustive concordance but now that I've found BLB Strong's Concordance simply collects dust on my shelf!

Building a library is a huge asset to any pastor but let me give you one final word of caution. **IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU DON'T READ!!!!** I grew up hating to read and in fact after I felt called to be a pastor my mom would get on my case asking, you can't be a pastor if you don't read. I vowed that I would be the first pastor that would pastor without reading! WOW was I wrong. I have learned to be a reader! You cannot be a leader if you are not a reader! PLEASE, don't go about building a library just to impress yourself or others. Having a great library does not matter if you don't read the books that are on the shelves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. What books would you say are essential in a pastor's library?
2. Do you have any of these books that I might borrow to see if it is a book that I need to invest in?
3. How did you start building your library?
4. How much does a minister spend on his/her library each year?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Why do you think books were important to Paul and continue to be valuable to ministers today?
2. What books have you purchased in each of the three categories I mentioned?
3. Do you understand why a good library is so important? Give me some reasons.
4. What kind of reading habits do you have? How much? How often? How long?
5. Can you tell me the difference between a commentary, an encyclopedia, and a concordance?
6. CHALLENGE: Read one book and give it away this next month (this will help protect you from just collecting rather than gleaning from your library).

Lesson 27: Anticipating Hurdles

Ministry is like running a 400-meter hurdle race. You have to keep moving while keeping an eye on the hurdles that are in front of you. That is something you can start doing right. Today let's talk about the six most common obstacles in ministry and how you can start bringing them into focus and prepare to overcome them.

The first hurdle is leading diversity. If the Lord is indeed calling you to ministry, you will one day lead people who have very different tastes, preferences, and opinions. If you're not careful, these differences can be confusing and lead you to believe that success is in pleasing people instead of leading them. Start anticipating this hurdle now by being someone who can get along with others. Learn now how to live gracefully with the fact that you cannot and will not please everyone. When other young people are getting caught up in drama and conflict, be a peacemaker. Instead of noticing people's faults, shortcomings, and differences, be someone who can quickly discover what people have in common. Develop the ability to admit mistakes, and value relationships over being right.

The second hurdle is unhappy people. The majority of God's people are kind, considerate, and eager to lighten your load. But unhappiness does strange things to a person's spirit. In the business world, if you are unhappy with employees, you can fire them. ***But you can't fire God's people from the church.*** A few of them will get downright nasty. Their pastor can be the one who bears the brunt of their personal stress, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction with life. The best way to anticipate this hurdle is to develop a secure stride. Learn to find security in things other than the approval or affirmation of others. Ask God to give you a thick hide and the ability to love those who are not kind. Make sure your spirit is large enough to absorb criticism gracefully.

The third hurdle is spiritual consumerism. Our culture is becoming increasingly consumer driven. Unfortunately, some of God's people have allowed this philosophy to spill over into their faith. They shop churches like they shop for products. Their commitment is only as far as the next church—one that can do it better, bigger, and brighter. There are some early warning signs in the life that may help you know you need to work on this hurdle:

- Struggling with rejection days and weeks after its occurrence.
- Pretending to agree with others when you really disagree.
- Wanting to give up when others express displeasure.
- Becoming defensive and keeping others at a distance.

If you see any sign of these things in your own life, ask God to help you begin to overcome them now, while you are young. I would also encourage you to share this with your mentor so that he/she may also help you overcome this hurdle.

The fourth hurdle is laziness. Ministry is a lot like being self-employed. There is a lot of freedom and even more distractions. Although there is accountability, there usually is not a lot of "real-time supervision." It is a trap for lazy, undisciplined, and unfocused individuals. We all struggle at times with the temptation to do as little as possible. Everyone has times when they do just enough to get by. Procrastination becomes a habit. Your bedroom, car, locker, or desk may be a mess. You may have become very good at making excuses. But let's keep it real. If these things become a pattern in your life, you're going to have some serious problems in the ministry.

So decide now that you're going to honor God with every moment, hour, day, month, and year that you serve in ministry. Develop the discipline now of making a list each morning of what you need to accomplish each day. Be disciplined and begin doing the things you don't like to do first, before doing the things you enjoy. That way you will thrive within the freedoms of ministry instead of drowning in them.

One neat idea I gleaned from Pastor Keith Loy of Celebrate Church is that he has a jar of hundreds of marbles in his office. Each marble represents the days that he has left until he retires or estimates his death. Each day he takes one marble out of the jar. It is a constant reminder that everyday is one less day to do God's work here on this earth. Make it a point right now to treat each day as a valuable gift God has given and commit yourself to using this day as best you can in honor of his service and kingdom.

The fifth hurdle is compartmentalized living. Unfortunately, some ministers accommodate compromise by compartmentalizing their life. Instead of living with high moral character in every area of their life, they separate their lifestyles into different compartments. I have seen ministers act one way in church services and have totally different behavioral patterns in the office, during recreation, in their private life, and out in public. You might see this kind of compartmentalized character manifested in your own life through questionable music, off-color humor, unhealthy friendship, illicit movies, or dating practices. If so, stop now. Don't let this practice gain momentum and destroy your future ministry. Instead of compartmentalizing your life, allow a Christ-like character to overlap each and every facet of your life.

The sixth hurdle is spiritual assault. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 6:12 that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against evil spiritual forces that seek to hinder God's work. The devil is going to do everything he can to destroy your church and drive you out of the ministry. As a matter of fact, he's not going to wait until then. He is going to start distracting you now in your years of preparation. How? He will tell you you're "too cool" to engage in worship and show passion for God. He will get you to start acting impulsively without prayerful consideration. He will make you insensitive to the needs of others and allow your ambition to drive you instead of God's Spirit. He will fight you with discouragement or frustration in the process of becoming a minister. But you can be prepared for these hurdles! Start the habit now of developing a daily prayer life. Make sure you spend time in the Word each day. Slow down enough to remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit and where He is leading you.

Relay runners do not stop running just because their race will involve inevitable hurdles. They do the opposite! They run hard with a sharp eye on each approaching hurdle and a determination to overcome them. It's not too early for you to do the same thing.

In our next lesson, we'll talk about the topic of dating and how it relates to your possible call to ministry. So keep running, keep preparing, and most importantly, keep exploring!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How do you keep from getting caught in the struggles that people with differences try to get you in?
2. Have you ever become calloused by dealing with the unhappiness of others? Has it ever brought you to a point where you no longer care?
3. Making lists every day seems like something parents do. My life isn't that complicated; I can easily remember what I need to do. Why should I start making lists now?
4. Does the fifth hurdle mean that you aren't supposed to live like normal people? It seems like you almost have to be too good to be normal.

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Have you found that you are often the person in the group that reaches out to others or helps make peace between your friends?
2. How do you deal with unhappy friends? Give me an idea of what you do and say to them when you are trying to help them.
3. How do you feel when you experience rejection? How does it affect your emotions, relationships, and perspective?
4. How do you push yourself to get things accomplished when you don't have the desire or the supervision?
5. Are you prepared to handle the hurdle of spiritual assault? What are you doing to be ready?
6. Do you live a compartmentalized life? In other words, are you one way at church and another with friends?
7. Who are you accountable to? Do you have someone who can speak into your life no matter what? How do you develop healthy relationships that encourage and edify?

Lesson 28: Dating While Preparing for Ministry

Can a person who feels called to the ministry date anyone they want? Today we're going to talk about something that has the greatest potential to either bless or hinder your future ministry... dating. Dating will either help you find the right person, hinder your potential, or even prevent you from being ordained. Over the years that I have been involved in leadership within our denomination I have seen the pain, destruction, and impact that a pastor's spouse can have on a ministry. For most pastors that I have seen leave ministry it is usually caused by one of two things: 1) the pastor's own moral failure, discouragement, or stupidity 2) the influence of the pastor's spouse upon his/her ministry. This is how incredibly important this topic is. Outside of a pastor's own spiritual pursuits, a pastor's spouse is the leading reason he/she succeeds or fails in ministry.

That is why I would like to mention three important things: compatibility, discretion, and prayer.

First, let's talk about compatibility. The whole purpose for dating is to help you find a compatible spouse. If you're called to ministry, that means the person must be someone whose desire, temperament, and spiritual maturity is compatible with a ministry lifestyle. Dating can help you explore these traits in others.

I love what Keith Drury said about dating in his book, *The Call of a Lifetime*, when he said, "*A man or woman who marries a minister marries the ministry too. It's a little bit like being the president's spouse. The spouse of the president is married to both the person and the job and becomes a public figure to the nation.*"

What kind of lifestyle does this person need to be compatible with? First, that person needs to be flexible in following God wherever He may call you. Some ministers remain at one location for many years. However, most ministers relocate six to seven times in their career. Your spouse will need to be comfortable with this and not limit God's will to a particular state, proximity to family, or availability of work for themselves.

Second, the person needs to be comfortable with living somewhat of a public life. Now I am not saying that you will enjoy the popularity of a rock star or have paparazzi following you to the grocery store. But much of a minister's life is lived in the spotlight. It's not easy for any of us, but you need to at least be willing to learn the skills to deal with it.

Third, the person you date should be someone who is aware of the long and unpredictable hours that ministers work. When it comes to the workweek, ministry is a lot like being a doctor on call, a realtor, paramedic, or evening newscaster. You need to be available when the people you serve need you. Because the people we serve work secular jobs, most of your personal interaction with them will be in the evenings and weekends. You will need to run to the hospital in emergencies, take phone calls at home, and attend functions, meetings, and church during times most lay people would call "free time."

But most of all, the person you date must either love the church or share your call to ministry. If you are dating someone now, it is a good idea to talk about these issues and see where that person stands. If you happen to be dating someone who does not have these qualities or share your desire for a life of ministry, then you should end the relationship. Should you end up falling in love, or even worse, getting married, that person could force you to abandon your calling.

Right now, you still have a choice. If you are not serious with someone, then look for a person who is compatible with both you and your call.

To sum it up, your ministry partner will need to be someone who is spiritually mature, loves the church, and is flexible, caring, friendly, and unselfish. Very few things will affect your ministry more than your marriage. It will either double your effectiveness or prevent it. Dating is the bridge that determines which one of those extremes ends up defining you.

The second thing we need to talk about is discretion. Most, if not all, moral failures involve sex, money, and power. At this stage in your ministry, I doubt you're rolling in the dough or that you are the ruler of the free world. So, let's get real and talk about sex.

At this stage in your life, sexual temptation may be the greatest threat to destroying your ministry. At the least, it will cheapen your soul. At the worst, it can produce a situation that would disqualify you from ordination and perhaps from lifelong ministry. Because ministry is a high calling, you need to live above the line and use great discretion in dating and interacting with members of the opposite sex. Let me suggest a few ground rules that will both honor your call and keep you out of trouble while you date.

1. Start slow and at the right age. It is not wise to start dating before the age of 16. Early, frequent, and steady dating is one of the single biggest risk factors for teenage sexual activity. If you are young, give God time to prepare you.
2. Predetermine boundaries. It is important to determine the boundaries of physical touch before your date, not during it. Don't be foolish enough to expect yourself to think straight when your emotions and hormones are hijacking your brain. Not everyone's threshold for temptation is the same. For some, cuddling is the line. For others, it's holding hands or kissing. You and your date should pray and ask God to give you guidance. Then listen to the convictions God gives you. Keep in mind, your date is someone else's daughter or son and future spouse. The key is to determine definite boundaries that honor God beforehand and stick to them.
3. Avoid potentially dangerous situations. When you are on a date, make sure you place yourself in an environment that will support your faith instead of weaken its boundaries. Date in groups with those who share your values. If you are alone with your date, stay in public places instead of places that offer privacy and isolation. Avoid sexually stimulating TV shows, videos, and movies when you're dating.
4. Value your faith over another person. Any person who tries to manipulate you by forcing you to choose between them and your values does not respect you, your faith, or your call to ministry. Beware of lines like, "If you really love me, you'll do this for me," or "You know God will forgive us."
5. Respect yourself and your date. Respect yourself enough not to back down from your values and boundaries. If your date is unwilling to respect your values and boundaries, love yourself, God, and your future ministry enough to walk away.
6. Be a whole number before you seek a date. In our culture, we have placed way too high a burden on others to make us whole or to fulfil us. We have misplaced the role God is to play in our lives on unsuspecting dates or spouses. **YOU DO NOT NEED A MAN or a LADY to MAKE YOU WHOLE!** God already provided that person for you in your life and His name is JESUS! If you are not whole on your own, finding a date, getting married, will not solve this problem and will destroy your ministry.

7. Make yourself accountable. If you find yourself getting serious with someone, make yourself accountable to a friend, a pastor you trust or even your cohort leader. It would be wise if this person is of the same sex as you. Ask that person to pray for you while you are on your date. Allow that person to ask tough questions and keep you accountable after you return.

Dating can help you find someone who brings out the best in you or someone who brings out the worst. If you can commit yourself to these standards, you will be well on your way to success.

Finally, let me speak to you about prayer. It is not too early to start praying for your future spouse, your marriage, and the wisdom to make wise choices. Why not start praying now for the qualities you desire in your future spouse? Even though you might not know who the person is or where they live, God does. Pray that the Holy Spirit will move in their life to make them spiritually mature beyond their years. Ask God to give them a love for the church and the things of God. Pray that they will be someone who is flexible, caring, friendly, and unselfish. Ask God to give them a passion for ministry and a compassion for people. Pray that they will be someone who is secure in themselves and their call. Ask God to make them be teachable, morally resolute, and compatible with you and your future ministry.

I cannot stress how important it is to begin now praying for the person you will marry

But don't stop there. Begin praying that God would prepare you for a lifetime of marriage and partnership. As you date others, ask God to give you wisdom about who you should be dating. Pray that God would lead you to people who have a passion for God. Ask that you will be sensitive to the leading of His Spirit. Ask God to give you the courage to do what is right despite your feelings or emotions. Pray that God will give you the strength to avoid compromising situations and to help you keep your life free from impurity.

When it comes to dating, don't forget the importance of compatibility, discretion, and prayer. All three are important for you to stay on track and continue your journey.

Now that we have talked about dating well, I realize that some of you on this journey are already married, so in our next lesson I want to us to discuss how to live well in marriage and ministry. Until then, keep exploring!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. After reading through this lesson, why do you feel this is such an important topic to discuss?
2. How can you know if the person you are dating will try to manipulate you or force you to choose between them and ministry?
3. Does making yourself accountable mean that you have to tell them everything you do on a date? Why or why not?
4. How or what do I pray when talking to Jesus about a spouse?
5. Is the choice of a spouse really this important to the call of God? I mean, it seems like it is just a job, so what does my spouse really have to do with it?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. What kind of person do you think would make the best spouse for you?
2. What do you think are the appropriate boundaries in dating? How do you handle it when the person you are dating wants to go past these boundaries?
3. How do you believe your dating and/or future spouse could affect your ministry?
4. Can you tell me about the disciplines you have decided on to help you in dangerous situations?
5. Have you been praying about the person you will marry? What have you been asking Jesus for?
6. Why do you think this lesson on dating was included? Do you think it is as important as it has been presented?

Lesson 29: Being a Great Spouse

When I was in college and preparing for ministry God lead into my life a beautiful girl who would soon become my wife. As our dating became more serious and I eventually popped the big question to my sweetheart on Valentine's day in front of 30 Pastor's wives in a class be taught by Sharon Drury the seriousness of what we were about to do began to dawn on me. I knew I was called to ministry but all of a sudden, I now realized I was taking along for the ride someone else and eventually this partnership would produce children that had no choice in the matter of my calling or ministry.

As I began to look around campus it became rather apparent that there were two distinctive groups when it came to Pastor's kids (or PK's). On one hand, there were PK's who loved ministry and in fact were preparing for ministry themselves but there were plenty of other PK's who hated ministry and wanted nothing to do with it, in fact for some of them the only reason they were at Indiana Wesleyan University was because of the financial aid benefit given to Pastor's kids.

The reality of my choices began to weigh on me as I was now preparing for ministry and preparing to get married and so I began to ask the PK's that I was meeting why or why not they loved ministry. As I began asking the question it became very apparent rather quickly as to the difference. For the PK students who loved ministry it seemed that their father was very present in their lives and ministry was just a part of the "family business" if you will. These students would comment that they knew their parents loved them and they spent plenty of time with them and when it came to ministry they were all involved together. On the other hand, the students who had a distain for ministry felt their fathers (primarily) treated the ministry as a mistress that constantly invaded their lives. For these students, their dads were often times so involved in ministry that they were unable to give quality attention and care to his own family and wife. The ministry was seen as a constant disruption in family life often keeping their dads from being at home or going to ball games or just being around to teach them how to hit a ball or have a tea party.

At a very young age, this left an indelible impression upon my young soul. If I was going to be a pastor, if I was going to be a husband, and if I was going to be a dad, I better make sure to do it well so that my kids love ministry and my God. So, in today's lesson, I want to talk about being a great spouse and parent while at the same time being a great pastor (yes, it is possible to do both at the same time!)

Respect your family's time – Respect your church's time. Unfortunately, ministry does not fit neat and tidy into a nice little box. I always like to teach young pastors that ministry always ebbs and flows. Some weeks you will work like crazy and put in 60 plus hours at the church but other weeks you might only need to put in 35 or 40, it's just the nature of ministry. Learn to work with that ebb and flow by respecting both your ministry and your family. If you are not lazy (go back to lesson 27 to touch up on that one) when a week comes a long that is light, don't intentionally pack it up with "ministry stuff" but rather use it to spend a little more time at home. At the same time, if you have a long week of ministry, give yourself to it without guilt of ripping the family off. The secret is being fair! If every week you find you need to work 60 plus hours, you are out of balance and it is going to cost you your family. The reverse is also true, if you only spend 30 hours a week in ministry then you are ripping the church off and will soon be out of a job and a ministry. In our flexible lives, work at maintaining the balance in the ebb and

flow and when a tough ministry week comes a long, your family will be okay but when a light week can be afforded in ministry, realize you are not God and He can take care of your ministry while you are catching up with family.

Treat your family as your first congregation. Do you realize your spouse only gets one vote on you? The only vote she/he gets will happen or did happen on the day they said “I do”. Now the church will vote on you many times over the course of your ministry and they can vote you off the island but your spouse can’t. If you love and respect your family, treat them as your first congregation. Do you realized, for most pastors, they are their family’s only pastor, they don’t get to go to the next church down the road (or if they do we need to have a talk because you have some serious problems brewing). As a pastor, how would you love your congregation well? If that is the case, what would keep you from doing the same for your own family? Your family is your “first” congregation.

Invite your family to be partners with you in ministry. In the olden days too many pastors separated their families from their ministry. I’m not sure why that philosophy ever made its rounds. My wife and I have always, intentionally invited our children to be a part of our ministry. The reality is, they are a part of our ministry whether they want to be or not but by inviting them into our ministry, we acknowledge their role in ministry, we honor their role in ministry, and we grant them great respect. As my kids were growing up they would go on hospital calls with me (but keep it appropriate – got some crazy stories on that one), visit shut-ins with me, stop by new folk’s homes to welcome them to our church community and got the “pastor’s ear” on how to do things better. As they got older, they would help me lead in various ways in ministry in the children’s program, in worship, or in the nursery. I always enjoyed having them around and so did the folks I lead.

The key here is “invite” not demand! Your greatest ministry will probably come through your children. They will bring many friends into your lives and those friends are connected to parents and the instant bond you will share with those parents is that you have kids of the same age. Just being my child they are part of ministry and they had no say so on that and so when we asked them to help with something, we always invited them to it and didn’t demand they do it.

Allow your kids freedom! This may sound like heresy but I will say it anyway. A few years ago Jim Dobson did research on the Christian family and found that Christian parents often times make worse parents than do secular parents. The reasoning he discovered is that Christian parents try to protect their children from too much and demand a Christian lifestyle so they will avoid evil. This very loving thing on the parent’s side backfires in that it never allows the child to develop morally while under the protection of the family. The trouble is, when the child comes of age and needs to make moral decisions for themselves they are not prepared and then often fail. (I am not suggesting we throw off abandon and let our kids go wild – that’s just stupid). As a pastor’s kid your children are under the microscope and they are handed a lot of expectations that at times seem unbearable – if you want your kids to love God and love the church – don’t unduly add to those expectations because of your lack of self-confidence and people pleasing tendencies. I stood in the gap for my kids with the congregation. Kids in other families in our church would miss church all the time but when my kids missed church all of a sudden it was seen as the most horrid of things. I realized this and I then stood in the gap actually giving approval to and telling the board that I allowed my kids to miss church every now

and then. For instance, my son got involved in Boy Scouts which meant every month he was going to go camping and miss one Sunday of worship. I had a few board members that didn't like that, but I encouraged my son to go. The reality is, his Christian influence at the boy scout camp was actually bigger than any influence we would have sitting in a worship service on a Sunday.

Keep Balanced! One of my favorite professors in college would always tell us “balance is the key to life.” In everything we must keep balanced. When it comes to family and ministry this is so true. I have always held that God is first, my family is second, my ministry is third, and myself is last. Now from time to time because God is first, He moves ministry up a notch and sometimes in order to stay healthy, He raises the position of taking care of myself up but as a general rule: God, Family, Ministry, Self. My family needs to know I love them and saying “I love you” is never enough. If my actions and the way I spend my time do not reveal to my wife and children that I love them, then I am missing the mark and there is some re-evaluating I need to do. If you believe God will fill in the voids because you are “called to ministry” that is a cop-out of your marital duties and cheating on your responsibilities to your family.

Take comfort, you won't always get it right. Wow, I made some mistakes along the way and I can share some crazy stories, but non-the-less my kids were a big part of who I was as a pastor. I am not being arrogant or prideful but as of this day, all my kids cherish and love ministry. I have a daughter who has launched into life after graduating from college and moved back to Minnesota (much to the chagrin of her parents) but as she has made this transition into adulthood she has chosen to be involved in volunteer ministry serving on a worship team in church, being a part of a small group, and getting involved in other ministries of “her” church...all without the prodding or pushing of mom and dad. My son is a business major, has decided he would like to be steadily involved in leading worship after college. I actually hired him a summer ago to lead worship in our church during a transition period and this last year he took a dynamic yearlong class in worship arts at college and now he knows he is called to help lead worship and at this point on a volunteer basis while he pursues his business career. My senior daughter these past two years has blossomed and she willingly wants to engage in in many ways around our church while still in high-school and is very focused on young children's ministry. I am blessed but this didn't just “happen”, my wife and I were very intentional about how we were going to raise our children and be involved in ministry at the same time.

If you give your entire life to ministering to hundreds of people and yet on your death bed because of your lack of care and ministry to your own family your own children do not love God and have a passionate place in their heart for ministry, what value was all that “work” you did for the church? We cannot guarantee our children will love and serve God, but we can sure guarantee they hate the church and God by the way that we love them and love the church. So do your best at loving your spouse and children well, in the long haul, they are your greatest congregation!!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How have you learned to balance the demands of family and the demands of ministry?
2. When do you find it hardest to balance it all?

3. How have you personally involved your family in ministry? Where they involved in your ministry?
4. Do you believe your children from time to time should be exempt from having to be “at church”? Why or why not?
5. Has there ever been a time that you got out of balance with your family and ministry? How did you correct it?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. How do you plan to safeguard your family in ministry so that they know you love them dearly?
2. What hopes and dreams do you have for your own children when it comes to their spiritual lives?
3. How do you believe you might need to protect your family from the church?
4. How do you plan to keep romance alive in your relationship with your spouse?

Lesson 30: Why Is My Family Freaking Out?

Over the last couple of weeks we have talked about your immediate (spouse and children) family but today I want to step back a bit and talk about your extended family (especially if you are not married). Your family (mom, dad, siblings) plays a big role in your ministry and expectations of ministry. For some, your family will be very supportive and excited for you. For some, your family just may not care. They may not be Christians and they will see this as just another career choice and they will not understand your passion or call. Finally, there are some students whose family is actually opposed to them entering ministry. I hope this is not the case for you but if it is, let's spend the next two lessons investigating this a little thinking about how to respond to their negativity.

Let's start by trying to understand why your family may be unsupportive of your call. At first their lack of support may make you feel disappointed, abandoned, or even angry. But understanding some of the common reasons why families struggle with God's call may help you be more sensitive to them during this time.

Many times parents want "more" for their children than they think the ministry can provide. Many years ago, in our nation, the three most prestigious vocations were ministry, medicine, and law. However, that has changed. A vocation in ministry is no longer viewed with the same respect and stature. Some parents and family members may have spent years hoping you would give your life to something different or higher up on their own list of career preferences. You need to remind them that what we do is not as important as how fulfilled it makes us. Assure them that the call to ministry is more fulfilling to you than any other profession could hope to be.

Sometimes parents have financial concerns. Ministry is a specialized vocation where formal education is limited to private colleges and universities. The beginning salaries of young ministers are not as high as other specialized professions like medicine and law. Nor do they offer the same peak potential. Some parents worry that a career in ministry means a lower standard of living and prolonged payments on educational loans. Help them understand that you are aware of this and are prepared to meet the challenge by managing your lifestyle and lowering expectations in return for a life of fulfillment and challenge.

A few parents become concerned about how your choice will reflect upon them. Some parents feel that their own status is influenced by what their children do, how much they make, where they live, or what kind of lifestyle they lead. There is not a lot you can do to change the way your family finds self-worth. But you can assure them that they will have the certainty of knowing their child chose a career that provides personal fulfillment, service to society, and has eternal value.

Other parents may feel that a life of ministry has more drawbacks than advantages. Limited finances, lack of privacy, frequent relocations, long hours, isolation from family, and exposure to the periodic criticism of others is not something any loving parent wishes on their children. Those who have experienced these things may think they are doing you a favor trying to protect you from them. It is important to reassure them that, like any profession, the ministry has both advantages and disadvantages. Help them understand that the energy and fulfillment you receive from the advantages of ministry are more than enough to absorb the occasional drawbacks.

Most parents do not like the unpredictability that accompanies a life of ministry. There are a few people who enjoy living life in an adventurous and spontaneous way. But most of us like predictability. Parents and family are no different. They may struggle with the thought of not knowing where, when, or how God may lead you. Like anyone who loves you, your parents will want to live near you, share experiences, and be involved in the lives of their grandchildren. You must reassure them that all of us live with the reality that life has unexpected changes, unforeseen destinies, and unpredictable challenges. Remind them that we do not live life from our limited vantage point but from God's aerial view.

Lastly, some parents do not share the values of the Christian faith and may even be hostile to the thought of you serving in ministry. Whether it is negative experiences, philosophical differences, or opposing religious beliefs, some parents may resent you giving your life to something so different from their own personal beliefs. In this case, you will need to assure them that their own religious beliefs are a personal matter. Your call does not require any kind of philosophical compromise on their part. You would hope that they can still offer you the emotional support that any family member needs to navigate through life. Inform them that although you may have differences in opinions, you are committed to not allowing those differences to change your love and dedication to each other. Ask them to reciprocate with the same commitment.

It can be hard when those we love the most seem unsupportive of us in life. Most of the time, their lack of support is based on a lack of understanding and will change once they see how important it is for you to follow God's call. Until that happens, resist the temptation to feel disappointed, abandoned, or angry. Ask God to give you patience, love, and understanding.

In our next lesson, we're going to talk about some practical things you can do to respond when your family is lacking support. In the meantime, keep exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. Did your family give you any opposition to your going into the ministry? What did you do about it?
2. Why would my family or friends give me such a hard time about going into the ministry? It isn't like this is something bad to do with my life.
3. Why can't they see that going into the ministry is a good thing? I mean, it's helping people through all kinds of stuff. That should make them happy.
4. Without my parent's support, I don't know how I will ever be able to go into the ministry. I feel really defeated. What can I do?
5. Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. What has been the general response and attitude of your family toward your decision to go into the ministry?
2. Did any of the reasons in the lesson sound familiar to your own experience? Which ones?
3. How have your friends responded to your wanting to go into the ministry?
4. Have you experienced any disagreements with family members or friends concerning your decision to serve in ministry? How have these disagreements been resolved?

Lesson 31: What To Do When My Family Isn't On Board

What should you do when you lack the moral, financial or emotional support of your family? In our last lesson, we talked about some common reasons why family members may be unsupportive of your call to ministry. Today I would like to talk to you about some practical things you can do to help navigate through these difficult times. Although the level of resistance may vary in each situation, let me assume it is high as I give this advice. That way it will be easier for you to determine how to respond.

1. Honor and respect their authority. In Ephesians 5:31, the Bible teaches us that sooner or later, everyone must break from the control of their mother and father and build their own lives and families. However, the same book also instructs you to submit to the authority of your parents when it says in Ephesians 6: 1-3, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother'-which is the first commandment with a promise='thet it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'*"

That means that while you are living under the roof and authority of your parents, you need to obey them without compromising your faith. If they forbid you from pursuing or preparing for a call to ministry, then you will have to wait until you are out on your own to start preparing.

Sometimes submitting to your parents can be hard. When our parents or authority figures seem to be holding us back from God's will, it is important to remember that no one, including your parents, can sidetrack God's will. At those times it is more productive to try to find out what God is trying to teach you through submission. Remember, you can only develop the ability to submit to God when you learn how to submit to man. As long as your parents are not requiring you to do anything illegal or immoral, try submitting to their authority instead of pushing back and challenging them. One day, you will have the freedom to follow your heart. But for now, look for what God may be trying to deliver to your life through the discipline of submission. Whatever it is, it must be something you need for the future.

2. Listen with an open heart. Although your family may not share your faith, they usually know you better than most. Be open and secure enough to talk with them about their concerns. Calmly respond to them with the information you have learned and exposed yourself to. Proverbs 18:15 tells us, "*The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.*" Sometimes God can use parents to give you helpful feedback about your strengths, weaknesses, and the unique challenges you may face.

3. Be sensitive to invisible factors. It is important to remember that there may be more going on than meets the eye. It is possible that your family's lack of support is nothing more than misguided concern motivated by love. It may also be the result of spiritual obstacles that you will need to tear down through prayer and fasting. Ephesians 6:12 tells us that our battle as Christians is not against what we can see but things we cannot see. Things are not always as they seem. So be watchful and discerning about what you address and how you respond.

4. Pray for them. Don't forget the power of prayer. Begin praying for your family, and trust God to change their hearts. Ask your pastor to agree with you in prayer that God will make your call evident to them and that He will soften their hearts. Pray that God will bless your family through

this experience and use this situation to reveal himself to them in a greater way. If they are not believers, renew your commitment to pray for their salvation.

5. Be Christ-like. Just because others are disagreeable does not give us a right to act out in anger or make the situation worse. This is a wonderful opportunity to show others how deep your call really is. Remember Galatians 5:22-23 when it says, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."* No matter how others act or respond to your possible call, decide in your heart that you're not going to bring disrespect upon the call and cause of Christ by acting in the flesh. Determine in your heart to live out the life of Christ in any and all situations.

6. Trust God. Obstacles in ministry are often spiritual exercises to help us develop the ability to transfer more trust to God. If you are called of God to ministry, I can promise you that as time goes on you will face greater obstacles than unsupportive family members. Use this as an opportunity to build your faith and trust God. He can and will provide finances, preparation, opportunity, and even a support base for your ministry.

7. Be patient. The Bible tells us that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. If you end up having to wait, be patient. In Acts 5: 29 we read about a time when others tried to use their authority to hinder Peter from fulfilling God's purpose for his life. After listening to them, Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men!" You may come to the same place in your life, but when and if you do, it must be with humility, respect, and at a time when you are no longer a minor.

8. But most importantly, love them. There is nothing as important as continuing to express love through patience and acceptance when we are in disagreement with family members. No matter how much they disappoint you or fail to support your call, remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 when he says, *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."* If you can't love your family, you will not be able to love God's people. No matter how hurt or disappointed you may feel, never stop loving them.

It isn't easy exploring the call of God without the emotional or financial support of your family. But remember, you're not alone. The Bible gives us examples of people who lacked the support of their families. In the Old Testament, Joseph's brothers did everything they could to hinder God's plan for his life. But they could not. In 1 Peter chapter 3, Peter encourages Christian women whose unbelieving husbands were antagonistic to their faith to trust God. The Gospels tell us that at one point, Jesus' own brothers and sisters not only doubted His call but His sanity as well. God will sustain, support, and provide for your call as you continue to trust Him, act in the right spirit, and live out your faith. The lack of family support can be difficult, but it's no reason to give up on the journey.

In our next lesson, we are going to talk about what makes the ministry so worthwhile and fulfilling. Until next time, continue exploring the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How do I show honor and respect to my parents when they show no respect for me or the decisions I make?
2. Trusting God isn't as easy as it sounds. When my family starts telling me their reasons for me to not go into ministry, I feel like my trust factor diminishes. How do I keep trust where it should be?
3. I try to be open to their thoughts and listen closely to what they say, but they just don't make sense to me, and we end up arguing. Is there a way to do this without my family being involved? Because I don't want to fight with them over something so good.
4. What should I pray for when praying about this and my family? Will God actually do something like change their minds?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Have you had any disagreements with family members over going into the ministry? What were they like? How did they get resolved?
2. Are there other things that might be causing your family to resist your going into ministry?
3. How well have you done in keeping a Christ-like attitude and actions?
4. Would you say that you are a patient person? Would other people say you are patient?
5. How can you honor and respect your family and obey God at the same time?

Lesson 32: Hard, but Worth It

Of all the things you could choose to do with your life, serving in the ministry may be the most fulfilling. There are few things as satisfying as helping God's people grow, develop, and reach out to lost people. But it is important for you to understand that the ministry is not an easy job. It has its own set of challenges. As a matter of fact, ministry today just might be one of the most difficult vocations there is. What other job do you know of that requires you to...

- write and deliver a moving speech 52 times a year
- motivate, recruit, train, and get things done through a predominantly volunteer workforce
- balance budgets, manage facilities, and run a business
- face relational conflict on a regular basis
-

What other vocation involves such a strange mix of responsibilities? Where one has to... discover God's will, believe for the impossible, cast vision, and inspire leaders; provide counseling, visit hospitals, dedicate babies, bury the dead, comfort the grieving; and satisfy an increasingly diverse and demanding constituency.

I don't know of any, do you? The key is remembering that ministry is more fulfilling than it is easy, and more rewarding than it is hard. Yes, it's true. Ministry isn't easy, but it's never boring either. There are several reasons why.

1. People are saved. If God is calling you to the ministry, He will use you to lead others to Christ. Some will return to God after falling into apathy. Others will come to Christ from reckless and broken lives. God will use you to reach some who have secretly cried out to Him for help and intervention. And you will be the one God uses to reach them!
2. Lives will be changed. Should God be calling you to ministry, there is one thing you'll witness time and time again and never get tired of seeing it. People's lives will be changed! Some will experience physical healing in their bodies. Others will see broken relationships, violated trusts, and dead marriages restored by God's power. You will see some delivered from addictions, evil spirits, and tormented minds. God will use you as an instrument to help others experience transformation and change.
3. People will grow. As you answer God's call and develop your gifts, God will use you to help others mature and grow in their faith. God's anointing upon your life will enable people to worship, grow, serve, and reach others with greater effectiveness. Your ministry will help others become mature in their faith and empower them to make a greater contribution to the kingdom of God.
4. People will be strengthened. If God is calling you into the ministry, He will also use you to strengthen those who are weak. The discouraged, demoralized, and devastated will be encouraged. The grieving will find hope, and the fearful will find courage. But the most exciting thing is where they find this strength and what it does in their lives. God will use you to strengthen people in such a way that their hearts will be turned toward heaven and their ambitions focused on God.
5. You will be fulfilled. I've been in ministry for over 25 years, and I can tell you that one of the most fulfilling things in life is knowing my efforts are making an eternal impact. That can be the same for you. While other professions labor and work to advance the things of this world, you can be energized in knowing that every day you wake up, you can make an eternal difference in this world. There is nothing quite like it!

Ministry is one of the most fulfilling, energizing, and influential ways to spend your life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. If the ministry is so hard, why do people do it?
2. The ministry doesn't look that hard to me. What am I missing?
3. The lesson said that ministry is more rewarding than hard. Then why do some people leave the ministry to do other things?
4. What if I try the ministry and realize that I am not cut out for it? Can I change my mind? I mean, God won't be mad or something with me, will He?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Which of the reasons mentioned in the lesson got your attention and made you get excited about the ministry?
2. Do you ever think that being in the ministry is going to be too hard for you? What is it that makes you think this?
3. Is there anything you can do or want to do other than ministry? What keeps you from doing it?

Do you fully understand just how difficult the ministry is as a vocation? Tell me what you understand.

Lesson 32: Finding Friends

During a leadership intensive that I am leading with a few of our leaders in the church we got onto an interesting topic and consequently some very interesting conversations that ensued. One of my leaders is the manager of a large supply warehouse with some 250 plus employees working for him. He has 3 direct reports and has also been hired to do leadership training throughout their entire company. As we were talking about leadership he made an interesting comment. He said that years ago he resigned that he would be friendly, loving, and supportive to all his employees but he could never be their “friends”. Because of his position, he said, he simply cannot afford to be “hanging out” with the guys. One of the other leaders who runs his family business chimed in on the same lines and said that he is more of a father figure than a friend because in the morning I may have to correct an employ and yet in the afternoon may hang-out and shoot the breeze. So he also had committed himself to be friendly, to be Godly, but also understood he could not be “buddies” with his employees if the company was to remain healthy.

As the conversation developed I threw my two cents in and commented that this very issue becomes a difficult thing in the church world because on one hand the very heart of the faith is about relationships but at the same time I am called to lead. On most days, the two roads run parallel like a carefully planned interstate highway but then on some days, the two road diverge and cannot function side by side. I have discovered that more often than not, it is when those roads diverge that the greatest impacts for eternity and for the church develop. It is on those difficult days, where leadership and my call must trump my need for their friendship, that the church usually pushes forward to take higher ground.

As I was talking to a good friend (and fellow DBMD member) about this topic he commented that in all of his education from undergrad to his MDiv this discussion was never raised and yet it is one of the biggest factors involved which expands or limits the size of a pastor’s ministry. So let’s take just a few moments to explore some truths around the development of our friends while in ministry:

1. While a pastor needs to love his people well, he cannot place the burden of personal relational fulfillment on the congregation. If a pastor is not relationally healthy and able to form adequate relationships outside the church, forming those tight bonds inside the church will eventually cost the church its forward movement.
2. The ability to navigate healthy friendships is one of the greatest distinctions between a high capacity pastor leading a church of 150 or more and a pastor leading a smaller congregation under 100. There is something exciting and sad in understanding the position of the church family when it comes to them being their own friends and not necessarily ours. When I am doing my job well, I am helping those in my congregation to connect and building bridges of friendship with each other but in the very work of accomplishing that goal, I naturally end up on the outside of many of those relationships. I will still be their pastor, I will still be respected, but I will not be their buddy. For some pastors this is an impossible mountain to climb and so they resign to being buddy’s with most the people in the church and the church then maximizes at the pastor’s capacity for friends (which is typically between 60-80 people).
3. God has called us to lovingly lead his church, not be best friends with everyone in the church. This may sound harsh, but it is true. As a pastor, there are times you will have to make difficult

decisions. If you place a higher value on your friendship than the overall need or health of the church, you incapacitate the church from being as effective and far reaching as it should be. You will quickly cap the growth of your church to the limit of your ability to be “friends” or the limit of your ability to individually control all relationships inside the church. Eventually this will not only cap the church’s growth but will eventually lead to its demise.

4. Being a “buddy” rather than being a pastoral leader at times will cause you to be ineffective at leading those whom you are charged to spiritually care for. The time will come in your ministry when you will have to share with a friend some honest feedback about their spiritual lives. If they are more a buddy than a parishioner you will may very well not share what needs shared in fear of destroying the relationship.

5. There is a high demand for pastor’s to be relationally healthy. If you are not relationally healthy you will place an undue burden on your church causing them to fulfill you and consequently you will stunt the growth of your church.

6. This is great news for our cohort system. One of the core components of the very program you are in is to help you foster healthy relationships with those outside of your church so that inside the church you can thrive and be the leader you need to be. When you have a group of trusted friends that you can lean on, that you are not directly leading, you are then free to lovingly lead as God directs.

7. I say all this but add this HUGE caution. The other extreme is just as dangerous, you must “love” the people you serve. If you lead without loving you have no business being a pastor. I have run into those who believe so strongly that the leader is to be the boss that they forget this is a relationship business working with volunteers. Those leaders tend to isolate believers and violate God’s laws. All we do, must be done out of love. We can never lead without loving! The heart of this discussion is how best do we love? Do we have to be buddies with the folks we serve in order to love well, or can we better lead like a father those under our care where we are friendly, but not necessarily friends.

Every pastor needs a group of friends. We all need people in our lives that we can count on, that will have our backs when the going gets tough. We all need a shoulder to cry on and trust me, in ministry you will have those days when you need that shoulder. But in our need and search for friends we must be cautious or careful about placing our personal need on the shoulders of those we are called to lead. We must be loving, we must be friendly, we must be loyal to those we serve, but often times we simply cannot be their “buddy”. So I would encourage you to begin developing good friendships with your peers and other pastors that you are meeting as you prepare for ministry, those friendships are going to carry you through the tough times and celebrate with you in the good times!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. How do you balance being friendly and being friends with those inside the church?
2. Do you have a group of friends outside the church? If so, how did you develop them?
3. Can you describe to me a time when friendship vs. friendliness got out of balance and caused you problems?

4. When is a time that you had to lead and the decision to lead cost you a friendship?
5. What advice would you give to me, a beginning pastor, in this area of developing friends inside and outside the church?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. List 3 friends outside of your church that you could share a few intimate details of your life with?
2. How do you plan to stay relationally healthy so that you can balanced being friendly vs. being a “buddy” with those inside the church?
3. What potential problems do you see could develop if you were to be “buddies” with those in the church? How do you think this might negatively affect the future progress of the church?
4. For those to whom this lesson may make you gristle, if you disagree, why do you disagree and can you support your premise?

Lesson 33: Here Am I, Send Me!

By now you have learned things that most young people never get an opportunity to learn until they're older or until they have learned them the hard way. The Greater Ohio District of the Wesleyan Church has a passion to nurture the call of God in the hearts of young people while they are still the learning stages of their preparation for ordination.

After traveling with your mentor through these lessons hopefully you have learned a lot of important things about the God of in your life...

- why the call of God is so important, and how to discern and confirm it in your life;
- what ministry is all about, and the many ways those who are called of God can serve Him; the importance of preparing for that call, as well as practical things you can start doing right now while you are in school;
- how to anticipate hurdles and navigate common obstacles;
- some guidelines for dating and anticipating a fulfilling marriage in ministry.

Perhaps the only thing left for you to do is to answer that call. Isaiah found himself in a similar situation. He had just been exposed to the grace, forgiveness, and majesty of God. Then it was time for God to speak. What would God say to Isaiah? Instead of making a statement, God asked Isaiah a question. "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" Isaiah responded to God's call in Isaiah 6:8 when he said, "*Here am I, send me!*"

Is God asking you the same question today? Is He asking you to embrace the call of a lifetime? Is He asking you to go before Him as a representative of His love, His Word, and His call to redemption? If so, take the lead from Isaiah. Follow God's call by volunteering your will, your life, and your future. Remember, you're not alone. Thousands have gone before you all through human history. Now it is your turn to join the company of the called. It's your time to be led and be guided by God's Spirit.

It all starts by saying "yes" to God. But your "yes" is not a response to a moment; it is a response to an invitation to journey with God. That journey will take you to unbelievable places that you never thought you would go. You will get there through routes you never knew existed. He will use you to touch people's lives in ways you never imagined. If you, like Isaiah, hear the call, then I encourage you to answer. The journey starts with one word. Yes! So keep growing, keep learning, and keep preparing yourself to answer the greatest of calls!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: STUDENT TO MENTOR

These questions are designed to help the student gain deeper insight into the lesson topic for the week. Be prepared to answer any of these questions and others that the student might have.

1. What was it like when you said yes to the call of God? What happened next for you?
2. How do you volunteer your will, your life, and your future to God?
3. I really believe that God has called me, but I am still afraid to say yes. How do I overcome this fear?
4. At this point I am not sure if God has called me to ministry. What do I do now?
5. The lesson said that saying yes is the start of the journey. Does this mean that by saying yes I am not committed to being in the ministry, just to exploring about being called?

Are there any other questions you might have? If so, write them down below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: MENTOR TO STUDENT

Questions the mentor or pastor could ask the student to get him/her thinking about how the specific lesson might apply to him/her.

1. Do you have any more concerns about being called to ministry?
2. At this point, do you believe that God has called you to ministry?
3. Are you willing to say yes to the call of God?
4. What do you think you should do next to continue on the journey to explore the call of God?