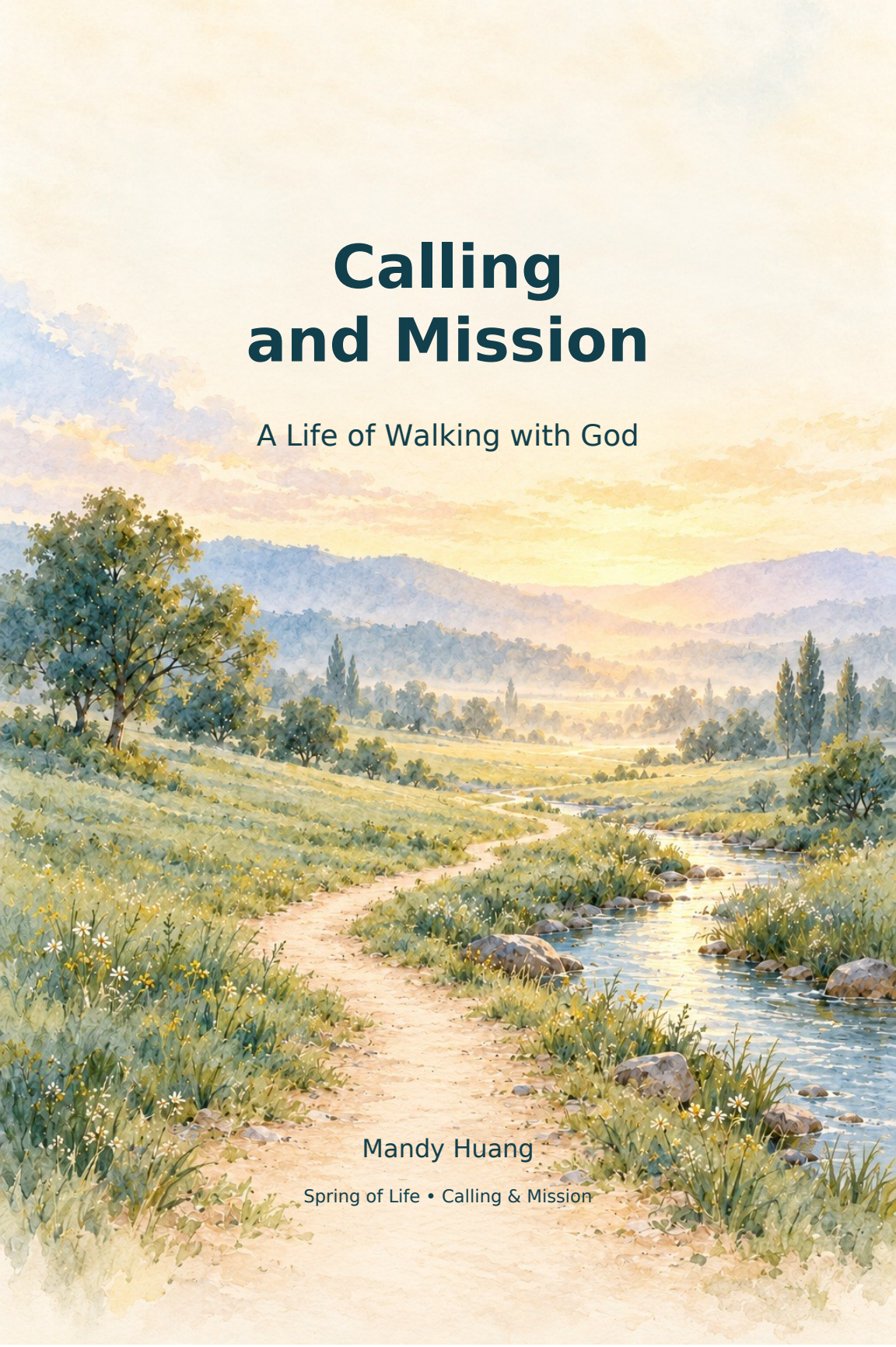




Calling and Mission

A Life of Walking with God

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Spring of Life • Calling & Mission

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Contents

Preface

Notes on Scripture Quotations

Chapter 1: Calling in the Bible

I. The Foundation of Calling

II. The Heart of Calling

III. The Direction of a Called Life

IV. Responding to God's Call

V. Called and Entrusted

VI. The Ultimate Goal of Calling

Conclusion: Calling Brings Us to God Himself

Chapter 2: Calling and the Meaning of Life

I. Developing a Worldview

II. Developing a View of Life

III. Developing Our Values

IV. Rethinking Wealth

V. Redefining Success

VI. A Life of Freedom and Abundance

Conclusion: Reordering Our Understanding of Life's Meaning

Chapter 3: Calling and Character Formation

I. The Fear of the Lord

II. Trust

III. Humility

IV. Obedience

V. Faithfulness

VI. Perseverance

Conclusion: Character Formation Is Ultimately About More Than Becoming a “Better Version of Ourselves”

Chapter 4: Calling and Mission

I. Calling and the Christian Life

II. Calling and the Church

III. The Relationship Between Calling and Mission

IV. Calling and the Mission of the Gospel

V. Living Out Our Mission

VI. Responding to God's Call and Living
Out Our Mission

Conclusion: From Him, Through Him, and
To Him

Afterword

About the Author

He said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers for men.”

— Matthew 4:19 (World English Bible)

Preface

I began writing *Calling and Mission: A Life of Walking with God* because of a question that has stayed with me throughout my life of faith: How does God call people, and how do we respond to Him in real life?

As I remember it, I was about fourteen and in junior high school when I had an experience that I later came to associate with “calling.” At the time, I had not read the Bible, heard the gospel, or attended church. I did not know how to understand that experience. After coming to faith in Christ, I looked back on the path I had taken and began to reflect on its meaning. Through Scripture, I also began learning to discern God’s leading in my life.

On 3 June 2003, I was baptised into Christ. I remember driving home from another city after a small group meeting later that same

year, following my baptism. Full of excitement, joy, and hopeful anticipation, I confidently told those travelling with me, “One day, I will write a book.” That scene remains vivid in my memory. At the time, I did not know what I would write, or when and how that desire would be fulfilled.

In 2015, I began studying biblical leadership and biblical counselling. In early 2019, I began offering counselling to others, and I have continued to do so ever since. These experiences of learning and counselling have provided an important background for my reflections on calling, growth in the Christian life, and living out our mission.

From building the Spring of Life website to writing this book, I have been responding to the same responsibility entrusted to me by God. This later became the mission of Spring of Life: Rooted in biblical truth, Spring of Life

helps people respond to God's call and live out the mission He has entrusted to them.

While improving the website's content, I experienced the leading of the Holy Spirit and received reminders and encouragement from two brothers in Christ. I began organising my studies of Scripture and reflections on calling and mission into a book. In this process, my long-held desire to write a book gradually took on a clearer focus and direction.

Looking back on my experiences, I began to consider how God calls and leads people.

Scripture helps me know the God who calls me more deeply and discern His leading in my life. In writing, I have sought to return to the biblical text, pay attention to its context, and distinguish between what Scripture has clearly revealed and my own understanding of my experiences.

The book's four chapters begin with calling in the Bible and then explore the meaning of life, character formation, and living out our mission. These themes are connected.

Knowing the God who calls us helps us understand life anew. The truth we receive needs to shape our character through our relationships and choices. It also needs to be put into practice in our families, work, churches, and everyday lives, as we learn to carry out our responsibilities faithfully.

A life of walking with God runs through all these reflections. Through Christ's redemption, we are reconciled to God. By His grace, we continue to trust and obey Him, support one another as fellow believers, and fulfil together the responsibilities entrusted to us. Knowing the Lord, growing in the Christian life, and putting our faith into

practice often happen together and continue throughout our lives.

My understanding of biblical truth remains very limited. I need to continue studying and learning, and to keep putting what I understand into practice. This book shares my studies of Scripture and my reflections along the way. I want my understanding to continue to be tested by God's word, and I value reminders from fellow Christians that are faithful to Scripture.

This book is written primarily for Christians who want to understand God's call, reflect on the meaning of life, and learn to respond to Him in everyday life. Whether you are just beginning to trust Christ or have followed Him for many years, whether you are seeking direction, carrying heavy responsibilities, or going through a life transition, may these

pages accompany you as you bring your questions before God.

As you read, follow the Scripture references in this book and read the relevant passages in your Bible, together with their surrounding context. Make time for prayer and reflection as well. Some ideas take time to understand; we can begin responding by taking one step that is already clear to us today. You can also read and discuss the book with brothers and sisters in Christ, learning together in your shared life and putting the truth you receive into practice in your own circumstances.

I hope this book will help us know more deeply the God who creates, redeems, and calls people, and learn to trust and obey Him by His grace. We cannot always see the road ahead, but we can rely on Him, take today's responsibilities seriously, accept help where

we are limited, and entrust to Him the outcomes beyond our control.

May the writing and sharing of this book help people know Christ more deeply and give glory to God!

Notes on Scripture Quotations

The Chinese original uses the Chinese Union Version with New Punctuation (Shen edition) for direct Scripture quotations. The English pre-release edition uses the World English Bible (WEB) for direct English quotations.

Quoted Scripture appears in quotation marks. “Excerpt” indicates that only part of the cited passage is quoted. Multiple references are separated by commas or semicolons, and an en dash marks a continuous range of verses. The wording of direct quotations is retained from the selected Bible text; it is not mechanically altered to match the spelling or terminology of the surrounding prose.

Summaries, explanations, and applications not presented as direct quotations are the author’s

exposition. Readers are encouraged to consult the cited passages and read them in context.

Bible books are named in the text, and Scripture references identify the book, chapter, and verse, for example, John 1:12.

[EDITORIAL CONFIRMATION PENDING:
The final WEB edition and text date, direct quotations and excerpt boundaries, textual differences from the Chinese edition, and final Scripture attribution are to be confirmed before publication. This pre-release edition does not claim that permissions requiring specific approval have been granted.]

Chapter 1: Calling in the Bible



What do we live for?

Who am I? Whom do I belong to? How should I live this life? What is the meaning of my work, family, abilities, experiences, and choices? If God calls people, what is He calling them to? How should we respond?

When we speak of “calling,” we often think first of a career, ministry, direction in life, or a particular task to accomplish. As a result, “What is my calling?” is often understood as “What exactly does God want me to do?”

In this book, “calling” refers to God’s summons to people and their response to Him. Scripture records calls in different circumstances, some involving a specific commission or responsibility. The New Testament also emphasises that God calls people in Christ to turn to Him, receive salvation, live holy lives, and look forward to the glory He has promised.

Understanding calling begins with God's initiative and grace. We therefore need to ask first: What is the God who calls us like? What is our relationship with Him?

God created human beings and gave them life, dignity, and responsibility. Although sin estranged them from Him, He took the initiative in redemption, reconciling sinners to Himself in Jesus Christ. He calls people to repent, believe, and turn to Him. Those who have received His grace are given new life in Christ and are continually renewed by the Holy Spirit. They follow Christ throughout their lives, live according to His will, and look forward to being with Him forever.

To understand calling, then, we need first to know the God who calls us and understand our lives and responsibilities in relation to Him. Without this foundation, we may treat calling as a form of self-fulfilment and mistake our

personal ambitions for a mission entrusted to us by God.

Abraham left his country, his relatives, and his father's house. Moses heard God call him in the wilderness. The prophets received God's word, and Jesus called His disciples to follow Him. Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, and the direction of his life changed. The disciples were also sent to bear witness to Christ in the world.

These calls took place in different historical settings and each had specific content. Yet together they show that God takes the initiative in revealing Himself, and people are called to trust Him, obey Him, and carry out the responsibilities He entrusts to them.

To know this God who calls people, we must also return to what Scripture reveals about creation. Genesis 1 repeatedly records God speaking and what He commands coming into

being. John reveals further: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”; “All things were made through him”; and “In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1, 3–4, excerpts). The “Word” here is the eternal Son, who became flesh as Jesus Christ (John 1:1–2, 14, 17–18). Hebrews also teaches that God created all things through His Son and has spoken to us through Him (Hebrews 1:1–3).

The God who created all things is also the God who reveals Himself to people and accomplishes redemption in Christ. Yet His commands in creation need to be distinguished from His calls to people. The former reveal His power to bring all things into existence; the latter involve His summons to people and their response before Him. Recognising their connection does not mean treating them as the same concept.

This chapter considers God's call to people through six related aspects, none of which can replace the others: its foundation, heart, direction for life, response, entrusted responsibility, and ultimate goal. These help us understand identity, turning to God, holiness, following Christ, mission, and glory. These six aspects provide a framework for this chapter's discussion, based on the overall witness of Scripture. They are not a classification of calling explicitly listed in the Bible.

This is an order for understanding and discussion, rather than six stages completed one after another. Turning to God, being renewed, following Christ, and carrying out entrusted responsibilities are interwoven throughout a believer's life. Our eternal hope also begins to shape how we live today.

The chapter begins with identity and responsibility in creation to explain why people are accountable to God. It then considers salvation and new life in Christ. When the New Testament speaks of believers being called, it often begins directly with God's saving work in Christ. Beginning with identity here is therefore a choice in the structure of the book. It does not mean that people already have the identity of God's children before they are saved.

I. The Foundation of Calling

Knowing Who I Am and Whom I Belong To

1. Understanding “What Should I Do?” Begins with Knowing “Who Am I?”

The biblical account of humanity begins with God's creation.

“God said, ‘Let’s make man in our image, after our likeness. ...’ God created man in his own image. In God’s image he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26–27, excerpts).

This passage connects human identity with responsibility. Human beings are created in God’s image and entrusted with governing the created world. Yet life and dignity are not rewards earned by completing a task. We receive life from God and bear responsibility as His creatures. We need to do our entrusted work wholeheartedly, but achievement cannot determine whether a person deserves respect.

“Image” and “likeness” together describe the unique relationship between human beings and their Creator. The passage does not explain them as two components of human nature or limit God’s image to a single ability. Although created in God’s image, human

beings remain creatures, fundamentally distinct from their Creator. God is spirit, so we cannot simply equate human appearance with the nature of God (John 4:24).

In light of Genesis 1:26–28 and the wider witness of Scripture, human beings have a unique identity and dignity. God has given them the ability to know Him and respond to Him, as well as the responsibility to manage the created world under His authority. This responsibility should be exercised with faithfulness to the Creator and care for what He has made, rather than taking whatever we want or destroying what He has made.

Both men and women are created in God's image and have equal human dignity and worth.

Human dignity does not depend on wealth, education, occupation, ability, influence, or the approval of others. Nor does it depend on

how much work a person has done for the church.

Even after sin entered the world, human beings remained made in God's image.

Genesis 9:6 uses this truth to emphasise that human life must not be taken arbitrarily.

James 3:9–10 likewise teaches that we must not praise God while cursing people made in His likeness. Sin damages human life and relationships, but it has not erased the dignity of being created by God.

As I seek direction in life, then, I need to recognise that my life comes from God and that I am someone He has created. I need to take my responsibilities seriously, but I do not have to prove through achievement that I deserve to exist. I have dignity, and I should also respect others and be accountable to my Creator and to other people.

2. Adam: After Sin, the Fundamental Human Problem Concerns Our Relationship with God

God created Adam and placed him in the garden of Eden “to cultivate and keep it” (Genesis 2:15, excerpt). Work and responsibility were originally part of God’s good creation. After he sinned, the ground was cursed because of him; work was accompanied by hardship and frustration, and he would eventually return to dust (Genesis 3:17–19). The curse brought by sin must therefore not be confused with work itself.

Adam received both life and responsibility from God. His responsibility was grounded in his relationship with his Creator. This reminds us that work enables people to use their abilities, serve others, and bear responsibility, but cannot be the measure of a person’s entire

worth. Unemployment, retirement, or diminished physical ability may change what someone can do, but cannot remove the dignity God has given their life.

Genesis 3 records that after disobeying God's command, Adam and Eve felt shame and fear and hid from His presence. God called to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9, excerpt). He then questioned them about their actions, exposed their sin, and pronounced judgement.

God was not unaware of Adam's location. His questioning confronted those who were hiding with their actions and with why their relationship with Him had changed. Here we see both God taking the initiative to approach people and His exposure and judgement of sin.

This call cannot simply be equated with the New Testament proclamation of the gospel calling sinners to trust Christ. It reminds us

that when God speaks to people, He does more than help them find direction: He also confronts them with sin and the responsibilities they must bear.

The fundamental human problem is therefore more than a lack of planning for life. People receive life from God yet disobey His commands. They should trust Him, yet fear and hide from Him. It is this estrangement from God through sin that the biblical unfolding of redemption and calling addresses.

3. Our Identity as Created Beings Must Be Distinguished from Our New Identity in Christ

Before Adam heard God call him, he was already a person God had created. Our identity and dignity as created beings do not depend on later receiving a particular calling. Yet because sin has estranged us from God, we also need His redemption. In Christ, God calls

people to turn to Him, giving those who receive His grace new life and belonging in Him.

In terms of creation, everyone receives life from God, lives under the Creator's sovereignty, and has the dignity of being made in His image. Yet this identity as a created being does not mean that a person is already reconciled to God or has already become His child in the sense of redemption. Sin separates people from God, and they need His redemption.

John writes, "But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become God's children, to those who believe in his name" (John 1:12). Peter describes believers who have received grace as "a chosen race," "a royal priesthood," "a holy nation," and "a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9, excerpts). Paul also says, "Therefore if

anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17, excerpt). These passages describe different aspects of the new life and identity people receive through Christ.

Becoming God’s children means being welcomed by Him and being able to draw near to Him. Becoming His people also means worshipping Him and bearing witness to Him alongside other believers. This belonging comes from God’s grace, not our positions or achievements in the church.

A person who has not yet turned to Christ does not thereby lose their dignity as a created being. Nor does being created by God automatically mean possessing salvation in Christ. Creation and redemption are related, but they must be clearly distinguished.

To understand calling, then, we need to know where life comes from and how we should be accountable to God as His creatures. We must

also face a personal question: Have I been reconciled to God through faith in Christ? Calling is grounded in the God who creates people, reveals Himself, and redeems them in Christ.

II. The Heart of Calling

Returning to God

1. Our Deepest Problem Is More than Uncertainty about Direction: It Is Estrangement from God through Sin

Planning can help us organise our lives, but it cannot resolve the separation from God caused by sin. In Scripture, sin includes both specific evil actions and resistance to God: refusing to trust Him or live according to His will. Sin offends God and harms others. Its consequences cannot be resolved merely by adjusting our plans for life.

Adam hid from God after he sinned. The people of Israel repeatedly turned away from Him, and the prophets called them to repent and return to God. Through Zechariah, God said, “‘Return to me,’ says the LORD of Armies, ‘and I will return to you’” (Zechariah 1:3, excerpt). Joel also conveyed God’s words: “turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning” (Joel 2:12, excerpt). These calls point to abandoning rebellion and trusting God again. Fasting and weeping should express genuine repentance; they cannot replace turning to God in the heart.

As Jesus began His public ministry, He proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled, and God’s Kingdom is at hand! Repent, and believe in the Good News” (Mark 1:15, excerpt). Repentance includes acknowledging sin, abandoning the path of resistance to God, and

turning to Him. Believing the gospel means trusting the redemption God has accomplished in Christ. Repentance and faith are closely connected: both turn us from reliance on ourselves to the grace God gives. People cannot remove sin by improving their behaviour or reconcile themselves to God through religious enthusiasm.

As we consider God's call, then, we first need to ask ourselves: Have I repented, trusted Christ, and turned to God? Career direction, life goals, and a desire to serve each deserve serious attention, but they cannot replace our need for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God.

2. Paul: Knowing Christ Radically Changes the Direction of Life

Before encountering Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul already had knowledge, zeal, and clear goals. He had received rigorous

training in Jewish tradition and had believed that he ought to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9). He thought he was being faithful to God, yet in his zeal he persecuted those who belonged to Christ.

Acts records that light from heaven shone around him, and he heard a voice: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” (Acts 9:4–5, excerpts). Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, leading him to recognise that the One he had been resisting was the very Christ sent by God.

Paul’s transformation began with Christ taking the initiative to approach him. His former judgements were corrected, and the centre and direction of his life changed. He later valued knowing Christ above all else. Rather than relying on his own righteousness, he received righteousness from God through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:7–10).

He no longer treated his religious credentials and performance as the basis for his standing before God. On the basis of Christ's redemption, God declares those who believe in Jesus righteous. This is "justification": sinners are forgiven by God, declared righteous, and given standing before Him. This acceptance is by grace and grounded in Christ, rather than earned through personal performance (Romans 3:23–26).

This experience reminds us that effort and enthusiasm do not in themselves guarantee the right direction. People can have a strong sense of mission and still need God's correction. They can be familiar with matters of faith and still need to know and trust Christ more truly. We too need to examine ourselves: Am I responding to the Lord, or simply trying to prove that I have been right all along? Turning to God means trusting Christ, acknowledging

Him as Lord, and allowing His truth to guide our lives anew.

3. Calling and Salvation Are Closely Connected but Cannot Simply Be Equated

The word “called” in the wedding feast parable in Matthew 22:1–14 and the “call” closely linked to justification and glory in Romans 8:30 occur in different contexts and carry different emphases. The former reminds people to respond seriously to the king’s invitation. The latter reveals God’s work in saving those who belong to Him and ultimately bringing them into glory.

When calling concerns sinners turning to God, it is inseparable from salvation. Yet salvation cannot be summarised merely as “issuing a summons.” God accomplishes redemption in Christ, so that those who trust Him receive forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and new

life, and look forward to the final fulfilment of salvation.

Paul explains that Christ died for us while we were still sinners, demonstrating God's love (Romans 5:8), and that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). The eternal Son became human, died for our sins, and rose from the dead, accomplishing the redemption we could never achieve for ourselves. Christ's death and resurrection are central to the gospel proclaimed by the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Turning to God therefore has a definite foundation: we trust the Lord who gave His life for sinners and rose from the dead.

Repentance and faith are our response to grace, not achievements that earn salvation. Ephesians 2:8–10 explains that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. Those

who receive grace are also created in Christ to do the good works God has prepared.

Grace saves people and enables them to begin a new life. Good works are not achievements that earn salvation, but the fruit that a life transformed by grace should bear. Caring for people in need, honestly fulfilling commitments, and willingly bearing responsibility should all be concrete responses to trusting Christ. The gospel directs our attention to Christ, turning us from self-reliance to trust in God, and from estrangement to reconciliation with Him.

4. Turning to God Brings Both Our Personal and Shared Lives before Him

People may attend gatherings, be familiar with biblical language, and undertake church work while still needing to ask whether their hearts have truly turned to God. Quoting Isaiah,

Jesus said, “These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). When outward actions are detached from trust, repentance, and obedience, they cannot express genuine worship.

Bible study, prayer, worship, and service should all help us know, trust, and obey God, and learn to love others. In these activities, we also need to let God’s word correct our thoughts and actions, learning to put the truth we receive into practice in our lives.

Turning to God also brings us into the shared life of His people. Ephesians 2:19–22 explains that believers become members of God’s household and are built up together in Christ. The church is the community of those who belong to Christ. We trust God personally and, through Christ, also belong to one another as believers. Together we worship, receive

encouragement and correction, share one another's burdens, and learn to love.

This life of belonging to one another has concrete expressions. Believers in the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42).

Today, churches likewise need to help believers continue following Christ through teaching faithful to Scripture, shared worship, prayer, and care for one another. Turning to God should not remain a private feeling. It also needs to take shape in a life of belonging to other believers.

Paul urges believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling, then immediately speaks of humility, gentleness, patience, and unity (Ephesians 4:1–6). We belong to one Lord and share one hope. Our response to God's call is expressed not only in our

personal decisions but also in how we listen to differing views, handle disagreements, care for those who are weak, and follow the Lord together with other believers.

Turning to God therefore involves the whole of life: acknowledging sin, trusting Christ, receiving grace, and learning obedience in both personal and shared life. Those who receive grace also need to consider further: Since I belong to Him, how should I live?

III. The Direction of a Called Life

Being Set Apart for God

1. God Calls People to Turn to Him and to Live as Those Who Belong to Him

God calls people to turn to Him and enables those who receive His grace to begin learning to live as people who belong to Him. Peter

writes, “but just as he who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all of your behavior” (1 Peter 1:15). Paul also says, “For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Holiness involves being set apart for God and living in a way consistent with His character and will. Belonging and conduct cannot be separated. Those who belong to God are called to turn from sin in their thoughts, desires, relationships, and choices, and to learn honesty, justice, and love. First Thessalonians 4 applies this calling particularly to the body, sexuality, and responsibility toward others.

This does not mean that believers are already entirely without sin in this life. First John 1:8 reminds us that claiming to be without sin is self-deception. A holy life involves continual confession, repentance, receiving forgiveness, and learning obedience through reliance on

God's grace. Confession is more than admitting that "we did not do something well." It is acknowledging before God that we have acted against His will. God promises to forgive and cleanse those who confess their sins, enabling us to face Him again and continue in obedience (1 John 1:9).

We cannot earn God's acceptance through holy conduct. God graciously makes us His own in Christ, and those who receive His grace respond to His call by pursuing a life consistent with that belonging. Holiness is neither a special option for a select few nor a means of developing a sense of superiority. It is the direction of life for all who belong to God.

This connection between belonging and conduct also appears in Paul's teaching to the Corinthians. He says that they have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name

of the Lord Jesus Christ and by God’s Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11). He then urges them to flee sexual immorality and glorify God in their bodies (1 Corinthians 6:18–20). Here, “sanctified” emphasises that they have already been set apart for God. They also need to live out this belonging in practice.

2. Joseph: Faithfulness to God When Unseen and at a Cost

When Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph, he spoke of his master’s trust in him and pointed out that she was his master’s wife. He concluded, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9, excerpt). Faithfulness to God led him to take both his entrusted responsibilities and interpersonal boundaries seriously.

Potiphar’s wife repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph, and he continued to refuse. One day, he entered the house to do his work when no

one else was inside. She caught him by his garment, but he left it in her hand and ran outside (Genesis 39:10–12). His choice reminds us that even when no one is supervising us, we remain accountable to God.

Holiness concerns inward faithfulness and also requires practical action. When faced with inappropriate relationships, concealed financial dealings, or online temptations, it is not enough to say we know right from wrong. We need to maintain boundaries, leave situations that draw us into sin, and seek help from trustworthy people when necessary.

Joseph was later falsely accused and imprisoned. His faithfulness did not immediately protect him from loss. Scripture therefore offers no formula promising instant success if we simply hold to our principles. Obedience to God may involve misunderstanding, injustice, and cost.

Holiness is grounded in the fact that God deserves our faithfulness. We respect others and refuse to do evil not merely to obtain good results, but because we belong to God and are accountable to Him and to other people.

3. Growth in Holiness Comes from God's Renewal and Requires Our Response

Paul urges believers not to conform to this world but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds, so that they may discern God's will (Romans 12:2). This concerns how we judge success, use power, and choose between personal gain and honesty. God's word corrects our judgements and guides us toward a life pleasing to Him.

Paul explains that those who receive grace behold the Lord's glory and are transformed by His Spirit, becoming increasingly like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). The passage places this

renewal in the context of the new covenant and the Spirit's work, showing that the transformation of life comes from the Lord and is closely connected to knowing Him.

God renews people so that they become like His Son (Romans 8:29). Christ is the image of the invisible God, the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of His being (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). He is the eternal Son who truly reveals the Father.

Human beings, by contrast, are creatures shaped by grace to become increasingly like Christ. Becoming more like Christ does not mean becoming God. It means increasingly reflecting the character Christ has revealed and living in a way that pleases Him.

The Holy Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in people's lives (Galatians 5:22–23). These

qualities enable us to love God and others more fully and change how we handle relationships, bear responsibility, and use our abilities. Examples include listening during a conflict, restraining our words when angry, and keeping promises even when no one reminds us. Such concrete expressions show how the Spirit renews our lives. Paul also urges believers who live by the Spirit to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

God shapes those who belong to Him through His word, the Spirit's work, believers' encouragement and correction of one another, and discipline and trials in life. Philippians 2:12–13 connects our obedience with God's work within us. Those who receive grace earnestly live out the salvation they have received, and both their desire to act and their ability to do so come from God's work within

them. This leads us both to rely humbly on God and to respond to Him earnestly.

This growth in life, in which we continually turn from sin, learn holiness, and become more like Christ by God's grace, is an important aspect of sanctification. Those who receive grace rely on the Holy Spirit to turn from sin in everyday life. When we have harmed others, we need to earnestly confess our sin, apologise, and do what we can to repair the harm. Through prayer and reading Scripture, we learn obedience and continue repenting and following the Lord after we stumble. Such growth involves lifelong learning; it cannot be accomplished by human willpower alone.

4. Holiness Means Living in the World as Those Who Belong to God

When Jesus prayed for His disciples, He did not ask the Father to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one and sanctify them in the truth (John 17:15, 17). The disciples continued living in the world, but were called to act according to God's truth.

Holiness therefore takes shape in money, sexuality, marriage, family, work, power, speech, and relationships. It leads us to deal honestly, treat people justly, keep promises, show mercy to the vulnerable, acknowledge mistakes, forgive others, and fulfil our responsibilities.

Conduct in church cannot cancel out harm done at home, and public ministry cannot conceal dishonesty in private. Speaking of

love from the pulpit requires learning to listen patiently at home. Pursuing results at work requires maintaining honesty. Bearing leadership responsibility requires concern for justice and other people's dignity. When we discover that our words or actions have harmed someone, we should earnestly confess our sin, apologise, and take responsibility for what we have done.

Knowing God's holiness makes us more aware of our need for grace and teaches us to treat others humbly. Pursuing holiness means learning faithfulness to God in real life and treating others with honesty, justice, and love.

IV. Responding to God's Call

Walking with God in Everyday Life

1. Following Christ Is Central to Responding to God's Call

Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers for men” (Matthew 4:19, excerpt). This call connects following with mission. The disciples follow Christ and are also shaped and led by Him to participate in the work He entrusts to them.

Following Christ extends throughout a disciple's life. We need to keep trusting the Lord, listening to His word, obeying Him, and bearing responsibility in relationship with Him.

Jesus uses the relationship between the vine and its branches to explain how disciples bear fruit. The branches must remain in Him; apart

from Him they can do nothing (John 15:4–5). Following Christ therefore involves more than receiving a task. It also involves remaining connected to Him, receiving His words, and obeying Him in His love (John 15:7, 9–10).

Prayer, reading Scripture, and worshipping together help us rely on the Lord and find direction for our daily responsibilities through our relationship with Him.

Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Luke 9:23, excerpt). Denying ourselves does not mean denying our dignity as created beings or allowing others to harm us at will. It means setting aside a life governed by self as the highest authority and submitting to Christ’s lordship. Taking up the cross includes willingness to bear the cost of faithfulness to Him. Following Christ may require giving up dishonest gain,

acknowledging our wrongdoing, or remaining faithful to the Lord under pressure. These responses take place in everyday life.

Following Christ involves receiving grace as well as trust, obedience, and self-denial. It teaches us to ask in our daily choices: How can I respond to the will the Lord has already revealed? How can I remain faithful to Him and treat others with love?

2. Abraham: Trusting God's Promise before the Whole Road Is Clear

God said to Abraham, "Leave your country, and your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1, excerpt). Hebrews 11:8 explains that by faith he obeyed and went out, even though he did not know where he was going.

Abraham could not see the whole path ahead, but he had received God's revelation and promise. His faith had a definite object and foundation: the God who had revealed Himself and given His promise.

Believers today cannot foresee every outcome either, but they can live according to the truth God has already revealed. Scripture teaches us about God's attributes, salvation, and will, and the Holy Spirit helps us understand and obey His word.

Abraham's faith rested on God's explicit revelation and promise. Today, as we seek God's leading, we also need discernment. We must not treat our strong feelings as though they were automatically God's commands. Our personal desires and judgements about circumstances need to be tested by Scripture. We also need to pray, listen to appropriate counsel, and take our actual responsibilities

seriously. Favourable circumstances do not prove that a decision is necessarily from God; difficulties do not mean that a course of obedience is necessarily wrong.

Faith enables us to rely on God with our limited understanding and makes us willing to receive correction. An unclear future does not prevent us from being faithful to responsibilities already clear today. However strong our personal conviction may be, it still needs to be tested by God's word.

3. Following Christ Extends through Family, Work, and Everyday Life

Scripture records the extraordinary experiences of Moses, Isaiah, Paul, and others when they were called. These experiences each have their own historical setting.

Believers today do not have to wait for the same events before responding to the Lord.

We can learn to follow Him in daily responsibilities that are already clear.

Following Christ in everyday life involves how spouses treat one another, how parents raise their children, and how children respect their parents. It also involves honesty at work, how we use money and time, and how we handle power, conflict, and temptation.

Paul urges believers to do everything in word and action in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17). In his teaching to slaves of that time, he also says, “And whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Colossians 3:23). This verse has its historical setting. Applying it to work today requires reading it alongside the principle in 3:17 that our whole lives belong to the Lord. Working conscientiously also includes treating colleagues honestly and fairly. Those with management responsibility are likewise

accountable to the Lord and must not use this passage to demand unconditional obedience from others (Colossians 4:1).

Family and work are important settings in which those whom God calls follow God and carry out entrusted responsibilities. Some use “vocational calling” to describe their responsibilities at work, and this expression can be meaningful. What matters is that we do not treat every career choice as a command specially revealed by God or turn a particular occupation into our ultimate identity.

When making specific choices, we need to exercise careful judgement in light of biblical principles, family responsibilities, abilities, circumstances, and mature counsel. Some choices concern arrangements that can be discussed; others concern moral responsibilities that are already clear.

Uncertainty about our career direction should

not cause us to neglect responsibilities such as working honestly, caring for our families, or repaying debts we owe.

Roles and stages of life change, but following Christ continues through them all. Daily responsibilities do not lose their meaning because we have had no extraordinary experience.

4. Following Christ Is Lifelong Trust and Obedience

Peter left his nets to follow Jesus, yet later denied Him three times out of fear. After His resurrection, Jesus entrusted him again with caring for His sheep (John 21:15–17) and said to him, “Follow me” (John 21:19, excerpt).

Peter’s experience shows us that failure may occur along the path of following Christ. Yet after failure, we still need to return to the Lord, receive His grace and correction, and

continue in obedience. Grace enables us to move forward again and also leads us to take seriously the consequences of sin and the responsibilities we must bear.

Continuing to follow the Lord requires us to keep listening to His word, acknowledge our limitations and sins, and rely on the Holy Spirit's help. Jesus promised His disciples at that time that the Spirit would teach them and remind them of what He had said (John 14:26). Today, we know Christ through the apostles' witness recorded in Scripture and ask the Spirit to help us understand and obey the truth.

Romans 8:13–14 connects the Spirit's leading with putting sinful deeds to death by the Spirit and explains that those led by God's Spirit are His children. In this passage, the emphasis is on how those who belong to God turn from sin and live a new life by the Spirit. Being “led by

the Holy Spirit” cannot be understood merely as receiving guidance on choosing a career or deciding where to live.

When we choose honesty under pressure, are willing to repent when corrected, and learn to trust the Lord in difficulty, we are also responding to the Spirit’s work in everyday life.

Following Christ throughout life means continuing to trust Him, receive His correction, learn obedience, and grow together with other believers amid changing circumstances.

V. Called and Entrusted

Sent to Participate in God's Work

1. Calling and Mission Are Closely Connected but Have Different Emphases

Calling concerns God's summons to people, and its specific meaning must be understood in the context of the passage. "Mission" emphasises the responsibility entrusted to those whom God calls, which they must carry out faithfully. People bear responsibilities in their lives as created beings, and Christ also gives His disciples an explicit gospel commission. Responsibilities arising from creation and the gospel commission are connected, but each has its own specific content and needs to be understood separately. From the beginning of creation, God entrusted human beings with governing the created

world. He also placed Adam in the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15). These are human responsibilities before the Creator. Sin distorted how people fulfil them, but did not remove their accountability to God.

Christ's commission to His disciples to bear witness to Him and make disciples of all nations belongs to His redemptive work. Family, work, and social responsibilities cannot replace gospel witness. Nor can gospel ministry justify neglecting family, honesty, or justice. Proclaiming Christ and living in a way that pleases Him should be consistent with each other.

Mission must be understood in relationship with God. People know and follow the Lord and, in the light of His word, discern and carry out entrusted responsibilities. We can make plans and use our abilities, but our personal

desires need to be guided by God's truth. We should not begin by assuming that our plans must be His will.

Christ has already made the shared gospel mission clear, while individuals participate in different ways. Some preach, some teach, and some offer hospitality, give, pray, or walk alongside others. Members of the church need to work together according to their gifts and the needs they encounter. We do not have to wait until we can summarise “my unique mission” in a single sentence before taking up responsibilities that are already clear. As we move through different stages of life, the ways we bear responsibility may also change. These arrangements become clearer gradually through prayer, discernment together with other believers, and actual service.

2. Moses: God Sends, Provides, and Requires a Response

God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, called him by name, told him of the Israelites' suffering in Egypt, and sent him to Pharaoh to bring the people out (Exodus 3:1–10). This mission arose from God's will and action.

Moses asked, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God answered, “Certainly I will be with you” (Exodus 3:11–12, excerpts). Moses relied on the God who sent him and on His presence.

Later, Moses worried that the people would not believe him and protested that he was not eloquent. God promised to help him speak and arranged for Aaron to assist him. Yet Scripture also records that when Moses continued to resist, God became angry with him (Exodus 4:1–16). God understands human limitations

and provides help, but also requires people to respond to His commands.

Moses' experience reminds us that carrying out what God entrusts to us requires reliance on Him and acceptance of the help He provides. We still need to take training seriously, use our abilities well, and face our limitations honestly. We rely on the God who sends us. The help He gives enables us to bear responsibility in faith and learn to obey the commands He has already revealed.

3. God's Work Is Greater than the Responsibility Entrusted to Any Individual

We may speak of "my mission," but need to remember that the responsibility entrusted to us is only one part of God's work. No person or organisation can encompass all of God's work within its own plans. God promised Abraham that all families would be blessed,

sent Moses to lead the people, and sent prophets to convey His word. At the centre of the history of redemption is the redemption Jesus Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection.

After His resurrection, Christ said to His disciples, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” He then breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit!” (John 20:21–22, excerpts). The passage connects the disciples’ commission with the Holy Spirit. They are sent to bear witness to Christ, but cannot undertake or repeat His unique work of redemption.

Acts 1:8 records that the Holy Spirit empowers the disciples to bear witness to Christ to the ends of the earth. Matthew 28:18–20 explains that, with all authority in heaven and on earth, Christ commands them to make disciples of all nations, baptise them, and

teach them to observe His commands. He promises to be with them always. This mission includes proclaiming the gospel and helping people continue to know the Lord and obey His word. The church needs to undertake such teaching and pastoral care in its shared life.

Carrying out this shared mission therefore requires the church to respond together. We need to ask: What has God already revealed? In today's circumstances, which responsibilities should I bear, and with whom do I need to work?

Participating in God's work requires both earnest action and acknowledgement of our limitations. The church bears witness to Christ, and individuals bear different responsibilities within it. We need to pray, discuss, support one another, and be willing to have our plans examined. God is the One who accomplishes redemption and the Lord of

mission. We have received grace and been entrusted with responsibility, and we serve alongside other believers.

4. Responsibilities Differ, and Faithfulness Includes Working Together

Paul describes the church as a body. Though its members are many, they belong to one body, have different gifts and functions, and need and care for one another (1 Corinthians 12). Peter likewise urges believers to serve one another with the gifts they have received, as good stewards of God's grace, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:10–11). Gifts therefore carry a responsibility to serve others. Those who preach publicly need the other members, and those who quietly care for people in need must not be undervalued.

Applying this principle to life, we should also respect the responsibilities people bear according to their roles, abilities, and circumstances. Some preach publicly; others walk alongside particular people. Some cross cultures to proclaim the gospel; others work honestly in their professions. Some bear leadership responsibilities; others faithfully raise children. These responsibilities cannot all be classed as the same kind of commission, and their worth cannot be judged solely by visibility or scale.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus describes a master returning to settle accounts with his servants and commending those who were faithful (Matthew 25:14–30). The parable appears in the context of His teaching about watchfulness. It reminds them to take entrusted responsibilities seriously as they await His return. We should use what we have

received faithfully, rather than measure ourselves by what has been entrusted to others or reduce the parable to a formula for achieving measurable results.

Faithfulness includes using gifts well, fulfilling responsibilities wholeheartedly, receiving encouragement and correction, working with others, and being willing to change when mistakes are discovered. Those with leadership responsibilities need to listen to others. Those serving need to keep their commitments and seek help when something exceeds their abilities.

We take the responsibilities we have received seriously, work with other members of the body when our abilities are limited, and entrust to God the outcomes we cannot control. Faithfulness involves both doing our best and relying humbly on Him. All glory belongs to Him.

VI. The Ultimate Goal of Calling

Being with God Forever

1. God's Call Carries Eternal Hope

Careers, roles, and specific forms of service in this life have their limits, and death ends our present way of living. Yet God's call in Christ directs our hope toward a future beyond death.

Peter explains that God has called believers in Christ to His eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10). Paul likewise teaches that God called believers through the gospel so that they might obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14). This hope rests on Christ's redemption and God's promise.

Christ has risen from the dead as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). Paul uses "first fruits" to

explain the close connection between Christ's resurrection and the future resurrection of those who belong to Him. He has already risen, and those who belong to Him will also rise when He returns (1 Corinthians 15:20–23). Believers' ultimate hope includes bodily resurrection and the new heaven and new earth God has promised (Revelation 21:1–4). Our hope is more than escape from the body. It is life brought to fulfilment in God's renewed creation, where sin and death no longer rule.

Eternal hope also strengthens our commitment to today's responsibilities. After discussing the resurrection, Paul urges believers to stand firm and abound in the Lord's work, because their labour in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). Particular work comes to an end, but a life faithful to the Lord does not thereby lose its meaning. Resurrection hope enables us to take life seriously without making immediate

results our final measure. When faithful effort has not yet produced visible results, we can still trust the Lord because His promises will not fail.

2. Paul: Responsibilities Have Their Stages, and Life's Hope Is in Christ

As Paul faced the end of his life, he said, “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). He took his entrusted responsibilities seriously while knowing that his service would reach its end.

Human service has limits, but God's work does not depend on any one person continuing to carry it out. Acts 17:25 explains that God lacks nothing; rather, He gives people life, breath, and all things. The opportunity to participate in His work is a gift of His grace,

and it carries responsibilities we should fulfil faithfully.

Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). He then expressed his hope of departing to be with Christ while explaining the benefit to believers of his remaining alive (Philippians 1:23–24). He valued his service in this life and placed his hope in Christ.

A believer’s departure to be with Christ does not mean that the future bodily resurrection and the promise of a new heaven and new earth have already been fully realised. These hopes are connected but need to be distinguished. Believers who die are with Christ and still await bodily resurrection and the complete fulfilment of salvation. Whether we continue bearing responsibility today or face death, Christ remains the centre and hope of life.

When a ministry ends, a role changes, or physical ability diminishes, we can therefore still trust the Lord. Belonging to God is His gift to us and does not depend on retaining a particular ability to work.

3. Sharing in Glory Means Being Brought to Fulfilment by God in Christ

In Scripture, glory ultimately belongs to God. Those who belong to Him share in glory by the grace God gives in Christ. Today He works through the Holy Spirit to make believers increasingly like Christ. In the future, He will also glorify them with Christ, raise them bodily from the dead, and free them from the rule of decay and death (Romans 8:17, 29–30; 1 Corinthians 15:42–49).

Romans also connects sharing in Christ's glory with suffering with Him. Hardship in this life does not invalidate God's promise,

and the hope of glory does not mean that those who follow the Lord can avoid suffering.

Sharing in glory here points to the fulfilment of God's redemptive work: those He saves will be completely freed from sin and death and be with Him forever. This hope therefore cannot be measured by success or achievement in this life.

Revelation portrays God dwelling with His people, being personally present with them as their God (Revelation 21:3). He wipes away their tears, and there is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:4). His servants serve Him and see His face. The Lord God gives them light, and they reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:3–5).

This shows that eternal life still involves worship, service, and real participation, but is no longer subject to sin, the curse, or death. We need not speculate about every detail. We

can trust God's revealed promise that His people will be fully and forever with Him.

The beginning and end of Scripture thus echo one another profoundly. People receive life from God and hide from Him after sinning. God acts in history to redeem, and Christ accomplishes salvation through His death and resurrection. Ultimately, God's people see His face and dwell with Him in the new creation. This final hope is more than a return to Eden. In the new creation God has promised, sin, the curse, and death are removed, and His people are with Him forever.

Calling includes real responsibility and mission, and also directs life toward this ultimate destination: sharing in God's glory in Christ, worshipping and serving Him forever, and being with Him.

4. Eternal Hope Changes How We Measure Life Today

When our ultimate hope rests in God, success is no longer life's highest measure, and failure no longer determines its entire meaning.

Human worth does not depend on being noticed. Age, retirement, illness, and changes in ability do not remove the dignity of being created by God.

A person can lose a position and still belong to God in Christ. They can finish a task and continue following Him. They may be unable to bear former responsibilities, yet still trust, pray, love others, or humbly receive care in new circumstances. Even when someone's ability to express themselves or act is extremely limited, their dignity is not diminished.

Dignity as a created being belongs to every person. Eternal hope in Christ is grace

received by those who trust Him. The two need to be distinguished, while together reminding us that the worth of a life cannot be judged only by its usefulness.

Eternal hope also leads us to take today's responsibilities more seriously. Precisely because life is God's gift and our labour in the Lord is not in vain, we should use our time and gifts well, work conscientiously, care for our families, love others, and bear witness. At the same time, we can acknowledge our limitations, accept the ending of a season, and entrust ourselves and unfinished matters to God. Sometimes faithfulness includes handing work to others so that other members of the body can continue it, and being willing to receive care.

Responsibilities in this life have their seasons, but God's redemption will reach fulfilment. Those who belong to Him look forward to

bodily resurrection and being with Him forever in the new creation He has promised.

Conclusion: Calling Brings Us to God Himself

Calling brings us to God Himself and enables us to understand and bear responsibility in relationship with Him. Finding a specific direction in life is important, but the foundation, centre, and ultimate hope of calling must all be understood in light of the God who calls people. Paul explains that God calls believers into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).

“Returning to God” concerns reconciliation with Him today through repentance and faith in Christ, and also points toward the future fulfilment of salvation and being with Him forever. From today until that day, those who receive grace are continually renewed, follow

Christ throughout their lives, and faithfully carry out entrusted responsibilities. Knowing God and bearing responsibility are closely connected, and God Himself remains the centre and ultimate hope of it all.

God created human beings and gave them life, dignity, and responsibility. Although sin estranged them from Him, He accomplished redemption in Christ and calls people to repent, believe, and turn to Him.

Those who have received grace are given new life and a new identity. They worship together with other believers, love one another, and serve together. Continually renewed by the Holy Spirit, they follow Christ in family, work, church, and society, carry out entrusted responsibilities, and bear witness to Him. They look forward to bodily resurrection and being with God forever in the new creation.

When we ask, “What is my calling?” we therefore also need to consider: Do I know the God who calls me, and have I been reconciled to Him through faith in Christ? How can I follow Him together with other believers today and faithfully bear the responsibilities He has already made clear? Where does my ultimate hope lie?

These questions help us connect our direction in life with God’s truth and understand daily responsibilities in the light of eternal hope. What we do matters, and the responsibilities entrusted to us require faithfulness. Yet all of this is rooted in God’s grace and directed toward His glory.

Calling begins with God and brings us to Him. By His grace, we know Him, turn to Him, and belong to Him. We follow Christ throughout our lives, faithfully carry out entrusted responsibilities, and look forward to being

with Him forever. From this foundation, we can continue to ask: What is the meaning of the life God has given us? How should we respond to Him in everyday life?

Chapter 2: Calling and the Meaning of Life



Why do we live?

This question follows us throughout life.

When we are young, we may first ask what we will do in the future. As we enter working life, we begin to think about how to succeed. At certain turning points, we ask again: What is all this effort for? Setbacks in our careers, changes in relationships, health problems, children growing up and leaving home, or even finally reaching a goal we have pursued for years can all lead us to reconsider the meaning of life.

We may not discuss this question every day, but our choices continually answer it. What we give our time to, what we pursue most earnestly, what we most fear losing, what makes us feel we have worth, and what makes us see ourselves as failures all reveal where we place the centre of our lives.

Some people find meaning in their careers, others in their families. Some pursue wealth and achievement; others value recognition, belonging, and freedom. Family, work, and relationships are indeed worth cherishing and require attentive care. Yet finite things cannot provide life's ultimate foundation. Someone who loses a job still needs to know who they are. Someone who is no longer noticed still needs to know that their life has worth and to find hope for continuing to live.

Scripture directs us back to the source of life: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). God existed before people began searching for meaning, and He had already given them life before they began planning their lives. Understanding the meaning of life therefore requires knowing the God who created life, and understanding our identity and responsibility before Him.

Chapter 1 explains that, in Christ, God calls sinners to turn to Him. Those who receive His grace are given new life, called to follow Christ throughout their lives, and given hope of being with Him forever. This chapter asks further: How does this calling change our understanding of the world and of life, and the ways we assess value, use wealth, and face success and failure? How can we live each day in a way consistent with our belonging to Him?

This change involves our relationship with God and the renewal of our whole lives. Sin has estranged people from God, and they need Christ's redemption. After receiving grace, we still need the Holy Spirit to keep renewing our thoughts and conduct. We come to understand the meaning of life anew in a relationship of reconciliation with God, and that meaning gradually unfolds as we follow Him.

This chapter explores six aspects: our worldview, our view of life, our values, our understanding of wealth, our understanding of success, and a life of freedom and abundance. These provide a framework to help us think. They are connected with one another and together direct us to God Himself.

I. Developing a Worldview

Recognising Whose World We Live In

A worldview concerns where the world came from, why it exists, who governs history, what is real, what is good, what is evil, and humanity's place in the world. It may sound like a philosophical concept, yet it is closely connected with everyday life.

Whether we believe the world has a Creator affects how we understand life. Whether we believe people have dignity given by God affects how we treat them. Whether we

believe God remains sovereign also affects how we face uncertainty and circumstances beyond our control. Habits, desires, and circumstances also influence human conduct, but our basic understanding of the world continually shapes how we make judgements.

1. The World Begins with God Rather than with Us

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” This is Scripture’s starting point for understanding the world. The psalmist declares further, “The earth is the LORD’s, with its fullness; the world, and those who dwell in it” (Psalm 24:1).

Human beings did not create the world, nor are they its ultimate owners. Our bodies, time, abilities, and resources are all under the Creator’s sovereignty.

Acknowledging that we are created beings helps us recognise our limits. I can study the world, make plans, and use my abilities, but I cannot make my own judgement the highest standard of good and evil or demand that everything happen according to my wishes. God gives people responsibility to care for and govern the created world, and they must carry out that responsibility under His sovereignty.

Recognising that “I am not God” also enables us to lay down burdens that are not ours to bear. We do not have to know every answer, control every outcome, or take responsibility for satisfying everyone. We need to discern what we can and should take responsibility for, act earnestly within that scope, and entrust to God outcomes beyond our abilities.

Entrusting matters to God does not do away with planning and action. James 4:13–16 reminds us not to treat tomorrow, which we

cannot control, as though we already possess it. We still work and make arrangements for our lives, while acknowledging before God that life is a gift we have received and that we cannot secure the future by ourselves.

Acknowledging our limits also helps us distinguish our own responsibilities from those of others. Parents, for example, should do their best to raise their children, but cannot make every choice for them. Leaders should make clear arrangements for work, but cannot ensure that everyone will respond as they expect. Recognising our limits enables us to fulfil our responsibilities conscientiously while respecting the responsibilities others must bear.

2. Human Beings Are Neither Masters of the World nor Meaningless Bystanders

Scripture helps us recognise our limits and also see the dignity we receive from God.

“God created man in his own image. In God’s image he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Human beings are not God, yet they are created in His image and receive life, dignity, and responsibility.

We should neither place ourselves in the Creator’s position nor disregard the worth of our own lives or those of others.

God entrusted human beings with governing the created world and placed Adam in the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15). People are therefore more than consumers of resources; they are also stewards accountable to God. Labour, research, creative work, care, and participation

in public life can all be practical ways of carrying out our responsibilities as created beings.

“Creative work” here means working with the materials and abilities God gives us. It must not be confused with God’s act of bringing all things into existence. Human governance is also subject to God’s will and requires concern for the land, resources, and other people’s dignity. The ability to exercise a certain power does not give us the right to use it however we please.

Such a worldview leads us to take our own place in the world seriously. Caring for someone in the family, providing a reliable service at work, and upholding justice in the community all have practical significance. One person’s responsibilities may have a narrow scope, yet they remain connected with other people and the created world.

When we consider care for the created world and meeting human needs, the value of work cannot be judged by income alone. Cleaning, nursing, growing crops, repairing things, and caring for family members all meet people's practical needs. Society requires many kinds of labour. Respecting workers and treating them fairly are part of taking our responsibility to care for the created world seriously.

3. The World Is Good and Also Broken

Genesis 1:31 describes everything God made as “very good.” Genesis 3 records how, after people disobeyed God, sin damaged relationships between people and God, among human beings, and between people and the land. The world today still displays the goodness of creation, while also being filled

with the harm, toil, and death that result from sin.

Recognising the goodness of creation enables us to give thanks, appreciate it, learn, and build. Recognising the reality of sin keeps us from treating education, institutions, technology, or personal effort as our ultimate salvation. These can improve circumstances, but cannot by themselves bring sinners forgiveness and reconciliation with God or remove death.

Scripture places our hope in Christ's redemption and the renewal God has promised. Romans 8:19–23 portrays creation groaning together as it waits to be freed from bondage to decay. The One seated on the throne declares, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5, excerpt). This promise points to its fulfilment in the new heaven and new earth. It cannot be used

directly as a guarantee that every present difficulty will immediately disappear.

We can therefore engage seriously with the world as it is, while acknowledging that we cannot accomplish its ultimate redemption. Caring for those who have been hurt, addressing injustice, and making good use of technology and resources are responsibilities we need to bear. The complete renewal we hope for, however, depends on God fulfilling His promise.

Waiting for God to fulfil His promise does not mean ignoring present harm and injustice. Harm still needs to be exposed, injustice stopped, and wrongdoers held accountable. Trusting God enables us to continue doing good amid brokenness, while also allowing us to weep, seek help, and wait for justice that has not yet come.

Jesus Christ entered this broken world, truly experienced human hardship, and accomplished redemption through His death and resurrection. Our hope therefore has a definite foundation. God does not ask people to deny darkness by adopting an optimistic attitude. Rather, He turns our eyes to the risen Lord so that we continue trusting Him in a world not yet fully renewed.

II. Developing a View of Life

Understanding Where Life Comes From and Why We Are Here

A worldview helps us understand the world we live in. A view of life takes the question further: Why does my life exist, and how should I live it? Our occupations, roles, and stages of life all change. We need to

understand these changes in light of life's deeper foundation.

Scripture teaches us that we receive life from God and are accountable to our Creator. It also shows us that sinners must be reconciled to God through Christ to receive a new belonging and eternal hope through salvation. Our identity as created beings and our new identity in Christ are related, but they must not be confused.

1. Life Is Given by God

Genesis 2:7 records that God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. Acts 17:25 also explains that God gives people life, breath, and all things. We did not obtain our lives through our own efforts; we received them from our Creator.

Human dignity therefore does not depend on achievement. An infant has accomplished nothing, yet possesses full dignity as a created being. Older people do not lose their worth when they lose the ability to work. Disability, failure, illness, and poverty cannot make one person's basic human dignity less than another's.

This also changes what we require of ourselves. It is necessary to pursue growth earnestly and take responsibility, but we do not need to keep achieving things to prove that we deserve to exist. Working wholeheartedly when we are able, and accepting help when our abilities are limited, can both express respect for life.

Respecting life also means respecting the limitations of our bodies. Even when illness requires us to rest and receive care, our lives still have meaning.

Having received life, we also need to learn to care for it in our own circumstances, rather than treating our bodies merely as tools for carrying out our plans.

Receiving life also teaches us gratitude. Daily food, someone willing to listen, or a period of time in which we can rest may all go unnoticed when we are busy. Gratitude does not require us to call difficulties good. It helps us recognise the kindness we have received in our actual circumstances and acknowledge that our lives are not sustained entirely by our own efforts.

2. The Heart of Life Is Our Relationship with God Rather Than Achievement

Jesus prayed, “This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ” (John 17:3). Knowing God here means more than having

information about Him. It also involves entering a real relationship with Him through Christ.

We easily expect that the right career, sufficient wealth, ideal relationships, or the fulfilment of our goals will finally make life complete. These can bring real joy, but they cannot replace our need for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Our deepest sense of belonging cannot be supplied by another finite person or by any achievement.

Ecclesiastes examines toil, wisdom, pleasure, and wealth to show the brevity of life and the circumstances beyond human control. It does not reject all work and joy; it also encourages people to receive the everyday gifts God gives them (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13). At its conclusion, the book brings us back to our responsibility to fear God, keep His

commandments, and face His judgement (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

The meaning of life therefore concerns more than whether we have enough. It also concerns how we live before God. Reconciled to Him through faith in Christ, we learn to receive, give thanks, and obey, allowing work and relationships to find their proper place on this foundation.

Reconciliation with God is founded on the redemption Christ has accomplished. A feeling of closeness to God is not sufficient grounds for assuming that the problem of sin has been resolved. God grants forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ and calls us to repent and believe. Those who receive His grace can therefore draw near to Him and continue to know Him through His word. This foundation takes faith beyond passing feelings and

enables us to return to the Lord even when we feel weak.

This relationship is not an isolated personal experience. God makes believers members of His household and builds them together in Christ (Ephesians 2:19–22). Those who know God also worship with other believers, share one another’s burdens, and learn to love one another.

3. Life Is Not Only for Ourselves

When God called Abraham, He promised to bless him, make him a blessing to others, and bless all the families of the earth through him (Genesis 12:2–3). This promise has a unique place in the history of redemption and extends to all nations in Christ (Galatians 3:8, 16). We cannot turn every particular promise to Abraham directly into a guarantee for ourselves. This promise first shows us God’s redemptive purpose of blessing all nations

through Christ. The New Testament also gives clear teaching on how those who receive grace can be a blessing to others in daily life:

believers should serve one another according to the gifts they have received (1 Peter 4:10). Knowledge, experience, resources, and opportunities are therefore more than means of personal development. They can also be used to care for others, build up communities, and fulfil responsibilities.

This gradually changes the questions we ask. Alongside asking, “What can I gain from life?” we begin to ask, “Whom can I love and help in my circumstances today? How can what I have received benefit others?”

Loving our neighbours as ourselves also includes appropriate care for our own lives. Serving others does not mean giving up rest, taking on every need without regard to our responsibilities, or using others’ need for us to

prove our worth. In a community where people serve one another, we sometimes give and sometimes receive help.

Such service can begin with the people already around us. We may not have abundant resources, but we can keep our promises, listen attentively to others' difficulties, share the knowledge we already have, or offer help when someone has more to do than they can manage. Living with concern for others does not require a prominent position. It requires a willingness to see particular people and their actual needs.

4. Life Has an Eternal Direction

Death reveals the limits of our roles, plans, and labour in this life. Yet this does not mean that our finite lives are meaningless. Scripture takes human hope further, towards Christ's resurrection. Peter explains that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God has caused believers to be born again into a living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

This eternal hope is grace received in Christ. It does not belong to us automatically simply because we are created beings. Scripture also brings us face to face with the realities of death, judgement, and accountability to God. Acknowledging that life comes from God therefore also requires us to ask whether we have been reconciled to Him through faith in Christ.

The hope of bodily resurrection and of being with God forever enables us to take life seriously while acknowledging that its stages come to an end. Retirement need not end our opportunities to love and serve others, and illness cannot erase human dignity. Our dignity as created beings does not diminish as our abilities weaken. Nor does belonging to

Christ depend on believers retaining a particular capacity for work.

Eternal hope does not require us to deny the pain of death. We still grieve our losses, yet in Christ we can hope for the fulfilment of God's promises. After discussing the resurrection, Paul urges believers to abound in the Lord's work, because their labour in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). This gives weight to faithfulness today and hope that reaches beyond immediate results.

Hope for eternity also teaches us to make good use of the limited time we have today. The psalmist asks God to teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12). This wisdom helps us take time seriously: some relationships need to be restored, some responsibilities need to be undertaken, and some pursuits need to be laid aside. We cannot determine the length of our

lives, but we can ask God to help us live today well.

III. Developing Our Values

Discovering What Is Worth Pursuing Throughout Life

Once we understand the source of life and to whom we belong, we need to ask further:

What is worth pursuing? How should I make judgements when needs conflict? Our values are revealed in our choices, and they need continual correction through God's word.

Decisions about work and family, conflicts between personal gain and integrity, and tensions between our own comfort and others' needs cannot all be resolved by a single simple rule. We need to discern the moral responsibilities that are already clear, while seeking wisdom in arrangements that allow for discussion.

1. The Centre of Our Values Is Love for God and Others

Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and that the second is to love our neighbours as ourselves. These two commandments sum up the teaching of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37–40). He shows us that a life pleasing to God is centred on love for Him and for others.

First John 4:19 teaches that we love because God first loved us. Love is therefore more than a moral task we are required to perform; it is also a response to receiving God's grace. The more we recognise the mercy we have received, the more we need to learn to treat others with mercy.

Receiving God's love also teaches us to love God and others in practical ways: to fear God, deal honestly with people, uphold justice, and

treat others with mercy, forgiveness, and faithfulness. Love for God cannot justify treating people as unimportant, and love for others must not lead us to disregard the truth God has revealed.

In family conflict, love may mean listening patiently, and it may also mean clearly identifying harm. At work, love includes serving responsibly and refusing to deceive. Acts of love need to be guided by truth; they cannot simply be equated with pleasing the other person.

Love for God and others also helps us address conflicting responsibilities. We cannot continually neglect family members who need care in order to attend more church activities. Nor can we justify dishonest working practices by saying that we are providing for our families. Many arrangements can be discussed, but honesty, justice, and concern

for others must remain responsibilities we take seriously within those arrangements.

2. Character Matters More Than Image

When God sent Samuel to anoint David, He explained that people look at outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). This passage concerns, first of all, God's choice of David. It also reminds us that visible qualities are not enough to reveal a person's life before God.

Education, position, ability, appearance, and influence can serve practical purposes, but they cannot replace honesty and faithfulness. Joseph's refusal to yield to temptation (Genesis 39:7–12) and Daniel's faithfulness to God in a foreign land (Daniel 6:4–10) both remind us that evaluating our conduct requires more than asking, "Will anyone find out?" We

also need to ask, “Does this go against God’s will? Does it harm others?”

Character, however, means more than holding firmly to what we believe. We may be sincere yet mistaken in our judgements, or appear resolute yet refuse correction. Good character needs to be shaped by God’s truth. When we discover that we are wrong, we need to acknowledge it, repent, and make changes.

Alongside considering how others see us, we can therefore examine the details of our lives: Does our private life correspond to what we express publicly? Are we honest when personal interests are at stake? Are we willing to listen when others offer counsel? Such reflection helps us see whether the values we cherish have become part of our everyday lives.

Character is also revealed in how we treat different people. We may be very courteous to

those with power, yet lose patience with people who cannot benefit us. We may appear humble and gentle in public, yet give free rein to anger at home. As our values are renewed, we become willing to examine these differences, learn to treat people with equal respect, and take seriously the need to correct our conduct.

3. People Matter More Than Tasks and Faithfulness More Than Prominence

Jesus saw a poor widow put in two small coins and pointed out that she had given what she needed to live on (Mark 12:41–44). The visible amount does not fully express the weight of a person's sacrifice. We cannot assess someone's giving solely by quantity, scale, or influence.

Respecting this widow's sacrifice also requires attention to the context: Jesus had just

rebuked the scribes who devoured widows' houses (Mark 12:38–40). We must not use this account to pressure people in poverty to give away all they need to live on. Respect for people's giving must include a serious commitment to protecting those in need.

Ruth stayed with Naomi through hardship and took on everyday responsibilities. Without a prominent position, she lived faithfully in particular relationships. Later, she became part of the family line of David and Christ (Ruth 4:13–22; Matthew 1:5). Scripture shows us the significance of ordinary life, but it does not promise that every quiet act of service will receive public recognition in this life.

Caring for parents, accompanying people through difficulties, and doing our work honestly can all be ways of living a meaningful life. Respecting these responsibilities also helps us notice people

who are easily overlooked, without judging their contribution by how visible their work is.

“People matter more than tasks” means that we must not treat people as expendable tools for achieving goals. It also requires us to care for those who have been hurt and take responsibility for the consequences of our mistakes, rather than using achievements to conceal harm.

This does not mean that tasks can be set aside carelessly or that everyone’s wishes must be met. Concern for people also includes dividing work reasonably, explaining responsibilities clearly, and helping people carry out entrusted tasks conscientiously. We need to examine whether our pursuit of impressive results has led us to neglect participants’ health, family responsibilities, and dignity. Planning work therefore requires us both to take entrusted

tasks seriously and to care for the people involved.

IV. Rethinking Wealth

From Ownership to Stewardship

Money affects food, housing, education, provision for old age, choices, and responsibilities. Scripture takes these needs seriously and also asks what place money holds in our hearts. As we use wealth, we need to examine whether wealth has already begun to rule us.

1. Wealth Itself Is Not Sin

Abraham and Job both possessed substantial wealth (Genesis 13:2; Job 1:3). Having resources is not in itself sinful, nor does poverty automatically make a person holier. We need to examine where our resources come from, how we use them, and the place they hold in our hearts.

Paul warns, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10, excerpt). His warning concerns the love of money: it can lure people away from the faith and drive many kinds of wrongdoing.

Earning an income honestly, providing appropriately for our families, and preparing for the future can all be responsibilities.

Deception, exploitation, concealment, and injustice do not become acceptable simply because they increase wealth. A biblical understanding of wealth concerns both the heart and the actual means by which wealth is acquired.

Those who have wealth need to guard against pride, while those with limited resources can also be drawn by greed. The love of money is not confined to those who already have a great deal. It may also appear in the belief that having just a little more will finally give us

worth. Paul connects contentment with godliness, reminding us that we brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out of it (1 Timothy 6:6–8). This teaching helps us take provision for our needs seriously while recognising the limits of accumulation.

2. We Are Stewards Rather Than Absolute Owners

As David prepared resources for building the temple, he prayed, “For all things come from you, and we have given you of your own” (1 Chronicles 29:14, excerpt). He acknowledged that even human giving comes from God’s prior provision. Recognising this source teaches us to treat what we possess with gratitude and responsibility.

Viewing wealth as something entrusted to us means managing it as stewards: acknowledging that we have received what we possess from God and are accountable to Him

for how we use it. This does not abolish ownership in everyday life. It helps us recognise that the use of property must also be guided by God's truth. How we earn, spend, save, borrow, and give must all be examined in light of honesty, justice, and love for others.

Saving may arise from prudence, or it may be driven by fear. Spending may meet legitimate needs, or it may become a way to show off.

Giving may express love, or it may become a way to win approval or control others. We need to face the actual amounts and arrangements involved, while honestly examining our motives.

Good stewardship includes planning within our means, keeping commitments, paying debts we owe, and attending to family responsibilities and others' needs. We can learn gradually through prayer, shared discussion, and trustworthy counsel. In this

way, we respond to God not only when making an offering, but also by being accountable to Him in our everyday decisions about earning, spending, saving, and giving.

The responsibilities of stewardship need to shape practical arrangements. A family can regularly review income and expenses together, first considering living needs, commitments already made, and debts owed, then discussing saving and giving. This is more than controlling the amounts involved. It also helps family members communicate honestly and prevents one person's impulsive spending or concealment from placing avoidable pressure on others.

3. Wealth Cannot Provide Ultimate Security

Jesus told a parable about a rich man who expanded his barns after a plentiful harvest, believing that his stored possessions would

guarantee years of ease. God pointed out that the man could not control his own life (Luke 12:16–21). The parable concludes by exposing the condition of someone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God.

The passage does not condemn all saving. It confronts us with the limits of relying on wealth. Resources can improve our present circumstances, but they cannot guarantee life, remove death, or reconcile us to God. The more wealth we have, the more we need to remember that we remain finite created beings. When we build our security on wealth, we often find it difficult to say, “I have enough.” The more we possess, the more we may fear losing. Jesus reminded His disciples that a person’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15). Acknowledging this enables us to use money

to meet real needs while placing our trust in the God who gives life.

Paul therefore urges those who are wealthy not to rely on uncertain riches, but on God, who richly provides everything, and to be generous and willing to share (1 Timothy 6:17–19).

This affirms that we may receive what God gives, while calling those who have resources to take responsibility for sharing them.

Trusting God does not mean denying financial pressure. Those facing scarcity need provision, care, and help; they must not simply be told to stop worrying. A community in which people support one another according to their ability also bears witness to God's grace in everyday life.

4. Wealth Can Be Used to Share and Bless Others

When Zacchaeus stood before Jesus, he declared his willingness to give half his possessions to the poor and repay four times as much to anyone he had defrauded (Luke 19:8). His response involved both giving and restitution for past harm. His changed understanding of wealth took shape in concrete action.

We cannot make the proportions in Zacchaeus's giving and restitution a standard all believers must follow. Yet we should take seriously what his response shows us: generosity cannot replace justice, and new offerings cannot conceal past deception. If resources have been acquired by harming others, responding to God requires facing our responsibility for restitution and repair.

Wealth can provide for families, care for people in need, support gospel work, and enable appropriate services and development. When Paul encouraged believers to contribute to fellow believers in need, he explained that giving should be according to what people have, not what they do not have. He sought mutual provision, rather than ease for one group and hardship for another (2 Corinthians 8:12–14). Sharing requires love, responsibility, and wisdom.

Using wealth freely involves more than being willing to give when we have plenty. It also means acknowledging our needs and receiving help when our resources are limited. We do not need to prove ourselves by how much we possess or build a sense of superiority through how much we give. We are to manage faithfully before God what we have received.

Giving also requires respect for those receiving help. Helping others should not become an opportunity to demand their obedience, display their circumstances publicly, or demonstrate our own generosity. We can learn about their needs, discuss appropriate ways to help, and take our responsibilities seriously when we can offer continued support. Nor can a single gift take the place of addressing unjust treatment. Whether resources benefit others depends not only on how much we give, but also on how we respect and care for those receiving help.

V. Redefining Success

From Proving Ourselves to Being Faithful to God

Working hard, developing our gifts, pursuing excellence, and achieving goals can be expressions of responsibility. But when success becomes a condition for proving who

we are, we have to keep producing results in order to maintain a sense of self-acceptance. Scripture helps us understand both the value and the limits of achievement.

1. Success Cannot Define Who We Are

Our position, income, and influence can change. If our identity depends entirely on these measures, a decline in results may lead us to interpret loss as a sign that we no longer have value. Responding to God's call helps us understand ourselves in light of the dignity He has given us as His creatures and our belonging to Him in Christ. Our performance no longer determines our whole worth.

Jesus asks, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mark 8:36). These words come within His teaching about denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Him (Mark 8:34–38).

The issue goes beyond balancing work and life: as we pursue immediate gains, are we still willing to remain faithful to Christ?

Success, therefore, needs to be examined in light of the truth. Gains obtained through deception, influence built by harming others, or acceptance secured by denying Christ cannot be called right simply because the results are impressive. We need to work hard, but we also need to recognise that some prices must never be paid for success.

Putting success in its proper place also allows us to appreciate what others achieve. Their growth need not threaten our own worth.

When working together, we can acknowledge our colleagues' contributions, share opportunities, and be thankful when others do better. We can pursue good results wholeheartedly while gradually letting go of

the habit of seeking security through comparison.

2. Scripture Emphasises Faithfulness and Also Values Results

Speaking of Christ's servants and stewards of God's mysteries, Paul says, "Here, moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). This passage first concerns the responsibilities of apostolic ministry. It also helps us understand that those entrusted with responsibilities are accountable to the Lord.

Faithfulness includes using our gifts diligently, learning, consulting others, and reviewing our work. We need to consider whether our work genuinely helps people, wastes resources, or causes harm. We cannot refuse to listen to feedback by saying, "I have

been faithful,” nor can we attribute every poor outcome to our circumstances.

This distinction is especially important in gospel ministry. Paul explains that he planted and Apollos watered, but God brought about the believers’ growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). Those who preach and teach need to fulfil their responsibilities diligently while acknowledging that it is God who brings people to faith and enables them to grow in Christ. We honour the contributions of those who serve alongside us, but we cannot attribute transformed lives to an individual’s methods or abilities.

Jesus’ parable of the talents reminds His disciples to make diligent use of what they have received as they await His return (Matthew 25:14–30). It calls them to faithfulness and accountability; it cannot

simply be turned into a rule that every ministry must keep expanding in size.

We also need appropriate ways of assessing results. Whether teaching helps people truly understand, whether a service meets their needs, and whether resources are used well are more concrete considerations than simply pursuing numerical growth. Some work requires observation over time and cannot be accurately assessed in the short term. When problems are already evident, however, timely adjustments are needed. Examining results carefully helps us act more responsibly.

3. Faithfulness Does Not Always Look Like Success

Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed God's word, yet he was repeatedly rejected and persecuted. John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ, but was later imprisoned and killed (Jeremiah 20:1–2; Mark 6:17–29). Faithfulness to God

does not guarantee recognition, security, or visible success in this life.

John the Baptist's disciples told him that people were turning to Jesus. John explained that he was not the Christ and expressed his joy at witnessing the Lord's arrival (John 3:26–29). He also said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). He prepared the way for the Lord and joyfully bore witness to His coming.

His response reminds us that the value of faithfulness to the Lord cannot be measured solely by an increase in personal influence. Whether we take on greater responsibilities or bring a previous role to an end, we need to examine whether our choices remain faithful to Him.

However, failing to achieve the results we hoped for does not, in itself, prove that we have been faithful to God. A lack of results

may be related to our circumstances, but it may also stem from poor judgement or a failure to fulfil our responsibilities. We do not let results determine the value of our lives, and we also remain willing to be examined by the truth and to accept correction.

When a role comes to an end, we may feel a sense of loss. We can acknowledge that loss and learn again how to assess our lives. We can be thankful for past achievements without having to keep producing the same results to prove that we still have value.

4. Failure Can Also Be Part of Growth

Peter confidently declared that he would not fall away, yet he denied the Lord three times. After His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him and again entrusted him with the responsibility of caring for His flock (Mark 14:29, 66–72; John 21:15–19). This

shows us that real sin and failure need to be faced, and that restoration is possible through the Lord's grace.

Not every setback is a sin. An unsuccessful plan, physical limitations, or a change in circumstances cannot simply be equated with Peter's denial of the Lord. We need to discern what calls for repentance, what requires adjustment, and what calls for accepting loss and learning anew.

God's forgiveness does not remove the consequences for which we remain responsible. Some failures to fulfil our responsibilities call for restitution; some relationships take time to repair; and some positions need to be set aside for a time. Being restored in our relationship with God does not automatically mean being immediately restored to our former leadership responsibilities.

When facing setbacks, we can begin by honestly examining what happened. Were there decisions we could have made more wisely? Did we overlook advice someone had already offered? Did we encounter changes we could not have foreseen? Careful reflection is more helpful than rushing to prove that we did nothing wrong, and more appropriate than taking all the blame upon ourselves.

Acknowledging the facts gives us a concrete basis for repentance, adjustment, and a fresh start.

A mature understanding of success makes us willing to give thanks when things go well, repent when we are wrong, learn through setbacks, and continue trusting the Lord after loss. Failure need not become our ultimate identity, and success should not become a master we cannot live without.

VI. A Life of Freedom and Abundance

Putting God at the Centre

The preceding five aspects all concern how we understand and live out our lives before God. These changes in understanding and ways of living are rooted in the new life Christ gives. Freedom and abundance are founded on God's redemption in Christ, rather than on our finally having everything in order.

Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10, excerpt). This promise comes within His teaching about the good shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. The sheep receive life because they have a shepherd who knows, saves, guides, and keeps them. Abundance needs to be understood through our relationship with Christ; it cannot simply be

equated with continual improvements in health, wealth, and career success.

1. Freedom Does Not Mean Doing Whatever We Want

Even with many choices available to us, we may still be ruled by desire, greed, comparison, and other people's opinions.

Jesus says that the truth makes people free, then explains that everyone who sins is a slave to sin and that only He can give true freedom (John 8:31–36). Freedom here concerns, first of all, release from the power of sin, rather than simply relief from psychological pressure.

This release enables us to obey God again, rather than treating our own desires as our highest standard. Paul also urges believers not to use freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but to serve one another in love

(Galatians 5:13). The freedom Christ gives enables us to learn to love others and do good.

Changes in our habits of comparison, our fears, and our patterns of behaviour often take time. Those who have received God's grace can learn a new way of life through prayer, Scripture, the support of fellow believers, and practical action. Not yet feeling at ease does not mean that Christ's grace has not reached us. Our freedom is founded on Him, while growth continues throughout our lives.

This freedom shapes concrete choices. For example, turning down a dishonest gain may still bring financial loss. But when we no longer make money the foundation of our lives, we can remain honest even at a cost. The freedom Christ gives provides us with new reasons and strength to respond to the truth.

2. Abundance Means Restoring Life's Proper Order, Rather Than Having More

Paul explains that he has learned contentment in both need and plenty, and that he relies on Christ in different circumstances (Philippians 4:11–13). The strength described in this passage enables him, first of all, to remain faithful to the Lord whether hungry or well fed, in plenty or in need. It cannot be treated as a guarantee that any personal wish will be fulfilled.

Our circumstances still affect our bodies, emotions, and daily lives, and financial hardship calls for practical help. Yet an increase or decrease in resources is no basis for judging whether God accepts us. We can work to improve our circumstances while learning contentment within our limitations.

Restoring proper order includes using wealth to fulfil responsibilities, ensuring that our work is honest, examining results, and making appropriate provision for rest. Our plans still matter, but they need to be guided by God's truth and take account of our responsibilities to others.

Contentment does not mean giving up on improving our lives. After speaking about contentment, Paul still thanks the Philippian believers for their practical support (Philippians 4:14–18). He relies on the Lord and also receives help from others. We, too, can express our needs honestly, seek work diligently, and learn new skills. These efforts can go hand in hand with trusting God.

3. Abundant Life Involves a Change of Centre, Rather Than Self-Fulfilment

Paul says, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20, excerpt). These words are closely connected with his being crucified with Christ and now living by faith in the Son of God. This change in the centre of his life is grounded in Christ’s saving love and His giving Himself for Paul.

This does not mean that our personhood disappears or that our individuality is erased. Our thoughts, gifts, and responsibilities remain real, but proving ourselves is no longer their ultimate aim. In Christ, we come to belong to Him and learn to let Him examine our desires.

We therefore work hard in response to God’s grace, rather than to prove that we deserve acceptance. We manage resources and learn to

be accountable to God for what we have received. We serve out of love for others, rather than relying on being needed to prove our worth. These changes may not happen all at once, but they gradually reorder our lives around Christ.

This change in the centre of our lives also affects how we respond to our own desires. We can value our interests and abilities and prepare our plans carefully. Yet we are willing to ask whether these pursuits are causing us to neglect honesty, our family's needs, or our responsibilities. If our original plans need to change, we can still trust the Lord and live faithfully in new circumstances with the life we have received.

4. Abundant Life Still Includes Suffering

Paul asks whether affliction, distress, persecution, hunger, danger, and other

hardships can separate those who belong to Christ from His love. He then declares that none of these can separate them from God's love in Christ (Romans 8:35–39). This hope does not deny pain; it means that suffering no longer has the final say.

Believers may still experience grief, confusion, and exhaustion. We cannot judge whether someone has abundant life simply by how calm or strong they appear. The laments in the Psalms and the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane show us that real pain can be brought before God (Psalm 13:1–6; Mark 14:32–36).

Abundance does not mean that every harm must be endured in silence. Caring for those who have been hurt, seeking help, stopping injustice, and protecting the vulnerable can all be acts of trust in God. We look forward to

His finally removing death and tears, and we also care diligently for those who suffer today.

Walking alongside those who suffer begins with patiently listening as they speak about their pain. We need not rush to explain why God has allowed all this, nor should we demand that they immediately show gratitude. We can offer food, care, visits, and prayer, or simply be quietly present with them. Such love helps people know that, even when they cannot yet understand their circumstances, someone is willing to share their burdens.

5. True Abundance Means Growing in Love for God and Others, and Faithfully Living Out the Life We Have Received

The fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). These qualities help us

understand the direction of growth in a life shaped by grace, as we learn love and faithfulness in our relationships.

We can examine ourselves through concrete changes. Are we more willing to let God's word correct us, listen to counsel, treat others honestly, and acknowledge our limitations? Are we willing to take responsibility and also accept help when needed? Such reflection helps us respond to grace; it must not become a scorecard for earning salvation or comparing ourselves with others.

Growth can be slow, and we may need to begin again after a fall. We need to walk patiently alongside one another, rather than judging someone's life solely by changes visible over a short period.

We must be especially careful not to assess people whose ability to communicate and act is severely limited solely by how much growth

they can demonstrate. They still need love and respect. God's acceptance in Christ is not conditional on visible demonstrations of growth. The community of believers also needs to fulfil its responsibility to love one another through practical care and companionship.

This fruit may not immediately make life easier, but it helps us respond to the people before us with greater love and self-control. We give thanks for the changes that have already taken place and ask the Holy Spirit to continue renewing the areas in which we are not yet obedient.

Abundance begins with the life Christ gives, becomes gradually evident through the Holy Spirit's renewal, and will be brought to completion in the future resurrection and new creation. The fruit we see today gives us

reason for thanksgiving; what is not yet complete keeps us relying on the Lord.

Conclusion: Reordering Our Understanding of Life's Meaning

We return to the question at the beginning of this chapter: Why do we live? Scripture guides us to understand life through the Creator, Christ's redemption, and God's promises, rather than reducing its meaning to a career, an undertaking, or a particular achievement.

Our worldview helps us recognise that the world comes from God and that human beings have both dignity and responsibility. Our view of life helps us understand that life is a gift we receive, and that through Christ we are reconciled to God and come to belong to Him. Our values help us assess choices through love for God and others and faithfulness to the

truth. Our understanding of wealth guides us to receive resources with gratitude, manage them responsibly, and willingly share them. Our understanding of success helps us pursue good results diligently while examining whether the ways we achieve them are faithful to God and consistent with justice. Freedom and abundance help us understand the life Christ gives, which gradually grows through the Holy Spirit's renewal.

These six aspects are interrelated and together influence how we understand life and make choices. How we understand reality affects how we arrange our lives; what we value affects how we acquire and use wealth; and how we assess success and failure reveals what we rely on. God's call guides us to bring these questions before Him, allowing His truth to shed light on our understanding and choices.

The meaning of life, therefore, needs to be understood through the life and grace God gives, and lived out as we respond to Him each day. God gives us dignity, and Christ accomplishes salvation. Those who have received grace learn today to trust, love others, work, give, and take responsibility. We do not have to prove our dignity as God's creatures through our performance, nor can we use that dignity as a reason to neglect our responsibilities.

Life comes from God. Through Christ's redemption we turn to Him; in responding to His call, we come to understand life anew; and in walking with Him, we live faithfully and look forward to being with Him forever. Seeking the meaning of life also leads us to know the God who gives life more deeply and to turn to Him.

Understanding life's meaning does not give us an immediate answer to every question, but it helps us know whom to seek, what to base our judgements on, and where to place our hope.

As we continue following God, this understanding also needs to shape our character. When choices come at a cost, waiting seems very long, or our efforts go unnoticed, how do we remain faithful to God? The next chapter takes up this question as it explores calling and character formation.

Chapter 3: Calling and Character Formation



God's call changes the direction of our lives and continues to renew us as we follow Him.

When we think about calling, we readily ask, "What does God want me to do? Where should I go? What mission do I need to undertake?" Scripture does record specific commissions: Abraham left his country, his relatives, and his father's house; Moses went to Pharaoh; Isaiah proclaimed God's word to the people; and the disciples were sent to bear witness to Christ.

Those entrusted with responsibilities need to keep learning how to trust God, treat others, and use the abilities they have received.

Abraham concealed his marriage to Sarah out of fear. Moses needed help from others as he led the people, and he was also rebuked for his unbelief and failure to honour God as holy.

Peter denied the Lord three times, yet later continued to follow Him through Christ's

grace. After being called, they still needed to keep growing as they followed God.

Responding to God's call and being shaped by Him often happen together. As we take responsibility, we discover our limitations, fears, and sins. Through God's grace, the correction of His truth, and practical obedience, we gradually learn how to remain faithful to Him.

Chapter 2 explored how God's call changes the ways we understand life, assess value, and order our daily lives. This chapter asks a further question: How are we shaped when we put that understanding into practice in real relationships, costly choices, and long periods of waiting?

Following the experiences of biblical figures as they responded to God and undertook what He entrusted to them, this chapter focuses on six interrelated qualities: the fear of the Lord,

trust, humility, obedience, faithfulness, and perseverance. These are the chapter's particular focus, rather than a complete biblical classification of character. Love, holiness, justice, honesty, mercy, and self-control are equally essential and run through all six.

Love runs through these qualities. If we neglect love, we may insist on doing things our own way and refuse to listen to others, mistakenly calling this faithfulness. We may demand that others follow our arrangements without listening to their views or difficulties, mistakenly thinking that we are teaching obedience. Or we may simply tell those who suffer to keep enduring without offering care or help. Learning faithfulness, obedience, and perseverance therefore requires attention to our relationships with both God and others,

and a willingness to let God's word examine our understanding and conduct.

Such growth is founded on salvation. Through Christ's redemption, God accepts those who trust in Him. He renews our lives so that we become conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). Today, through the Holy Spirit, He continues to shape our lives so that we become more like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). We cannot earn salvation by reaching a certain standard of character, yet we need to repent sincerely and learn obedience within the grace we have received.

Through His word, prayer, mutual encouragement among believers, and practice in carrying out specific responsibilities, God helps us understand ourselves, accept correction, and learn to love others. We need to respond personally, and we also need the support of other members of Christ's body.

These six qualities are interwoven in our everyday responsibilities and shared life as we follow Christ throughout our lives.

I. The Fear of the Lord

Knowing the One Who Calls

The fear of the Lord leads us to take seriously the God who calls us: Who is He? What do His holiness and authority mean for our lives? How should we respond before Him?

If we focus only on tasks, we may interpret God's call as His endorsement of our abilities, ideals, or plans. Scripture, however, guides us first to know God and to understand ourselves anew before Him.

In the wilderness, Moses saw a bush that was burning without being consumed. God called him by name and told him to remove his sandals because the place where he stood was holy ground. God also made Himself known

as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:1–6).

Before receiving the commission to go to Pharaoh, Moses first encountered God’s presence and holiness. The place was called holy ground because God appeared to him there. Moses needed to respond as God instructed; his curiosity did not give him permission to approach as he pleased.

In a vision, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne and heard the seraphim proclaim His holiness. He immediately confessed that he had unclean lips and lived among a people of unclean lips. After receiving the declaration that his sin was forgiven, he heard the Lord ask who would accept His commission (Isaiah 6:1–8). Isaiah responded, “Here I am. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8, excerpt).

These two accounts each have a unique historical setting and cannot be prescribed as experiences that every believer must repeat. Yet both show that calling is closely connected with God's holiness, revelation, and authority. Before God, we need to acknowledge our place and face the reality of sin and forgiveness.

1. The Fear of the Lord Includes Reverence and a Serious Regard for Sin and Judgement

The fear of the Lord includes respect, trust, and obedience, as well as trembling before His holiness and justice. It is more than anxiety about punishment or ordinary respect: it means taking God's holiness and judgement seriously.

Hebrews urges believers, since they are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, to give thanks and serve God with reverence and

awe (Hebrews 12:28). It also reminds them, “for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). This warning calls us to take God’s holiness and judgement seriously. Receiving grace does not permit us to treat God lightly. Grace enables us to draw near to Him and also leads us to respond to Him more earnestly.

The same book also teaches believers that, because Jesus is their high priest, they can approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and help (Hebrews 4:14–16). Reverence and closeness to God can therefore coexist. We acknowledge sin and take His judgement seriously, while trusting Him and seeking His help because of Christ’s redemption.

Drawing near to God through Christ while also fearing Him helps us avoid two errors. One is treating sin lightly, as though grace cancelled responsibility. The other is seeing only our own sins and never daring to receive

forgiveness. The fear of the Lord leads us to take God seriously and willingly to receive the grace He gives in Christ.

2. The Fear of the Lord Shapes Choices When No One Is Watching

When Joseph refused the advances of Potiphar's wife, he asked, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9, excerpt). Chapter 1 has already discussed his choice. Here we consider more closely the attitude revealed in his words: he first faced his responsibility before God, rather than basing his decision on whether anyone would find out.

Today, the fear of the Lord can shape how we handle money, speech, our bodies, relationships, and power. Returning money that does not belong to us, carefully correcting an error in a public statement, and remaining

honest when an improper gain would be difficult to detect all bring faith into everyday life.

Even when something does not violate an explicit rule, we still need to consider whether we are exploiting someone's trust, concealing facts they ought to know, or neglecting their dignity and safety in order to protect our own position. The fear of the Lord makes us consider whether our conduct itself is right, rather than merely the risk of being found out.

3. The Fear of the Lord Makes Us Willing to Be Corrected by the Truth

The fear of the Lord also makes us careful in how we use God's name. When we say, "God told me," or "This is the mission God has given me," we need to examine whether we are treating our own desires as His instructions. We must not invoke His name to

demand that others stop asking questions or to prevent our own judgements from being examined.

Honouring God makes us willing to examine our understanding in light of His word and accept correction when we discover errors.

The section on obedience later in this chapter will explain further how to discern specific choices and respond to what others ask of us.

4. The Fear of the Lord Leads to Gratitude and Responsibility

The fear of the Lord also has a positive expression: we receive His goodness with gratitude, respect the people He has created, use the abilities He has given us diligently, and willingly give Him the glory. Being able to serve is a gift of grace, and we must also give an account to Him for the responsibilities we undertake.

Knowing the God who calls us leads us to take our lives and choices more seriously. Before Him, we acknowledge sin, receive grace, and learn obedience. We also seek direction in the truth He has already revealed. This fear of the Lord lays the foundation for trusting Him when we cannot yet see the way ahead clearly.

II. Trust

Following God Before We See the Way Ahead

Knowing God's holiness and authority leads us to take Him seriously; knowing His faithfulness and grace enables us to rely on Him even when our understanding is limited.

When responding to God's call, we often want to know the whole road ahead: what results a decision will bring, how long we will need to wait, and what to do when difficulties arise. Preparation, planning, and understanding the

situation are all necessary, but we cannot control every outcome.

Trust enables us to fulfil our responsibilities according to the truth God has already revealed, while entrusting to Him a future that remains unclear and whose outcomes we cannot guarantee. We rely on God's faithfulness, the salvation He has accomplished in Christ, and the promises He has revealed.

1. Trust Has an Object and a Foundation

God commanded Abraham to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house and go to the place He would show him. He also gave promises concerning offspring, blessing, and blessing for all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1–7). Hebrews 11:8 explains that Abraham obeyed and went out

by faith, even though he did not yet know where he was going.

Abraham did not know what lay ahead, but he had already received God's command and promise. His action was grounded in God's revelation. The fact that Abraham did not yet know where he was going does not mean that every step into the unknown can be called living by faith.

Today, we also need to distinguish responsibilities Scripture has already made clear from arrangements that still require careful judgement. Trusting God leads us to obey the truth we understand, while being willing to learn the facts, listen to counsel, and entrust to Him the future we cannot control.

We may seek God in prayer and express our desires, but we cannot assume that God has guaranteed every outcome we hope for. The love God has revealed in Christ gives trust a

deeper foundation. Even when we cannot explain our present circumstances, through the redemption He has accomplished and the promises He has revealed, we can come to recognise His faithfulness anew and continue to rely on Him.

2. Trust Grows Through Waiting and Correction

Abraham's faith was not fully mature when he was first called. In Egypt, he concealed his marriage to Sarah out of fear. While they waited for offspring, Sarah proposed having a child through her servant Hagar, and Abraham agreed to her plan (Genesis 12:10–20; 16:1–6). These choices affected others and brought pain into their relationships.

God's faithfulness continues to be revealed amid human weakness, but we still need to face our choices and their consequences. We cannot call wrongdoing a necessary means of

growth simply because God later showed grace.

Waiting often reveals what we actually rely on. When results are slow to come, we may become anxious, try to control others, or use methods we already know are wrong. Trust needs to shape our response to these specific struggles, making us willing to hold to the truth that is already clear rather than crossing boundaries in our haste to obtain results.

In the test involving the offering of Isaac, Hebrews 11:17–19 shows that Abraham still believed God’s promise concerning Isaac and considered God able to raise the dead. Genesis also records that God, through His angel, stopped Abraham from harming Isaac and provided a ram to be offered as a burnt offering in his place (Genesis 22:11–13).

This event has a unique place in the history of redemption. It cannot serve as grounds for

anyone today to demand that others harm their children to prove their faith. It shows us that Abraham continued to rely on the God who had given the promise through an intensely difficult test. We, in turn, need to examine the demands we hear in light of the truth Scripture has already revealed.

Growing in trust involves waiting and repentance. Acknowledging that our judgement may be mistaken enables us to accept correction, face our responsibilities afresh, and continue seeking God's guidance.

3. Trust Shapes the Next Step in Ordinary Life

Ruth's experience shows us that trust can also take shape in ordinary relationships and actions. After her husband died, she chose to accompany Naomi back to Bethlehem, saying, "Your people will be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, excerpt). Later,

Boaz spoke of her taking refuge under the LORD's wings (Ruth 2:12). Her choice expressed both loyalty to Naomi and a willingness to turn to the God of Israel.

There is no record of Ruth receiving a specific command as Abraham did, nor did she know in advance that she would have a place in the genealogy of David and Christ. In her particular circumstances, she accompanied Naomi, gleaned, and took responsibility for daily life, while also receiving protection and provision from others.

Her experience helps us understand that trusting God does not require an extraordinary experience at every step. Taking seriously the responsibilities that are already clear, making good use of available opportunities, and being willing to accept help can all be expressions of a life of trust in God.

For us, the next step may also be ordinary. For example, when a work arrangement is still uncertain, we can first learn what it actually requires, discuss it with our family, and diligently carry out our present responsibilities. An unclear future does not prevent responsible action today.

We cannot, however, treat Ruth's later experience as a universal guarantee, as though loyal companionship or courageous action will inevitably lead to an ideal marriage and life. Trust is still grounded in God Himself. We cannot judge whether someone trusts God solely by whether their story ends as Ruth's did.

4. Trust Allows Room for Fear and Calls for a Practical Response

The psalmist says, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you" (Psalm 56:3). These

words acknowledge that fear is real and direct our response to God when we are afraid.

People of faith may still feel uneasy, weary, or confused. When facing illness, financial pressure, changes in relationships, and an uncertain future, we can bring these feelings before the Lord. We do not need to make ourselves appear strong before we begin to pray.

Seeking treatment, learning about the situation, listening to counsel, and discussing practical arrangements do not conflict with relying on God. Acknowledging our need for help can itself be a response that lets go of our desire for control and faces reality honestly.

Trust enables us to ask God for the outcome we hope for while acknowledging that we do not yet know how He will lead. Even when events do not unfold as we wish, we can still

grieve, seek help, and look for a way to continue living in His grace.

Following when we cannot yet see the way ahead or predict the outcome means continuing to rely on the Lord within the limits of our understanding, acting on the truth we understand, and entrusting to Him the outcomes we cannot control. This also helps us see our own place more clearly: we need to act responsibly, yet we cannot take God's place.

III. Humility

Knowing Our Place Before God

Humility helps us understand ourselves rightly, recognising the abilities we have received, the responsibilities we bear, and what we cannot accomplish alone.

We may think too highly of ourselves, assuming that our judgement is always correct

and our abilities are sufficient to control everything. Or we may look down on ourselves because of failure, comparison, or fear, believing that we are unqualified to take on any responsibility. Both views need to be corrected by the truth.

Romans 12:3 urges believers not to think of themselves more highly than they ought, but to judge themselves soberly. The verses that follow use the image of a body and its members to explain that believers receive different gifts and need to fulfil their respective roles in their shared life (Romans 12:4–8). Understanding ourselves rightly involves both acknowledging our limitations and diligently using what we have received.

Humility is closely connected with our identity as created beings, God's grace, and our responsibilities within the community. We have dignity given by God, and we receive

abilities and opportunities. We need to do our part while acknowledging our need for God and for others.

1. Zeal and Ability Need God's Guidance

When Moses was younger, he saw an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew and killed the Egyptian. He later fled to Midian (Exodus 2:11–15). Acts 7:25 further explains that he assumed his fellow Israelites would understand that God was bringing them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

Moses cared about his fellow Israelites and assumed they would understand that God was delivering them through him. This account does not directly say whether he was proud at the time, so we should not sum up his experience as a failure caused by pride. In applying it today, zeal and ability still need the

guidance of the truth. Simply wanting to help others does not mean that the methods we use are necessarily appropriate.

Many years later, God commissioned Moses from the burning bush and promised to be with him (Exodus 3:10–12). Moses still needed to act, speak, and take responsibility, but he needed to rely on the God who sent him and on the help He provided.

Moses' experience leads us to take the limits of zeal and ability seriously. We may have experience yet overlook important facts; we may have ability yet still need others' knowledge and cooperation. Humility leads us to acknowledge these limitations and remain willing to learn.

2. Acknowledging Our Limitations Also Calls for an Earnest Response

When faced with his commission, Moses repeatedly raised questions and later resisted on the grounds that he had difficulty speaking. God promised to help him speak and arranged for Aaron to assist him. When Moses continued to ask God to send someone else, the passage also records God's anger toward him (Exodus 4:10–16).

We therefore cannot call all hesitation and self-doubt humility. We need to distinguish between honestly acknowledging that we lack the ability for a task and persistently avoiding a responsibility that is already clear.

Sometimes we say, “I am not good enough,” “Someone else would be better suited,” or “I don’t know how to do anything.” These words may express genuine limitations, but they may

also conceal fear, avoidance, or an unwillingness to learn. We need to examine ourselves before God and listen to sound counsel, discerning our real difficulties and what action we can take.

If a task is beyond our abilities, we can seek training, invite others to work alongside us, or explain what we are currently able to undertake. If we truly are not suited to it, we should honestly discuss other arrangements. Humility allows us to say, “I need help,” and also helps us act on what is already clear.

At the same time, we cannot use the explicit commission Moses received as a reason to require others to accept every invitation to serve. Those extending an invitation also need humility, respecting the other person’s discernment and actual circumstances.

Humility leads us neither to exaggerate our abilities nor to dismiss lightly the abilities God

has given us. We acknowledge our limitations while remaining willing to learn diligently and take responsibility.

3. Knowing Our Place Makes Us Willing to Support Others' Growth

John the Baptist's disciples saw more people turning to Jesus and brought this to his attention. John explained that he was not the Christ but had been sent ahead of Him. He also used the relationship between the bridegroom and the bridegroom's friend to express his joy at hearing the bridegroom's voice (John 3:26–29). He said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

These words first concern John's unique role in preparing the way for Christ. He knew whom he was bearing witness to and could therefore rejoice as people turned to Jesus.

We cannot conclude from this that every believer should seek a decline in ability, work, or influence. We can, however, learn from John's clear understanding of his place: the responsibilities entrusted to us must not make us the centre in Christ's place.

When this understanding shapes our work together, it makes us willing to acknowledge others' contributions and support their growth. When others receive recognition, we do not need to interpret it immediately as our own loss. When someone is better suited to a particular responsibility, we can gladly support them.

Sometimes humility means stepping forward to take responsibility; at other times it means giving an opportunity to someone better suited. What matters is whether we are faithful to what has been entrusted to us and care for the community, rather than whether we always

retain the same position. We can play our part diligently while acknowledging that we are only one part of the whole.

4. Humility Is Revealed in How We Receive Counsel and Treat Others

Humility needs to be tested in real relationships. Saying that we have limitations does not guarantee that we will still listen when questioned. Speaking gently does not necessarily mean that we seriously consider others' views or allow those who should participate in a decision to be genuinely involved.

Philippians 2:3–4 urges believers, in humility, to consider others better than themselves and to look to others' interests. This teaching leads us to put aside rivalry and conceit and care earnestly for others. It does not call us to deny our own dignity or to assume that every

judgement made by someone else is more correct than our own.

When someone offers correction, we first seek to understand the issue they are pointing out. If we see things differently, we explain our reasons and continue the discussion. Humility keeps us from dismissing a well-founded view because of our own seniority or position. By acknowledging our shortcomings and making corrections rather than rushing to protect our image, we show more clearly how we understand ourselves.

Humility also enables us to maintain appropriate boundaries. We can respect others while refusing demands that are untruthful or unjust. We can acknowledge our mistakes without taking on responsibilities that do not belong to us. Understanding ourselves according to the truth requires both repentance and honest discernment.

Paul directs believers to have the mind of Christ Jesus and explains how He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death on the cross (Philippians 2:5–8). He is our Saviour, and He also guides us as we learn to care for others, use our abilities, and take responsibility with humility. Understanding our place rightly also makes us willing to accept His correction and let His word guide our choices and actions.

IV. Obedience

Submitting Our Will to God's Will

In responding to God's call, we each need to face a practical question: when God's revealed will conflicts with my desires, interests, or habits, am I willing to act according to His word?

We may know the truth and agree with it, yet remain reluctant to change. We know we

should be honest but are unwilling to give up the advantages of concealment. We know we need to apologise but fear losing face. We know that our behaviour is harming a relationship yet continue to make excuses for ourselves.

Obedience needs to shape our response to these specific struggles. It involves listening, understanding, and choosing, and it requires God's grace and the Holy Spirit's help. We learn as we respond, repent when we discover our errors, and allow God's revealed truth gradually to guide our lives.

1. Obedience Puts Trust into Action

When Abraham heard God's command, he left his country, his relatives, and his father's house and went toward the place God directed him to (Genesis 12:1–4). When Samuel heard God calling, he responded, "Speak; for your

servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10, excerpt). Mary received the message concerning Jesus’ birth and expressed her willingness for the Lord’s word to be fulfilled in her (Luke 1:26–38).

Their circumstances differed, as did the revelation and responsibilities they received. Abraham went out relying on God’s promise, Samuel began to receive and convey God’s word, and Mary bore a unique responsibility in the history of redemption. Their experiences show us that trust needs to take shape in practical choices, which may involve uncertainty and cost.

Today, we likewise need to put the truth we understand into action. Acknowledging the importance of honesty means we need to stop deceiving. Recognising human dignity means we need to change behaviour that belittles or exploits others. Being willing to take

responsibility means we need to honour the commitments we have made.

An unclear future does not prevent us from responding to what we already understand is required today. Obedience often begins with one thing before us and grows through continued practice.

2. Struggles with Obedience Need to Be Taken Seriously

Scripture also records the hesitation, avoidance, and failures of those who were called. Moses repeatedly resisted, Jonah fled in the opposite direction from where God sent him, and Peter denied the Lord three times. Those who are called may still fear, resist God, or falter under pressure.

We need to distinguish between honestly voicing questions and refusing to obey. When we have questions, we can seek understanding

and help. When a requirement is already clear, we need to examine seriously whether we are still avoiding it.

Jonah's experience especially shows that outward compliance and the heart's turning toward God both need examination. He later proclaimed the message God commanded him to give to Nineveh, yet remained angry because God showed mercy to the city (Jonah 3–4). A person may complete a task while their inner judgements and attitudes still need renewal.

Obedience therefore concerns both our actions and how we understand God and treat others. We need to ask God to help us change wrong behaviour while also being willing to face the pride, resentment, and self-centredness within us. Confessing sin, seeking help, and learning anew within His grace are all part of continuing to follow Him.

3. Christ's Obedience Accomplishes Salvation and Guides Our Lives

As Jesus faced the cross, He prayed, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42, excerpt). He truly experienced suffering, yet remained faithful to the Father’s will.

Philippians 2:6–8 explains that Christ humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Romans 5:19 also connects His obedience with people being made righteous. His obedience has a unique redemptive significance.

To know Christ, we first need to recognise Him as the Lord who gave Himself for sinners and accomplished salvation. Through faith we receive the redemption He has accomplished and then, within His grace, learn to become

like Him. Imitating His actions cannot be a means of earning salvation.

Christ's obedience also helps us understand that suffering and obedience can coexist. A person willing to remain faithful to God may still feel fear, sorrow, or struggle. We can pray to the Father, express our needs, and ask Him to help us act according to the truth.

Yet Jesus' going to the cross to accomplish salvation cannot be used as a reason to require those being harmed to give up seeking protection, or to exempt wrongdoers from accountability. We need to attend to justice, human dignity, and the responsibilities that should be borne in light of Scripture's teaching as a whole.

4. Obedience Requires Understanding and Discerning God's Will

Honesty, loving others, turning away from sin, caring for the vulnerable, and fulfilling our rightful responsibilities are clear requirements in Scripture. We need to understand these teachings carefully and be willing to let them govern our choices.

Decisions about a career, relocation, or specific arrangements for service require consideration of biblical principles, abilities, family responsibilities, actual circumstances, and mature counsel. We cannot treat our judgement as God's command simply because we say, "I feel prompted." Favourable circumstances alone cannot prove that a decision must be from God.

After urging believers not to quench the Spirit or despise prophecies, Paul calls them to test

all things, hold firmly to what is good, and abstain from evil (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22). When the council forbade the apostles to teach in Jesus’ name, they also insisted on obeying God (Acts 5:27–29). These passages remind us that obedience to God includes a responsibility to discern. We cannot simply equate human demands with God’s commands.

In the family, the church, and the workplace, legitimate authority has a real role. We should take the responsibilities involved seriously and respect teaching and arrangements consistent with the truth. Yet no position of authority gives someone the right to require others to sin, conceal harm, or endure injustice.

Asking questions, explaining difficulties, and seeking clarification do not automatically amount to disobedience. Equally, we cannot use “I obey only God” as a reason to avoid

legitimate responsibilities and accountability. Both parties need to be governed by the truth and discern together with honesty and humility.

5. Obedience Takes Shape in Actions We Can Take Today

Obedience can begin with something we already understand but have delayed acting on. If we know we have concealed important facts, we need to disclose them honestly. If we know an action is harming someone, we need to stop and take responsibility for putting things right. Confessing sin also calls for a concrete response: discerning what must stop, what needs correction, and how to take responsibility.

These responses may come at a cost. Honesty may bring loss, apologising may feel embarrassing, and facing the consequences may change our original arrangements. Yet

taking these matters seriously brings faith into real life.

Obedience requires preparation and continued learning. We can ask others to remind us, establish appropriate boundaries, and change habits that leave us prone to repeated failure. Philippians 2:12–13 connects believers' practical obedience with God's work in their hearts: God enables them to will and to act, and they also need to respond earnestly.

This growth may not happen all at once. After falling, we need to confess, repent, face the consequences, and keep learning. After making a change, we also need to sustain it over time rather than stopping at a momentary resolve.

Submitting our will to God's will involves continued learning within His grace: letting the truth guide our desires, putting what we understand of His word into action, and being

willing to change when corrected. Obedience is expressed not only in a single decision but also in ongoing practice. This leads us to the further question of how to remain faithful to what has been entrusted to us.

V. Faithfulness

Remaining True to What God Has Entrusted to Us

After our initial enthusiasm has faded, when our work receives little attention, results have yet to appear, or responsibilities become demanding, we still need to ask: how can we remain faithful to God and take seriously what has been entrusted to us now?

Faithfulness involves both perseverance and direction. We need to examine whether what we persist in is consistent with the truth, whether our methods are appropriate, and whether we are truly fulfilling our

responsibilities. We should respect sustained effort while also examining whether it is faithful to God and consistent with the truth. We cannot conclude that someone is faithful simply on the basis of how long they have persisted or how much they have given.

When speaking of the apostles as Christ's servants and stewards of God's mysteries, Paul says, "Here, moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Those entrusted with a responsibility need to remain true both to the one who entrusted it to them and to what they have received. For believers, this means being accountable to God and living in a manner consistent with His truth.

1. Faithfulness Begins with What Has Already Been Entrusted to Us

Jesus says that a person who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much (Luke 16:10).

This statement comes within His teaching about money and stewardship. It calls us to take seriously the resources we use now, rather than simply looking forward to greater responsibilities in the future.

Small matters can reveal how we handle responsibility. Whether we report expenses honestly, keep to agreed times, handle information entrusted to us properly, or promptly report a problem can affect other people's lives and their trust in us.

Sometimes we hope to find a special mission before beginning to apply ourselves seriously. Yet many responsibilities are already present today: caring for family, working honestly,

keeping promises, using resources wisely, and showing concern for those with whom we share our lives. These responsibilities do not lose their significance because they lack public influence.

Taking small matters seriously does not mean that God will necessarily give us a more prominent position. Faithfulness is itself a response to God; it cannot be viewed merely as a means of gaining more opportunities.

The responsibilities each person can undertake differ. Age, health, abilities, and family circumstances all affect practical arrangements. We need to fulfil our responsibilities according to our actual circumstances and respect those who are temporarily unable to work and are receiving care. Faithfulness must not become a standard for judging the value of a life solely by the amount of work a person does.

2. Taking Responsibility for What We Can in Difficult Circumstances

Joseph was sold by his brothers and became a slave (Genesis 37:28; 39:1). Later, he was imprisoned following a false accusation. Scripture repeatedly records that the LORD was with him and also describes the responsibilities he undertook in managing Potiphar's household and affairs within the prison (Genesis 39:2–6, 20–23).

Joseph could not decide when he would gain his freedom or control how others treated him. Scripture records both God's presence and kindness towards him and his diligence in fulfilling the responsibilities within his reach. We cannot, therefore, understand his experience merely as a story of achieving a dream through personal strength.

Today, we too may be unable to choose all our circumstances, yet we still need to discern what we can take responsibility for. For example, when a task is constrained, we can still give an honest account of its progress, take proper care of information entrusted to us, and promptly make difficulties known to those concerned. Such reliable actions help us remain true to the responsibilities we have received.

Joseph's experience as a slave and prisoner cannot serve as a basis for requiring people to remain indefinitely in unjust circumstances. Faithfulness can include seeking fairness and explaining difficulties; it can also involve moving towards new arrangements when appropriate. We need to remain faithful to God without assuming that every existing situation must be maintained permanently.

3. Those Outside the Narrative's Centre Also Make a Meaningful Contribution

Scripture also records people who are not always at the centre of its narratives. In particular circumstances, they pray, bear witness, welcome people, and help others, showing us different ways of serving faithfully.

In her old age, Anna continued to worship, fast, and pray. After seeing the infant Jesus, she spoke about Him to those who were looking for redemption (Luke 2:36–38).

Ananias of Damascus received instructions from the Lord. Although he knew that Saul had persecuted believers, he still went to help him as the Lord had commanded (Acts 9:10–19).

When the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul, Barnabas welcomed him and explained

his experience to the apostles. Later, he went to Tarsus to look for him and brought him to Antioch to serve together with others (Acts 9:26–27; 11:25–26).

These people's experiences cannot all be grouped under the same calling or office. Yet they show us that God's work involves many forms of practical participation: prayer, witness, hospitality, help, teaching, and working together. A person does not need to be at the centre of everything in order to serve faithfully.

In life today, this may mean supporting someone in need over time, helping a newcomer become part of a community, completing work behind the scenes with care, or offering appropriate support when someone finds it difficult to continue. These actions may receive little public attention, yet they have a real impact on others.

We should respect such contributions while avoiding the use of biblical figures' later significance as a guarantee that every quiet effort will bring a notable reward. The significance of faithfulness needs to be understood before God; it cannot be confirmed solely by whether a person later receives recognition.

4. Faithfulness Requires Examination and Correction

After speaking about the faithfulness of stewards, Paul explains that the Lord is the one who ultimately examines him and will reveal the intentions of people's hearts (1 Corinthians 4:3–5). Human evaluations have their limits, and our own judgements about ourselves may not be entirely accurate.

This does not remove the need for examination and accountability today. We still need to clarify responsibilities, examine the

results of our work, listen to feedback, and face the question of whether our actions are faithful to the truth. Leaving the final judgement to God cannot become a reason for refusing questions from others.

Faithfulness needs to be expressed in reliable attention to detail: considering carefully before making a promise and doing our best to keep it afterwards; promptly explaining difficulties and giving a clear account when using someone else's resources. If negligence causes loss, we should explain the facts, take the appropriate responsibility, and improve practices that are likely to lead to further mistakes. Such actions enable others to trust our promises and help us take responsibility for how we fulfil them.

5. Faithfulness May Also Require Adjustments and a Handover

“Remaining true to what has been entrusted to us” emphasises taking responsibility seriously. It does not require us to retain the same role or way of working forever.

Exodus 18 records that Jethro saw Moses dealing with the people’s affairs on his own. He pointed out that this arrangement would wear out both Moses and the people, and advised him to share the responsibilities. Moses accepted the counsel and changed the way he handled these matters (Exodus 18:13–26).

Those willing to take responsibility also need to examine carefully how they do so. Handling everything alone may leave a person exhausted, prevent others from participating, and affect those who need help.

Sharing responsibilities is one way of adjusting how we carry them. When our abilities or circumstances change, we may also need to hand a particular responsibility over to someone suitable. Faithfulness means taking such changes seriously, caring about the continuity of the work, and learning to let go of our dependence on our former position. Chapter 4 will further discuss how leaders arrange a handover.

We receive life and gifts from God and learn reliability, honesty, and love within His grace. Remaining faithful to these responsibilities over time also requires perseverance.

VI. Perseverance

Continuing to Follow God Through Life's Journey

When responsibilities continue for a long time, results are slow to appear, or new

difficulties keep arising, we may feel exhausted and even wonder whether we can keep going.

Scripture does not promise that the road will always be smooth once we respond to God's call. Joseph experienced slavery and imprisonment. After being anointed, David spent a long time being pursued. Moses faced Pharaoh's resistance and the people's complaints. Paul also experienced persecution, danger, and deprivation in his ministry.

These accounts help us recognise that the road of following God may be long and difficult. Perseverance enables us to continue relying on Him under pressure, rather than readily abandoning responsibilities that are already clear simply because results are slow to appear. Its focus is remaining faithful to God. For this reason, when we discover that we are wrong, we also need to accept correction.

1. Perseverance Is Grounded in God's Grace and Faithfulness

Paul writes that “suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (Romans 5:3–4, excerpt). These words rest on the gospel foundation laid out immediately before them: believers are justified by faith, have peace with God through Christ, and have gained access to the grace in which they stand. The passage goes on to say that God’s love has been poured into believers’ hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:1–5).

Perseverance and hope need to be understood in the context of God’s salvation and continuing provision. In suffering, we do not have to depend on willpower alone. Nor does enduring more pain necessarily make us more mature.

Suffering can leave us discouraged, angry, or disoriented. Paul himself acknowledged that the affliction he experienced in Asia was so severe that it exceeded what he could bear, and he even despaired of surviving. This led him to rely not on himself but on God, who raises the dead. He also explained that the believers' prayers had helped them (2 Corinthians 1:8–11).

This allows us to acknowledge our limitations honestly. Those who trust God may still feel overwhelmed, and they can make their needs known to their community. Accepting help does not weaken perseverance; it may provide important support for continuing on.

Even when we cannot explain everything that happens, we can still return to the love God has revealed in Christ, receive mercy, and ask Him for the strength and wisdom we need today.

2. Waiting Tests Our Resolve to Remain Faithful to God

While Saul was pursuing David, David had opportunities to kill him. Yet he refused because he would not harm the LORD's anointed (1 Samuel 24; 26). The danger did not immediately disappear. He still needed to wait and entrust his circumstances to God.

These events took place in the specific context of Israel's kingship and the LORD's anointed; they cannot be used to exempt leaders today from accountability. They help us recognise that, even under pressure, our actions need to be governed by God's truth. We cannot assume that the means are justified simply because the outcome appears advantageous.

Joseph was eventually released and entrusted with new responsibilities. Yet Scripture does not thereby guarantee that everyone who suffers faithfully will experience the same

turnaround in this life. We can hope for our circumstances to improve and take responsible action towards that end. At the same time, we need to recognise that God's faithfulness cannot be measured solely by whether a particular plan succeeds.

3. Continuing to Follow God Requires Discernment About When to Make Changes

Some difficulties call for us to keep facing them; others indicate that we need to change our approach, reduce the scope of our responsibilities, or reconsider arrangements together. Discerning the difference requires prayer, attention to the facts, listening to counsel, and taking our actual responsibilities seriously.

We need to discern whether we are holding fast to loyalty to Christ or to a particular way of doing things. If an existing approach is

ineffective or harmful, it should change. If the responsibility remains clear, we should seek a more appropriate way to fulfil it. Changing a plan can be a responsible response, while continuing to use the same method may not be appropriate.

Especially when facing harm and injustice, we must not use “God is shaping you” as a reason to require others to endure harm that could be prevented. Those who have been harmed need protection, and those who do wrong need to be held accountable. Leaving an unsafe situation, exposing wrongdoing, and seeking appropriate help can all be consistent with continuing to trust God.

Perseverance means continuing in the direction of following Christ. The particular place, role, and methods need to be assessed in light of truth and actual circumstances.

4. Perseverance Allows for Grief, Rest, and Seeking Help

Prolonged difficulties can drain people physically and emotionally. We cannot simply tell someone to “hold on a little longer” without making a serious effort to understand what they are enduring.

Hebrews 12:1–3 urges believers to run with perseverance the race set before them, looking to Jesus so that they will not grow weary and lose heart. This teaching acknowledges that people can become weary and need to turn their attention back to Christ.

The laments in Scripture show us that we can bring pain before God. We can express disappointment, admit that we do not understand, and ask for help. Weeping does not automatically indicate a lack of faith. Often, it is precisely how a suffering person opens their heart to God.

Rest and treatment also need to be taken seriously. Physical exhaustion calls for recovery; illness calls for care; and excessive pressure may call for a temporary reduction in responsibilities. We do not need to wait until we are completely depleted before allowing ourselves to seek help.

Supporting those who suffer is also a responsibility believers share in their life together. Hebrews 10:24–25 urges believers to encourage one another towards love and good works; Galatians 6:2 also calls us to bear one another's burdens. Supporting someone who is suffering involves listening, sharing practical tasks, and, when necessary, helping them find appropriate support.

We cannot declare on behalf of those who suffer that every injury will bring some particular benefit. Nor should we require them to explain what they have learned before

offering care. Sometimes the response most needed is to acknowledge the pain, provide protection, and remain patiently alongside them. Such support makes perseverance part of our shared life.

5. The Hope of Perseverance Extends Beyond Immediate Results

Peter points out that God has called believers in Christ to His eternal glory, and promises that He will strengthen them after they have suffered for a little while (1 Peter 5:10). This promise directs believers in suffering towards the fulfilment God will ultimately bring.

The words “suffered for a little while” cannot be used to guarantee that a particular difficulty will end soon. In relation to eternity, suffering in this life is limited. Yet for those enduring it, it may still be prolonged and heavy, and they need real help.

We may not see every task completed in this life, nor be able to explain every loss. Yet Christ's resurrection enables believers to hope for bodily resurrection, the full realisation of salvation, and being with God forever in the new creation He has promised (1 Corinthians 15:20–23; Revelation 21:1–4).

This hope enables us to take today's responsibilities seriously and also to accept the end of a particular stage. Even if we cannot complete all the work, or can no longer carry responsibilities we once held, we can still trust the Lord and entrust ourselves and the unfinished work to Him.

Continuing to follow God through life's journey means continually returning to Christ amid changing circumstances: receiving grace, examining our direction, taking responsibility, and waiting for His promises to be fulfilled.

The Six Qualities of Character Are Not Six Exercises in Self- Improvement

The fear of the Lord leads us to take God's holiness and authority seriously. Trust enables us to rely on Him within the limits of our understanding. Humility helps us recognise our place. Obedience brings the truth we understand into action. Faithfulness enables us to act responsibly and continue holding fast to what has been entrusted to us. Perseverance enables us to keep following God through waiting and pressure.

These qualities are interconnected; they are not six stages to be completed in sequence. We continue learning to trust as we obey, discover our need for humility as we take responsibility, and learn perseverance through sustained faithfulness. Each quality needs to keep growing amid changing circumstances.

Love runs through them all. Paul points out that gifts, knowledge, and even great sacrifice cannot take the place of love. Without love, these cannot bring the benefit he describes (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). As we put these qualities into practice, we need to care genuinely for others, allowing love to guide our persistence, actions, and responsibilities.

Such growth needs to unfold in a life of continuing communion with Christ. In His teaching about the vine and the branches, Jesus helps His disciples understand that they need to remain in Him in order to bear fruit (John 15:1–8). Paul also connects believers' obedience in practice with God's work within them (Philippians 2:12–13).

God accepts those who trust Him because of Christ's redemption; He does not wait until they are mature before showing them grace. Those who have received grace, in turn, need

to turn away from sin and learn holiness with the Holy Spirit's help. Growth in character cannot become a condition for earning salvation, nor can grace become a reason to refuse repentance.

We study Scripture attentively, acknowledge our needs in prayer, receive counsel in our shared life, and respond through concrete choices. These practices help us put the truth we have received into daily life. They are a response to grace, not a way to earn God's acceptance.

Self-examination can help us grow, but we do not need to give ourselves a daily score for our character. We can bring together before the Lord the sins we need to confess, the responsibilities we should carry, the help we need to seek, and the grace for which we can give thanks—responding honestly and continuing to learn to follow Him.

Character Sustains Mission More Deeply Than Ability

Ability helps people carry out work; character shapes how they use their abilities, treat others, and respond to responsibility. Someone may be very gifted yet unwilling to accept correction, influential yet dishonest, or clear about their goals yet use methods that harm others.

Saul provides a sobering reminder. He did not obey God's clear command, but defended keeping the best cattle and sheep on the grounds that they would be sacrificed to God. Samuel said, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22, excerpt). Outward religious actions cannot replace a genuine response to God's will.

Fulfilling what has been entrusted to us requires character consistent with God's truth,

as well as the relevant knowledge, abilities, and cooperation with others. Emphasising character does not mean neglecting the development of abilities or practical responsibilities. Chapter 4 will explore further how leaders use their abilities in carrying out actual responsibilities, work with others, and allow their actions to be examined.

God can renew people through waiting, difficulties, and the quieter parts of daily life. Yet the experiences of Moses in Midian, David on the run, and Joseph in prison each had their own specific context. We cannot conclude from them that every interruption to a plan means God is correcting a particular problem in someone's character.

Even when we do not yet understand why we are waiting or encountering obstacles, we can begin responding to the responsibilities that are already clear today. We learn as we carry

them out and seek help when we discover our limitations. Personal growth and practical service often take place at the same time; we do not need to wait until we are fully mature before beginning to respond.

Growth in character has value in itself. Even without a higher position or greater influence, becoming more honest, humble, and willing to love others is still a genuine response to God. Growth in our lives cannot be measured solely by how much work it helps us accomplish.

Conclusion: Character Formation Is Ultimately About More Than Becoming a “Better Version of Ourselves”

Maturity, self-discipline, and the development of abilities can all bring benefits. Yet the renewal of life described in Scripture involves more than progress in these areas. It means coming to know the Lord more deeply and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, becoming increasingly like Christ, living as those who belong to Him in our thoughts, relationships, and actions (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We fear God because He is worthy of reverence; we trust Him because He is faithful; we are humble because we are creatures and recipients of grace; we obey because He is Lord and we should follow His

revealed will; we remain faithful because we have received responsibilities from God and are accountable to Him; we persevere because His grace and promises remain dependable.

As we gradually grow in these qualities of character, we become more willing to accept correction from the truth and more able to love others in our actual relationships. Growth may take place in public ministry, or in a choice that receives little attention yet comes at a cost.

As we seek to understand God's call, we can also ask: What responsibilities has God already made clear? How am I responding? In these choices and relationships, where do I need to repent, accept correction, and learn?

Particular tasks will end, and our roles and abilities will change. Yet those who have received grace still need to know the Lord, trust Him, and learn love and faithfulness in

new circumstances. Character formation continues throughout our lives. Through Christ's redemption, we also look forward to our lives being brought to fulfilment in Him.

As we continue to grow, we also carry out what has been entrusted to us. This does not mean that we have matured to the point of no longer needing help. In our service, we still need to rely on God, receive counsel, and grow together with other members of Christ's body. The next chapter will explore further how individuals and the church discern their responsibilities and faithfully live out the mission entrusted to them, with Christ's presence, the Holy Spirit's help, and cooperation with one another.

Chapter 4: Calling and Mission



The first three chapters explored calling in the Bible, the meaning of life, and character formation. This chapter asks further questions: How do those who have received grace fulfil what has been entrusted to them? How do individuals and the church respond together, and bring the truth they have received into ministry, family life, and work?

All of this rests on God's grace. Paul explains that God saved believers and called them with a holy calling, not according to their works but according to His purpose and grace. This grace was revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:9–10). We cannot earn God's acceptance by fulfilling a mission. Good works and service are responses to salvation already received; God also continues to renew and help us as we respond.

This chapter will distinguish everyday responsibilities from the gospel commission entrusted to the church as a whole. It will explore how the church builds up believers and helps them work together, and how leaders use authority and resources appropriately. Responsibilities in family life and work, and the mission of proclaiming Christ and making disciples, each have their own specific content and requirements. As we follow the Lord, we need to carry out faithfully what has been entrusted to us.

Calling, the shaping of our lives, and living out our mission are interwoven throughout a believer's life. We do not have to wait until we are fully mature before beginning to serve, but we need to take on appropriate responsibilities in light of our abilities and actual circumstances. Nor should we assume that we no longer need renewal simply

because we already carry responsibilities. We rely on God, while also preparing carefully, learning, and working with others, entrusting to Him the results we cannot control.

This chapter approaches its subject through six areas: the individual Christian, the church, the relationship between calling and mission, the mission of the gospel, family life and the workplace, and leadership. These will help us understand how to remain faithful to the Lord, care for others, and give glory to God in our present circumstances.

I. Calling and the Christian Life

From Self-Understanding to Turning to God

God's call concerns the life of every Christian and deserves careful attention. Scripture records particular commissions given to people such as Moses, Isaiah, and the apostles.

It also urges all who have received grace to live in a way consistent with that grace.

Specific responsibilities differ, but trusting Christ, pursuing holiness, loving one another, and bearing witness to the Lord are directions shared by all believers.

As we carry out our responsibilities, we need to keep asking: Since I belong to Him in Christ, how should I live? What responsibilities do I need to carry today, and with whom do I need to work?

“From self-understanding to turning to God” does not mean that we must first understand ourselves completely before we can respond to Him. Through God’s revelation, we recognise our identity as creatures, our sin, and our limitations; through Christ’s redemption, we come to understand grace and what it means to belong to Him in a new way. Turning to God helps us know ourselves more truly, while

recognising our sin and limitations helps us see more clearly our need for His redemption and help.

1. Calling Helps Us Understand Who We Are, Whom We Belong To, and Why We Live

The first two chapters explained that human dignity as creatures comes from God, and that those who trust Christ receive new life and belonging by grace. This means that, as we carry responsibilities, we do not need to prove through our results that we deserve God's acceptance. Instead, because of the grace we have already received, we carefully discern how to remain faithful to the Lord and care for others.

Paul writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). This verse

immediately follows the teaching that we are saved by grace through faith. It shows that believers receive new life in Christ and begin to live in a way that pleases God. Good works are a response to a life received by grace; they cannot become a condition for earning salvation.

Recognising this belonging enables us to use the abilities we have received to do good. When arranging our time, choosing work, or participating in ministry, we can first consider whom the decision will affect and whether we are fulfilling our existing responsibilities. We can then consider how to help particular people, rather than simply increasing our own achievements.

2. Calling Moves Faith from What We Believe into How We Live

Understanding the content of our faith is very important. We need to know who God is, what Christ has accomplished, why people need salvation, and what kind of life pleases God. Doctrine helps us know the Lord in whom we believe and provides a foundation for practical action.

Paul urges believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling, immediately speaking of humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and making every effort to preserve unity (Ephesians 4:1–6). Responding to God’s call is therefore also expressed in how we relate to others: how we listen to opinions, handle disagreements, restrain our speech, and care for other believers.

Studying Scripture, praying, worshipping, and sharing in the life of the church help us know God and receive truth. They also need to bring correction to our thoughts and actions. If we are familiar with Scripture yet continually neglect our commitments, disregard our families, or refuse to acknowledge mistakes, we need to face the gap between what we believe and what we do.

Paul writes, “Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). The context concerns how we exercise freedom and consider the conscience and good of others. Glorifying God is expressed not only in public ministry but also in our willingness to adjust our behaviour out of love for others.

Calling makes the truth we believe a foundation for action. We consider not only whether we are free to do something, but also

whether it builds others up and is consistent with the Lord in whom we believe.

3. Calling Turns Us from Self-Fulfilment towards Responding to God's Will

Understanding our interests, abilities, gifts, and desires helps us discern what responsibilities we can carry. Making plans, learning skills, and developing abilities can also express faithful stewardship of our lives.

Yet our personal desires need to be guided by God's truth. What we like is not always appropriate, and what produces results is not always worth pursuing. A plan may satisfy our sense of personal achievement while neglecting family responsibilities; a ministry may expand our influence while making us increasingly concerned with our own reputation.

Responding to God's call leads us to bring these desires before Him, examining whether our goals are consistent with Scripture, whether the means of achieving them are honest and just, and how they affect those around us. In this process, we also need to listen to counsel and be willing to make changes when we discover problems.

Paul urges believers to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they can discern God's will (Romans 12:2). Putting this teaching into practice requires us to re-examine how we understand success, use authority, view the value of people, and decide what deserves our time and sacrifice.

Our God-given individuality and abilities can be used appropriately through this renewal. We can hope to do something well and give thanks for the results. At the same time, we need to learn to share responsibility, respect

others' contributions, and relinquish goals that contradict the truth.

As our lives are renewed, we gradually become less dependent on proving ourselves through every task. We become freer to ask: How can I make good use of what I have received, for the benefit of others and in faithfulness to the Lord?

4. Calling Teaches Us to Listen to God, Discern His Will, Trust Him, and Obey Him

Today, through Scripture, we come to know the truth God has revealed. We seek His help in prayer and receive teaching and counsel in the shared life of the church. The Holy Spirit helps us understand and obey God's word, teaching us to turn away from sin, love others, and remain faithful to Christ.

When assessing specific ministry arrangements, we also need to listen to others, allowing them to help us recognise needs and responsibilities more clearly and to discern together according to biblical principles.

Those extending an invitation to serve should explain the needs, requirements, and preparation involved. Those receiving the invitation should honestly explain their abilities and existing commitments. Both sides need to leave room for prayer, discussion, and correction.

This listening and responding continues throughout our lives. Grace enables us to keep seeking amid our limitations, confess and repent after failure, and learn obedience in what we already understand. We do not need to know the entire road ahead before carrying the responsibilities that are clear today.

5. Calling Gives Us a Steady Direction in a Changing World

Our living conditions, ways of working, and social roles will change. A steady direction does not mean always keeping the same job or plan. It means continuing to make decisions on the basis of trusting Christ, obeying the truth, and caring for others.

When previous work ends or changes, we need to discern which responsibilities have been completed, which must continue, and which should be handed over to others. We can then arrange new ways to participate in light of our abilities, family needs, and the counsel of our community. Those who are temporarily unable to work should also receive the community's care.

Change may bring a sense of loss, and adjustment takes time. We do not need to make new commitments immediately to fill

the gap. We can continue seeking the Lord and discussing matters honestly with those involved, so that the next step responds to actual needs and fits with the responsibilities we already carry.

Calling helps Christians understand themselves before God and gradually respond to His grace in every part of life. We receive identity and life from Him, learn to live in the truth, and continue following Him amid change. At the same time, through Christ we belong to one another as believers and share in carrying out what has been entrusted to the church.

II. Calling and the Church

From Gathering Together to Being United with Christ

God calls people in Christ and brings those who have received grace into the shared life of

His people. Believers personally trust Christ and, through Him, belong to one another. Together they worship, receive teaching, learn to love one another, and bear witness to Him. Peter calls believers “a chosen race”, “a royal priesthood”, “a holy nation”, and “a people for God’s own possession”. He also explains that they are to proclaim the excellence of the One who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9, excerpts). These descriptions have a corporate meaning: God makes them His people and enables them to bear witness together to His salvation.

Thinking about the church’s calling therefore requires us to address two questions together: Who are we? How should we live together and fulfil what has been entrusted to us?

“From gathering together to being united with Christ” emphasises that the church’s gathering needs to be centred on Christ. Worshipping

together, praying, receiving God's word, and serving one another are all important aspects of church life. These practices also need to help the whole community know Christ more deeply, remain faithful to Him, and be built up in love.

1. Calling Helps the Church Know Who We Are

The church is a community that has received grace in Christ and belongs to God, with members who belong to one another. Paul describes the church as Christ's body and identifies Christ as its head (Ephesians 1:22–23). The church receives life from Christ and acknowledges Him as Lord. Its teaching, leadership, and arrangements also need to be guided by His word.

Buildings, organisational structures, budgets, and scheduled activities can serve the church's shared life. Yet they cannot provide the

ultimate basis of its identity. Nor can the size of a congregation or the abundance of its resources, on their own, show whether a community is faithful to Christ.

Recognising to whom it belongs leads the church to keep examining whether its teaching is faithful to Scripture, how it treats people, and how it uses resources and authority. One shared question can guide this discernment: Do our decisions help people know the Lord, obey the truth, and love one another?

This identity also helps believers understand their relationship with other members of the body. We receive grace together and need to learn to support one another. Each person's needs, weaknesses, and growth concern the life of the whole community.

The church ultimately belongs to Christ. No leader, institution, or tradition can therefore replace Christ as the centre of believers' lives.

Leaders bear responsibilities for service and teaching, and also need to be guided by God's word together with the whole community.

2. Calling Brings the Church Back to Christ

When Paul discusses the church's growth, he connects knowing the Son of God, maturity, holding to the truth in love, and being joined to Christ the head (Ephesians 4:13–16). This shows us that the church's growth needs to become evident in how the whole community knows the Lord and lives.

An increase in numbers, the development of ministries, and improved resources can be reasons for thanksgiving, and also bring new responsibilities. At the same time, the church needs to consider whether believers understand the gospel more clearly, are learning to turn away from sin and live honestly, and are willing to listen, offer

counsel, forgive, and share responsibilities in their relationships with one another.

Turning to Christ requires ongoing confession of sin and renewal. A church may neglect people in its busyness, cease to think seriously about the truth while maintaining familiar habits, or avoid problems in order to protect its image. God's word leads the community to face these ways of going astray and learn to make practical changes.

If there is harm, injustice, or a failure to fulfil responsibilities within the church, responding to Christ includes establishing the facts honestly, protecting those who have been harmed, and taking the responsibility that is required. Shared prayer and confession need to be accompanied by concrete action: addressing wrongdoing, accepting the consequences, and repairing relationships and

adjusting arrangements as the circumstances require.

The church can learn new methods and needs to improve its organisation and communication. These efforts should help the community become more faithful to Christ. True renewal takes place in worship and teaching, and is also evident in how the community handles problems, uses authority, and cares for people in daily life.

3. Calling Leads the Church from Gathering People to Building Them Up

Christ gives different people to serve, in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry and build up His body (Ephesians 4:11–12). The purpose here is to equip believers to participate together in service and grow in knowing Christ.

Gathering together is itself deeply significant. Believers express their belonging in Christ by worshipping God together, receiving His word, praying, and encouraging one another. Hebrews also urges believers to consider one another, encourage love and good works, and not give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:24–25).

Building people up means helping believers understand the truth they believe and learn to obey it in family life, work, and relationships. Through teaching, companionship, pastoral care, and serving together, the church can help people recognise their gifts, face their weaknesses, and gradually take on appropriate responsibilities.

Equipping people also requires attention to their growth. A person's willingness to serve does not mean that they are ready to carry every responsibility. The church needs to

provide preparation, guidance, and support so that people can learn through practice, with room to acknowledge mistakes and make changes.

Nor can building people up be measured solely by how much work they can carry. Believers experiencing illness, loss, or difficult circumstances also need pastoral care and companionship. Helping people know and trust Christ, and learn love and honesty in His grace, is itself an important part of nurturing their lives.

The church's shared life and daily practice support one another. Believers receive help in the community and bring the truth they have received into daily life. The questions they encounter in life also need to be brought back to the community, where they can continue learning through teaching and companionship.

4. Calling Brings the Church from a Focus on Ministries Back to Its Mission

Ministries are the specific ways in which the church carries out its service, requiring appropriate organisation and arrangements. Biblical teaching, discipleship, visiting, hospitality, care, and gospel witness can be carried out through different ministries. Each arrangement needs to answer this question: How does it help the church remain faithful to the responsibilities Christ has entrusted to it?

When an activity continues over a long period, people may gradually focus only on keeping it running, rarely reconsidering the purpose it serves. The church can therefore review regularly what needs a ministry is addressing, whether people are receiving appropriate help, and whether resources and the burdens on participants are being considered carefully.

Such review must always be grounded in faithfulness to the truth.

Reviewing ministries may lead to new arrangements, or require existing activities to be adjusted or brought to an end. Such decisions require prayer, discussion, and an informed understanding of the situation. They cannot be based solely on attendance, the level of excitement, or short-term results.

Nor can the church's mission be defined solely by a particular leader's personal aspirations. Christ has already made known the commands entrusted to the church as a whole. Local churches need to consider their setting, the needs of the community, and the resources they have received in order to discern carefully how to participate.

Allowing mission to guide ministries enables the church both to act responsibly and to remain open to examination. We can make

plans, but need to keep considering whether they truly serve the purposes of knowing Christ, building up believers, loving one another, and bearing witness to the gospel.

5. Calling Enables the Church to Function as Christ's Body, with Each Part Fulfilling Its Role

Paul explains that the church is joined together through Christ, with each part contributing according to its function so that the body is built up in love (Ephesians 4:16). First Corinthians 12 also teaches that, although there are many members, they belong to one body, need one another, and care for one another.

Different gifts and responsibilities do not create a hierarchy of human worth. Public preaching needs the support of other members. Hospitality, visiting, prayer, giving, and practical care also play important roles in the

community's shared life. The church needs to recognise and respect these different contributions.

Everyone's participation in service does not mean that everyone holds the same role.

Teaching, pastoral care, and governance have corresponding requirements and call for careful preparation and examination according to Scripture. Other members can carry responsibilities suited to their gifts, abilities, and circumstances.

Helping one another also includes accepting help. Paul emphasises that members who seem weaker are indispensable, and calls the members to care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:22–26). Illness, old age, or difficult circumstances cannot take away a person's belonging within the community.

A healthy church therefore encourages participation while also caring for people

within their limitations. When a member can no longer continue their previous ministry, the community should still respect and accompany them, helping them continue to trust the Lord in their new circumstances.

The church's life becomes evident in shared worship, mutual edification, and daily practice. As believers remain faithful to Christ in their families, workplaces, and society, they also need to continue receiving truth together with other members of the body, sharing their needs, and supporting one another.

6. Calling Helps the Church Keep Its Direction in Changing Times

Cultures, ways of life, and communication tools change. The church needs to understand its setting carefully, recognise the questions people actually face, and learn to communicate the gospel clearly and appropriately.

New tools can help with teaching, communication, and connection, and new arrangements may improve service. Yet these choices need to be guided by the mission entrusted to the church. Ways of communicating can change, but the Christ to whom the church bears witness and His salvation cannot be redefined by personal preferences or social expectations.

The church needs to keep holding fast to the testimony proclaimed by the apostles and recorded in Scripture, responding in truth and love to the actual questions and needs people face.

Even when a particular way of communicating is popular, we still need to examine whether it is faithful to the gospel. Even when a method has been used for a long time, we still need to assess whether it can appropriately serve today's needs.

Adapting to change requires shared discernment within the community. Members of different ages, cultures, and experiences can help the church understand its circumstances more fully. Leaders should listen carefully to others, explain clearly the basis of their judgements, and be willing to learn and make corrections in practice.

Change may bring new opportunities or restrict existing ministries. The church can rearrange how people participate, while continuing to worship God, teach the truth, love one another, care for those in need, and bear witness to Christ.

Calling helps the church know to whom it belongs and guides it in learning to live together, face change, and carry the responsibilities God has entrusted to it. The whole community receives life in Christ, relies on Him, helps one another, is built up in love,

and bears witness together to the God who grants them grace, redeems them, and calls them.

III. The Relationship Between Calling and Mission

From Being Called to Being Sent

Calling and mission are closely related. God reveals Himself to people, calls them to respond to Him, and entrusts them with responsibilities to fulfil faithfully.

Understanding this relationship helps us understand concrete action in the context of our relationship with God and take seriously what has been entrusted to us.

Chapter 1 explained that calling in Scripture needs to be understood in context. It may involve sinners turning to God, believers pursuing holiness, or disciples following

Christ; it may also include a particular commission. Calling therefore cannot be reduced entirely to a task, nor understood as inward belonging without practical action.

In this chapter, mission focuses on the responsibilities God entrusts to us to fulfil faithfully. The responsibility to care for creation, everyday responsibilities in family life and work, and the gospel commission Christ gives the church each have their own specific content. They belong together in a believer's life of following the Lord, but cannot replace one another.

“From being called to being sent” expresses the connection between belonging and practice. We respond to God, continue to be renewed in His grace, and carry responsibilities in actual circumstances. Knowing the Lord, growing as believers, and participating in ministry often take place

together and continue throughout a believer's life.

1. Calling Begins with God's Initiative; Mission Comes from What He Entrusts to Us

Moses' mission came from God's explicit commission. God explained the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt, then commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh and bring the people out (Exodus 3:7–10). After being cleansed, Isaiah responded to God's call and received the responsibility to speak to the people (Isaiah 6:6–9). The risen Christ also sent His disciples with His authority to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20).

The authority and content of these explicit commissions come from the God who sends. We also need to take seriously the family, work, and everyday responsibilities discussed in this chapter, in accordance with the truth

God has revealed. Yet we cannot treat every personal arrangement as a direct commission of the same kind. Personal aspirations, enthusiasm, and plans therefore still need to be examined according to biblical principles. Our own conviction alone cannot give them the authority of a direct command from God.

Scripture does not prescribe calling, formation, and sending as stages that everyone must complete in sequence. Moses received his commission when he was called and continued learning as he carried his responsibilities. The disciples also continued growing as they followed Jesus and were sent by Him. Participating in mission therefore requires careful preparation and a willingness to learn, as well as continuing to accept correction after taking on responsibilities.

Today, the church has already received Christ's shared gospel commission. How

individuals participate requires careful discernment in light of Scripture, gifts, the community's needs, and actual responsibilities. Some ways of participating can become clearer through prayer, discussion, and practical arrangements. We do not need to wait for a special experience before beginning to respond to what has already been made clear.

2. Calling Primarily Concerns Whom We Belong To and Who We Become; Mission Further Concerns What We Are Sent to Do

“Whom we belong to and who we become” and “what we are sent to do” help distinguish this chapter's emphases. In Christ, God brings those who have received grace to Himself and into fellowship with Him. He also renews their lives, teaching them to live according to His

will. We need to carry out specific responsibilities as people who belong to God and live according to His will.

Paul explains that God calls believers into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, He also said that He would make them fishers for people (Matthew 4:19). In different ways, these passages show the close connection between a relationship with the Lord and the responsibilities He entrusts to people.

These two questions therefore help us recognise different emphases; they cannot be used to separate calling and mission completely, as though calling concerned only identity and mission alone concerned action.

Understanding this helps us attend to the foundation of our lives while also taking our responsibilities seriously. Service needs to

flow from trust in and obedience to the Lord. Fellowship with Him also teaches us to love others, use our gifts well, and respond to His commands.

Clear distinctions between different responsibilities also need to be maintained. Caring for family, working honestly, and treating people justly have their own requirements. Proclaiming Christ and making disciples also have explicit gospel content. Believers need to keep these responsibilities consistent with one another, neither neglecting everyday duties in the name of ministry nor replacing a clear witness to Christ's salvation with everyday good deeds.

3. Calling and Mission Are Both Grounded in Grace

Paul explains that God saved believers and called them with a holy calling according to His purpose and grace, not according to their

works (2 Timothy 1:9). Ephesians 2:8–10 also connects salvation by grace through faith with a life of good works after receiving grace.

We cannot earn salvation by fulfilling a mission, nor maintain God's acceptance through achievements in ministry. Christ's redemption is the foundation of the grace we receive; service is our response to grace already received.

Grace also sustains practical participation. Peter urges believers to serve one another according to their gifts and carry their responsibilities in the strength God supplies (1 Peter 4:10–11). We receive abilities and opportunities from God and need to keep relying on Him as we participate.

At the same time, receiving grace needs to be clearly distinguished from being ready for a particular role. God's acceptance of those who trust Christ does not mean that everyone is

immediately ready to carry the same responsibilities for teaching, pastoral care, or governance. Scripture sets requirements for church leaders concerning character, daily life, and teaching (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). These requirements need to be examined carefully within the community.

Grace therefore enables us to learn humbly, value preparation and cooperation, and face our limitations willingly. We can serve to the best of our abilities and thank God for the results. When we discover mistakes, we need to take responsibility and accept correction.

Paul explains that he planted and Apollos watered, but God brought growth in believers' lives (1 Corinthians 3:5–7). Human service is real and important, yet the growth of believers' lives ultimately comes from God.

4. Calling Involves an Ongoing Relationship; Mission Involves Ongoing Practice

Here, an “ongoing relationship” means that those who have received grace trust Christ, have fellowship with Him, and follow Him throughout their lives. “Ongoing practice” means that this following needs continually to take shape in concrete action.

The shared gospel mission Christ has given the church remains in effect. Yet the tasks, positions, and ways in which individuals participate may change with their stage of life, abilities, and circumstances. The continuity of the shared mission and changes in specific arrangements need to be understood separately.

A person may move from public teaching to walking alongside a few people, or from travelling for ministry to caring for family.

Illness or old age may also make it impossible to continue their previous work. These changes need to be taken seriously, but they do not diminish the meaning of belonging in Christ.

Changes in specific responsibilities do not mean that every arrangement is equally appropriate. We need to consider the responsibilities we already carry, the needs of those around us, and our abilities and limitations, discussing matters honestly with those involved. Some responsibilities need to continue; others need to be adjusted, ended, or handed over.

When a responsibility needs to be handed over, we should communicate promptly, prepare carefully, and attend to the continuity of the shared work, as far as circumstances allow. Specific ways to divide responsibilities

and manage handovers will be discussed in Section 6.

Whether the scope of our responsibilities expands or narrows, we still need to trust the Lord, obey the truth, and learn to love others. Someone who is temporarily unable to take on more work can also continue relying on God while receiving care. Through care and support, the church needs to express the belonging its members share.

The way we put our mission into practice therefore does not have to stay the same forever. What matters is continuing to be faithful to the Lord amid change, carefully discerning what we should carry today and how to respond together with other members of the body.

5. Calling and Mission Ultimately Point to God's Glory

Peter urges believers to serve one another according to their gifts as good stewards of God's grace. Those who speak are to speak in accordance with God's words, and those who serve are to rely on the strength God supplies, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:10–11). This teaching connects gifts, service, reliance on God, and the One to whom glory belongs.

Glorifying God concerns both the content of our message and how we carry our responsibilities. The gospel needs to bear clear witness to Christ's redemption. Service needs to be consistent with His truth, so that people receive appropriate teaching, care, and edification.

An institution's reputation, personal influence, and the scale of results cannot, on their own,

show whether God is being glorified. Honestly acknowledging mistakes, using resources justly, respecting others' contributions, and caring for those who are weak also express loyalty to God.

We must therefore neither hide problems to protect a ministry's image nor disregard human dignity to obtain results. When service causes harm, it needs to be addressed seriously. When results come from shared effort, each person's contribution needs to be respected, and thanks given for God's grace.

God is the One who accomplishes salvation and the Lord of mission. We receive from Him, serve in His strength, and share responsibilities with other believers. What has been entrusted to us calls for serious action; grace leads us to rely humbly on God. The direction of our service is to help people know

Christ and be built up in Him, and to give glory to God.

IV. Calling and the Mission of the Gospel

From Following Christ to Bearing Witness to Him

Christians carry different responsibilities in different circumstances, yet the church has received a clear shared mission: to bear witness to Jesus Christ and make disciples of all nations.

After His resurrection, Jesus declared that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him. He then instructed His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey His commands. He also promised to be with them always (Matthew 28:18–20).

This passage brings together Christ's authority, the sending of His disciples, baptism and teaching, and the Lord's presence. The church receives its mission from Him and needs to participate in accordance with the message and direction He has made known.

“From following Christ to bearing witness to Him” expresses how witness grows out of knowing and trusting the Lord. As disciples bear witness, they still need to follow Him, learn from Him, and receive His correction. Bearing witness to Christ and continuing to follow Him remain connected throughout a believer's life.

1. The Mission of the Gospel Comes from Christ Rather Than the Church's Desire to Expand

The Great Commission rests on the authority of the risen Christ. The disciples bear witness

to the Lord who died and rose again, and proclaim the salvation He has accomplished. The church is accountable to Him and must remain faithful to the message He has entrusted to it.

Evangelism must therefore not be reduced to increasing attendance, enlarging an organisation, or raising its profile. When people hear the gospel, turn to Christ, and become part of the life of the church, we have reason to give thanks. This also brings responsibilities for teaching and pastoral care. Numbers alone, however, cannot establish that the mission has been carried out faithfully.

The church needs to examine whether its message clearly points to Christ. It also needs to care about whether people understand why they need salvation and receive help to begin knowing the Lord, learning His word, and sharing life with other believers.

Carrying out the mission of the gospel also requires careful attention to how it is communicated. We must not conceal what the gospel says about sin, repentance, and following Christ in order to gain a response. Nor may we offer assurances that Christ has not promised, leading people to believe that faith in Him necessarily brings health, wealth, or a life free of difficulty.

Christ's authority gives the church courage to bear witness and calls it to remain humble and teachable. We can learn to communicate more clearly and improve our arrangements, while continually allowing His word to guide these efforts.

2. The Mission of the Gospel Includes Making Disciples as Well as Communicating a Message

The gospel has content that needs to be proclaimed clearly. In summarising the gospel he preached, Paul explained that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Christ's death and resurrection are central to gospel witness.

The church proclaims this salvation and calls people to repent and trust in Christ. The gospel can transform people's lives, but it must not be reduced to a method for improving relationships, finding meaning, or achieving success. People need to recognise their sin and to know the forgiveness,

reconciliation, and new life that God gives in Christ.

Making disciples also includes baptism and ongoing teaching. Baptism is an explicit command entrusted to us by Christ. Teaching helps believers gradually understand and obey the Lord's word and learn to follow Him in every part of life.

A person may begin to repent and believe at a particular moment, yet still need ongoing teaching, companionship, and pastoral care. When someone expresses a desire to believe in Christ, we need to take that seriously and respond with care. We must not assume from that expression alone that the person already understands the gospel. We need to keep listening to how they understand the gospel and to their questions, offering teaching and companionship to help them learn to trust

Christ and obey His word in the life that follows.

Those who trust in Christ also need to participate in the shared life of the church, receiving teaching and pastoral care, learning to obey the Lord's word, and growing alongside other believers. Teaching should help them know who Christ is and the salvation He has accomplished, understand His commands, and put what they learn into practice in specific relationships and choices.

The mission of the gospel therefore concerns both whether people hear the message and how they understand it, respond to it, and continue following the Lord in His grace.

3. The Mission of the Gospel Is Carried Out in Christ's Presence

When Christ sent His disciples, He promised, "I am with you always, even to the end of the

age” (Matthew 28:20, excerpt). The disciples received both a mission and the Lord’s presence. The church can rely on this promise and continue bearing witness amid limitations and difficulties.

The Lord’s presence does not mean that every undertaking will quickly produce the expected results. The apostles experienced rejection, persecution, and hardship, and also needed prayer, consultation, and mutual support. The path of mission may involve sacrifice, yet Christ does not therefore abandon those who belong to Him.

Nor does this promise exempt the plans of individuals or groups from examination. We cannot assume that our methods, judgements, and arrangements must be correct simply because “the Lord is with us.” The promise of His presence encourages us to be more willing to remain faithful to His word, receive

correction, and repent earnestly when we are wrong.

When we face rejection or slow progress, we can therefore remain faithful to the gospel we proclaim while carefully examining our methods, understanding people's needs, and seeking more appropriate ways to participate.

Christ's presence makes mission a path of walking with Him. We carry our responsibilities and continually receive His help. We serve wholeheartedly, yet need not bear the full weight of the outcomes alone.

4. The Mission of the Gospel Depends on the Holy Spirit Rather Than Human Ability Alone

Before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and would bear witness to Him to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Here, the power given by the Holy Spirit is closely connected with bearing witness to Christ.

Language skills, knowledge, training, organisation, and communication tools can all serve the mission of the gospel. Yet they cannot, on their own, bring people to recognise sin, trust in Christ, and receive new life. Paul explained that he planted and Apollos watered, but God brought growth in the believers' lives (1 Corinthians 3:5–7).

Relying on the Holy Spirit also calls for careful preparation. We should work to understand Scripture, learn to communicate clearly, understand the language and circumstances of those we encounter, and respond honestly to their questions. Prayer and preparation support one another, helping us use our abilities and resources appropriately.

The church also needs to assess the fruit of its ministry carefully. The number of people who see its content, the enthusiasm at a gathering, or the intensity of people's emotions cannot, by themselves, establish whether a ministry is faithful to the gospel or truly helps people know Christ. We need to examine whether what we proclaim is faithful to Christ and care about whether people are gradually understanding the truth, trusting the Lord, and learning to love and obey.

The Holy Spirit's work makes us humble. We can proclaim clearly, patiently walk alongside people, and continue praying, but we cannot control their response of faith or attribute changes in their lives entirely to our own methods.

5. The Mission of the Gospel Is Expressed Through Both Words and the Witness of Our Lives

Peter urges believers to proclaim the excellence of the God who called them. He also calls them to live honourably among those around them, so that those who speak against them may see their good deeds and glorify God on the day of His visitation (1 Peter 2:9–12). Our spoken witness and the way we live need to be consistent with one another.

The gospel needs to be expressed clearly in words. Honesty, compassion, and justice can express love for others, yet these actions alone cannot explain why Christ died, what His resurrection means, or how people are to respond to His salvation.

The truth being proclaimed also needs to shape the life of the person proclaiming it.

When words and actions are consistent, people can see more clearly the Lord to whom we bear witness. Believers still need His grace in their weakness and should face the realities of their own lives honestly. Section 5 will explore further how this witness becomes evident in ongoing relationships.

Explaining our faith to others also requires gentleness and respect. Peter urges believers to honour Christ as Lord in their hearts and always be ready to respond with gentleness and reverence when others ask about their hope (1 Peter 3:15). We can speak openly about what we believe while also listening patiently and taking the other person's circumstances into account. We must avoid using advantages of position, relationships, or resources to pressure people into responding. Clear words and an honest life together help

people know the Christ to whom we bear witness.

6. The Mission of the Gospel Begins Close to Home and Reaches All Nations

Acts 1:8 names Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. First of all, this presents the direction in which the apostles' witness unfolded in history. It also helps the church recognise that gospel witness is to cross geographical, cultural, and social boundaries.

Today, families, neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, and cities can all be places to bear witness to Christ. We can begin with the people we already encounter, taking care to build relationships, attend to their needs, and explain the hope we hold when suitable opportunities arise.

The church also needs to care about witness across cultures and get to know people whose languages, experiences, and ways of life differ from its own. Such participation requires learning and humility: making the effort to understand people's circumstances, communicating the gospel clearly, and respecting their dignity.

We can care about both those close to home and those far away at the same time. The church need not wait until every local need has been met before taking part in mission across cultures. Nor does an individual need to understand Acts 1:8 as a series of geographical steps that must be completed in order.

Not every believer will travel far, but all can participate together according to their gifts, responsibilities, and circumstances through prayer, giving, hospitality, companionship, translation, and other practical service. These

different forms of participation need to work together within the church.

Websites, social media, videos, and online gatherings can also help people encounter the gospel, receive teaching, and connect with other believers. These approaches still need to be combined with ongoing companionship and pastoral care, helping people take part in the shared life of the church.

The church receives its shared mission from Christ, and believers participate in different circumstances. We clearly proclaim His salvation and respond to His truth through the way we live. With His presence and the Holy Spirit's help, we walk alongside people as they come to know, trust, and follow Him.

V. Living Out Our Mission

In the Family and the Workplace

Following Christ encompasses the whole of a believer's life. Our relationships at home, our choices at work, and our use of money and time all need careful consideration before the Lord.

Paul urges believers to do everything, whether in word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17). This helps us recognise that every area of life needs His guidance. Worship, reading Scripture, and prayer help us know the Lord. The truth we receive also needs to shape how we treat others and carry our responsibilities each day.

This section explores how those who have received grace put entrusted responsibilities into practice in everyday circumstances.

Responsibilities in the family and at work have specific demands and also provide real settings for bearing witness to Christ. Working honestly, caring for family members, and treating people fairly are responsibilities believers should take seriously. Explaining Christ's salvation when appropriate opportunities arise also needs to be consistent with the way we live.

Thinking about mission therefore requires attention to the relationships and responsibilities we already have. We can seek new opportunities to participate while also beginning with the things we need to do well today, the people who need our care, and the habits we need to change, allowing the truth we believe to shape our actual lives.

1. Ordinary Life Is an Important Setting for Responding to God

When we think about mission, we may readily think of travelling far, preaching publicly, establishing an organisation, or accomplishing something with widespread influence. These may form part of a specific responsibility entrusted to us, yet believers still spend much of their time in ordinary life.

Caring for children, accompanying older people, doing household tasks, working diligently, keeping promises, and treating colleagues and those we serve with kindness can all be concrete acts of faithfulness to God. They meet real needs and help us learn to love, act honestly, and take responsibility.

Everyday responsibilities are more than exercises preparing us for greater work in the future. A child receiving patient care, an older person having companionship, and a task

being completed carefully have value in themselves. These things do not lose their meaning simply because they do not lead to a larger platform.

We do not have to find a name for our “unique mission” before we begin to respond. We can start carrying the responsibilities we already understand today. Directions that remain unclear can be discerned further through prayer, learning, and practice.

At the same time, human dignity cannot be measured by the number of tasks a person carries out. Some can do many things, while others can carry only a few responsibilities because of illness, age, or other limitations. They deserve the same respect and care. Receiving help can also be a way of trusting God amid limitations and sharing a life of mutual belonging with other members of Christ’s body.

2. The Family Is One of the Most Immediate Starting Points for Mission

Family relationships provide an ongoing, concrete setting in which to learn to love others. Faithfulness and love in marriage, parents' care and upbringing of children, children's respect for parents, and family members' care for one another and sharing of responsibilities all need to be guided by Christ's truth.

Ephesians 5:21–6:4 connects reverence for Christ with family relationships, giving specific instruction on how spouses, parents, and children are to fulfil their responsibilities. For example, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. Fathers are not to provoke their

children to anger, but to bring them up in the Lord's instruction and discipline.

Faithfulness in the family often takes shape in small things that recur: being willing to listen to family members, sharing tasks as agreed, taking one another's tiredness into account, restraining our words in conflict, and earnestly admitting wrong, apologising, and changing when harm has been done.

Public ministry cannot make up for neglecting responsibilities at home. We need to examine carefully whether, while investing in work outside the home, we are still attentive to the needs of those closest to us. Care for family members also needs to be reflected in how we allocate time and resources.

Self-giving and forgiveness within the family need to remain connected with truth, justice, and protection. Love does not require concealing harm, and forgiveness does not

remove accountability. When harm is ongoing, appropriate help needs to be sought, with careful attention to family members' safety and dignity.

Believers who are single, widowed, without children, or separated from family have the same full dignity as people created by God and the same belonging in Christ. The family is an important setting in life, but responding faithfully to God does not require everyone to experience the same circumstances of marriage and family. The church also needs to build genuine care and support among believers in different situations.

3. The Workplace Is an Important Setting for Responding to God

Work enables people to use their abilities, provide for daily needs, serve others, and share in the responsibilities of society.

Believers need to learn diligently and develop their abilities, while also examining whether the aims, methods, and effects of their work accord with the truth.

Paul said to slaves in his day, “And whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Colossians 3:23). He also required masters to treat them justly, remembering that they too had a Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1).

These teachings address a specific historical setting. Slaves and masters in that setting cannot simply be equated with employees and employers today. Read alongside the principle that our whole life belongs to the Lord, these teachings help us recognise that people in different roles at work are all accountable before God.

For employees, this may mean carrying out responsibilities diligently, communicating

honestly, keeping promises, and respecting colleagues and those they serve. For managers, it includes allocating responsibilities fairly, considering reasonable workloads, explaining requirements clearly, and seriously addressing injustice and failures to fulfil responsibilities.

The words “as for the Lord” must not become a reason to demand unconditional compliance or to increase people’s workloads without limit. Faithfulness to the Lord also means refusing dishonest demands and declining to take part in actions that harm others, even under pressure or for personal gain.

The value of work also needs to be understood in terms of the people and needs it actually serves. Repairing a piece of equipment, handling information accurately, caring patiently for someone, and providing a reliable service can all offer real help to others.

Diligence and professional competence at work are therefore also part of a responsible life.

A career can provide an important setting for putting entrusted responsibilities into practice, yet it cannot encompass the full meaning of calling. Roles change, and employment may end. We still need to discern how to use our abilities well, attend to practical needs, and remain faithful to the Lord in new circumstances.

4. Mission Changes the Centre and Manner of Our Lives Rather Than Merely Adding Another Task

Responding to God in the family and at work first affects how we carry the responsibilities already entrusted to us.

For example, when providing a service, we can reconsider our work from the perspective of those we serve: Does it meet real needs? Are the arrangements reasonable? Have we overlooked someone else's difficulties for our own convenience? Such reflection helps us adjust the way we work.

These changes need to shape concrete arrangements. If we say we value family, we need to make time for family members. If we say we want to treat people fairly, we need to examine our decisions carefully. If we say we value the resources entrusted to us, we need to reduce waste and manage them honestly.

Some responses do require taking on new tasks and even changing existing arrangements. We may need to enter a new area of service, care for someone in need, or go somewhere new after appropriate preparation. We need to discern carefully

whether we should take on the new responsibility and how to bring it into harmony with what has already been entrusted to us.

Our time, energy, and abilities have limits. Faced with multiple needs, we need to weigh priorities, consult those concerned, and seek ways to work together. We must not assume that every opportunity has to be accepted simply because it arises. Nor should we neglect a responsibility we ought to carry simply because it involves sacrifice.

Living out our mission means arranging our participation according to real needs rather than continually adding to our schedules. Appropriate choices allow us to attend to existing responsibilities and prepare adequately for new ways of responding.

5. Everyday Life Provides an Ongoing Witness to Our Faith

Major decisions affect our lives, and everyday habits also shape us continually. The way we speak, keep our word, use money, deal with the interests at stake and with conflicts, and treat those who can offer us little in return reveals whether the truth we believe has become part of our lives.

Family members, colleagues, and neighbours often come to know us through ongoing relationships. They see both our diligence and our weaknesses. Bearing witness to Christ therefore requires us to face the realities of our own lives honestly.

When we break a promise, express anger in inappropriate words, or hurt someone in other ways, we need to acknowledge our wrongdoing, bear the consequences, and take appropriate action to make amends and repair

relationships. A single apology cannot replace sustained change. Nor does explaining our faith clearly exempt us from the responsibilities we ought to fulfil.

At the same time, we can explain, when appropriate opportunities arise, why we trust Christ and why we need His forgiveness and help. Good deeds and spoken witness support one another, enabling people both to hear the gospel and to see how we are learning to respond in grace.

Everyday witness often requires patience. Family members' responses, colleagues' opinions, and changes in relationships are not entirely within our control. We can care sincerely and communicate clearly while respecting others and entrusting to God the outcomes we cannot control.

Whether we remain where we are or enter new circumstances, following Christ needs to

shape real relationships and responsibilities. The family and the workplace help us learn faithfulness each day. Through ongoing relationships, we also bear witness in words and actions to the Lord who gives grace and renews lives.

VI. Responding to God's Call and Living Out Our Mission

Leadership Rooted in Walking with God

Responding to God's call leads believers to carry responsibilities and serve others in real life. Some of these responsibilities also involve leadership: helping people understand shared goals, coordinating participation, making decisions, and taking responsibility for both the process and the outcomes of the work.

Such responsibilities may arise in the family, the church, the workplace, an organisation, or a community. Authority and expectations differ across these settings and need to be understood separately. In the church, leadership involves teaching the truth, caring for believers, and building up the community. In the workplace and other settings, it involves fulfilling the responsibilities of one's role fairly, coordinating work, and serving others. "Leadership rooted in walking with God," as used in this section, refers to Christians carrying leadership responsibilities according to biblical principles as they continue following the Lord. It involves using abilities, power, and resources appropriately and helping others work together to complete what has been entrusted to them. This section also helps other believers recognise appropriate leadership, learn to work alongside leaders,

and, when necessary, offer views and raise concerns.

Those carrying leadership responsibilities also need to know God's love and learn to treat others with that love. John states that God is love. He explains that God revealed His love by sending His only Son so that we might live through Him, and by giving His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:8–10). “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Our love for God and others rests on the grace He has taken the initiative to give.

Leaders need this grace too. We do not earn God's acceptance through position or results, nor do we need others' dependence on us to prove our importance. We receive life from Christ and learn His humility, love, and service as we follow Him. He accomplished redemption by laying down His life. This is a

work we cannot undertake or repeat. The character and way of serving He revealed, however, guide how we treat people and carry responsibilities.

Leadership is an ability and practice needed for certain entrusted responsibilities. It must not become a measure of every believer's spiritual maturity. Whether or not we hold a leadership position, we all need to know God, follow Christ, and live faithfully in our own circumstances.

1. Leadership Begins with Following Christ

Jesus called His disciples, "Come after me" (Matthew 4:19, excerpt). As they followed Him, they came to know Him, received teaching, and learned to carry entrusted responsibilities. When Christians lead others, they themselves still need to be guided by the Lord's word.

Following Christ leads us to examine carefully the direction of our leadership: Are our goals consistent with the truth? Are the ways we pursue them honest and just? We also need to notice whether our own desires interfere with our judgement about responsibilities and other people's needs.

Before making decisions, we need to understand the facts, listen to those concerned, and distinguish clear moral responsibilities from specific arrangements that can be discussed. Personal experience, strong convictions, and past results cannot guarantee that our judgement will be right this time.

In the church, we also need to distinguish clearly between biblical teaching, an individual's understanding of Scripture, and specific ministry arrangements. Leaders should explain the basis for their judgements and must not readily present their own

opinions as unquestionable commands from God.

Following Christ also means being willing to receive correction. When we discover an error in judgement, promptly acknowledging it and making adjustments can help shared work return to an appropriate direction. Leaders who remain teachable also set an example of listening carefully, speaking honestly, and seeking guidance together.

2. Leadership Begins with Remaining Connected to Christ

Jesus used the vine and its branches to explain His relationship with His disciples: “for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, excerpt). This is the foundation of life for all disciples. Those carrying leadership responsibilities also need to rely continually on Him.

Chapter 3 has already explained that growth in life requires us to remain connected to Christ. When we carry leadership responsibilities, this reliance especially helps us seek the Lord under pressure and avoid neglecting the truth in our haste to achieve a goal.

Responsibility can bring pressure and loneliness. Leaders can discuss matters honestly and pray with trustworthy people, while setting reasonable limits on the responsibilities they carry. When problems cannot be handled alone, they should seek help in good time, rather than allowing the entire work to depend on one person continually working to exhaustion.

Drawing close to Christ must not be treated merely as a way to improve results. Even when ministry progresses slowly or a previous responsibility has ended, we still belong to Him and need to live in His grace.

Relying on the Lord also leads us to prepare carefully. Knowledge, training, and organisational abilities can help us fulfil responsibilities. We use them well while remembering that knowledge and methods cannot replace God's work of renewing hearts.

3. Leadership Is Expressed First in Character and Not Only in Ability

Carrying leadership responsibilities requires both the competence to do the work and appropriate character. Ability helps a person complete tasks, while character affects how that person treats others, uses power, and deals with the interests at stake.

First Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 set out requirements concerning the lives, character, and teaching of church overseers and elders. These passages primarily concern church offices. They also make clear that leaders must

not be chosen solely on the basis of eloquence, enthusiasm, or visible results.

Character needs to be discerned through ongoing relationships and practical cooperation. The community should consider whether a person gives an honest account of important matters, deals fairly with the interests at stake, and treats others appropriately when opinions differ or pressure arises. These things directly affect how that person uses the authority they receive.

Ability also requires specific preparation. Leaders should learn to communicate, organise work, and handle conflict, and seek appropriate help when a matter exceeds their knowledge or abilities. A willingness to serve is valuable, yet necessary training is still required.

Before an appointment, a candidate's suitability needs careful assessment. After

responsibilities are taken up, training and oversight should continue. If a role needs to be adjusted, care for the person should continue as well. Suitability for a particular position must not determine a person's worth or replace recognition of their belonging in Christ.

4. Leadership Serves and Equips Others Rather Than Controlling Them

Jesus washed His disciples' feet and taught them to serve one another as He had served them (John 13:12–17). He also commanded them to love one another as He loved them (John 13:34). This helps us recognise that love needs to become action, making us willing to take responsibility, attend to needs, and serve others.

Jesus also taught that His disciples must not imitate those who use power to dominate

others. Whoever wants to be great is to serve, and whoever wants to be first is to be the servant of all (Mark 10:42–44). Leaders need to use their entrusted authority appropriately, helping everyone carry shared responsibilities rather than satisfying personal ambition.

In practice, serving includes listening patiently, understanding participants' difficulties, providing necessary support, and considering their abilities, time, and existing responsibilities. We must not keep assigning work to someone simply because they are willing, nor care about them only when we need results.

Equipping others requires opportunities to learn and practise. We can begin with suitable responsibilities, explain expectations, offer guidance along the way, and review the work together. As people's abilities grow, they should also receive corresponding authority,

enabling them gradually to take fuller responsibility for the work.

Serving and equipping also include helping people face mistakes and learn to take responsibility. Paul says that love “doesn’t rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Leaders need to identify problems honestly, explain how to improve, and provide necessary guidance. Correction should respect the person, helping them understand the truth, change their behaviour, and carry entrusted responsibilities more appropriately.

As others mature, leaders should be willing to share opportunities and support them in taking responsibility. As more people grow in maturity, more can share the work, reducing excessive dependence on a few leaders.

5. Leadership Means Faithfully Managing All That God Has Entrusted to Us

Peter urges believers to serve one another with the gifts they have received, as good stewards of God's grace (1 Peter 4:10). This understanding of being entrusted with responsibilities and accountable to God also helps leaders take seriously the time, funds, positions, and resources under their care.

Work arrangements should be clear: Who is responsible for what, and what authority do they have? Which decisions can be made independently, and which require consultation? How are resources to be used and progress assessed? Responsibility and authority need to correspond, so that people are not required to bear all the consequences of matters they cannot decide.

Leaders also need to explain the basis for decisions, the use of resources, and actual outcomes, and be open to examination. This is accountability. Clear records and arrangements for oversight help identify problems promptly and enable everyone to fulfil their responsibilities.

The community should have appropriate ways to raise difficulties. Those asking reasonable questions need to be treated fairly. If dishonesty, injustice, or harm occurs, the facts need to be established, those affected protected, and those responsible held accountable. Problems must not be concealed to protect a person's or ministry's image.

Managing resources also requires attention to people's actual needs and burdens. We need to examine whether limited time and funds meet real needs, whether work arrangements are reasonable, and whether anyone has been

persistently overlooked. Resource management requires accuracy and efficiency as well as justice and care.

Faithfully carrying leadership responsibilities also includes preparing for others to take over the work. Organising information, developing suitable people, gradually transferring authority, and helping those concerned understand the new division of responsibilities enable the work to continue. After a handover, the successor's authority and responsibilities also need to be respected. Any continuing support should follow what both parties have agreed, without overstepping the new arrangements.

Work has its stages. A careful handover and support for others as they continue carrying responsibilities are also expressions of faithfulness to what has been entrusted to us.

6. Leadership Helps People Turn to God Rather Than Depend on the Leader

Chapter 3 has already discussed John the Baptist's understanding of his place. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). For leaders in the church, this reminds us that Christ is the Lord to whom believers belong. Leadership must not allow dependence on an individual to replace trust in Him.

Jesus calls people to follow Him because He is Saviour and Lord. Christian leaders are entrusted with serving others and helping them know and follow Him. Imitating Jesus' humility, love, and service does not give us His unique position.

Teaching and pastoral care should help believers understand Scripture, learn to pray, discern, and put the truth into practice, and

grow alongside other members of Christ's body. Leaders can offer counsel, but they cannot take over every decision in another person's life or equate loyalty to themselves with loyalty to Christ.

Appropriate leadership helps people gradually learn to make judgements in light of the truth, carry responsibilities seriously, and seek the Lord amid their limitations. People can be grateful for a leader's help while also knowing that life and grace ultimately come from God.

In the workplace and public life, leaders need to treat people of different faiths fairly. They may explain their hope when appropriate opportunities arise, but must not make employment opportunities, resources, or treatment conditional on whether someone accepts their faith.

Leaders should help participants grow and complete entrusted work together. In the

church, they especially need to help people know Christ, grow in Him, and follow Him alongside other believers.

7. From Responding to God's Call to Remaining Faithful to Our Mission

Leadership serves specific entrusted responsibilities. When the work ends or a responsibility is handed to someone else, the path of following the Lord continues. Greater responsibilities require more preparation and oversight, while reduced responsibilities call for appropriate adjustment. Both should help us become more faithful to the Lord and more responsible in our treatment of others.

Leaders need to take responsibility seriously, and participants also need to work faithfully alongside them. Sharing responsibilities, communicating honestly, respecting different contributions, and supporting one another

through difficulties help entrusted work be carried out appropriately.

We carry today's responsibilities wholeheartedly and place our ultimate hope in Christ. His salvation gives those who have received grace the hope of bodily resurrection and of being with Him forever in God's promised new creation. Our work in this life has its stages, yet this hope continues to guide how we use power, love others, and serve.

Conclusion: From Him, Through Him, and To Him

Calling and mission help us understand life in relationship with God and take seriously the responsibilities we have received. God has accomplished redemption in Christ, bringing those who receive grace back to Himself.

Through the Holy Spirit, He continually renews their lives and brings believers into the shared life of the church, where they love one another and serve together.

Whether we consider an individual's everyday responsibilities, the church's shared gospel mission, or the responsibilities entrusted to leaders, we need to return to the same question: Since we belong to Christ, how should we respond to Him today?

We need to proclaim Christ's salvation clearly and let the truth we proclaim shape our lives.

The church builds up believers through worship, teaching, pastoral care, and mutual service, and bears witness to the Lord together. Individuals participate according to their gifts, responsibilities, and circumstances, learning faithfulness in the family, at work, and in other relationships. Everyday responsibilities and the gospel commission each have specific demands and need to come together in a life of following Christ.

After discussing God's purposes in salvation, Paul marvels at His unsearchable wisdom and says, "For of him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen" (Romans 11:36). This praise points to God's wisdom and the relationship of all things to Him. It also guides us, as we consider calling and mission, to acknowledge that we receive life and grace from Him, rely

on Him as we carry responsibilities, and give Him the glory.

“From Him” reminds us that life is God’s gift, salvation comes through His grace, and the church’s mission to proclaim the gospel and make disciples has been entrusted to it by Christ. We can make plans and develop abilities, but our desires and plans need to be examined and guided by God’s word.

“Through Him” leads us to keep seeking the Lord as we act with care. Christ promises to be with His disciples, and the Holy Spirit helps believers bear witness to Him. We seek Him in prayer, receive teaching through Scripture, and learn to carry responsibilities through counsel and practical cooperation within the community. Relying on God leads us to fulfil our responsibilities wholeheartedly while entrusting to Him the outcomes we cannot control.

“To Him” leads us to examine where our service ultimately directs people. Results are reasons for gratitude, resources need faithful management, and those holding positions need to take their responsibilities seriously. All of this should help people know Christ, obey the truth, learn to love others, and build up the community. We thank God and respect every participant’s contribution, without taking personal credit for shared achievements, and remain willing to have our plans and actions examined.

An individual can therefore ask, “What truth do I need to obey today, what responsibilities do I need to carry, and what do I need to face together with others?” The church also needs to ask, “Are we still connected to Christ, faithful to the gospel we proclaim, and building people up in love as we bear witness

to the Lord?” These questions help us put mission into practice in daily life today.

Specific work has its stages, yet God’s salvation in Christ directs our hope towards eternity. We take today’s responsibilities seriously, learn to receive care when our abilities are limited, and look forward to bodily resurrection and to being with Him forever in God’s promised new creation. Knowing Him, following Him, and giving Him the glory remain at the heart of calling and mission.

All things are from Him, through Him, and to Him.

Glory be to God!

Afterword

As I come to the end of this book, I remember a wish I had more than twenty years ago, before I knew what I would write: to write a book one day. That wish has now taken shape in this book, and it leads me to take the words I have written more seriously.

As I moved from studying biblical leadership and biblical counselling to offering counselling to others, and then to developing the Spring of Life website and preparing this book, my understanding of calling and mission gradually became connected with real people, relationships, and responsibilities. Writing has led me to examine my own life afresh, consider how the truth I understand shapes my daily choices, and ask whether I am putting the truth I share into practice.

Although the manuscript is complete, I am still learning. What I have come to understand and share in this book calls for an ongoing response in the years ahead: receiving God's grace, learning to trust and obey, being shaped through specific relationships, and taking responsibilities seriously. I still need God's word to correct me, the Holy Spirit's help, and the counsel and support of brothers and sisters in Christ.

I thank God for enabling me to complete this book. Throughout the writing process, I sought Him in prayer and relied on His guidance step by step. Through Scripture and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, He helped me understand more clearly what I was writing and strengthened my faith, enabling me to continue studying and organising the material until the manuscript was complete.

I thank the two brothers in Christ who offered reminders and encouragement while the Spring of Life website was being improved. Their help enabled me to see more clearly why writing this book matters.

I thank the two collaborators who assisted with the development and maintenance of the Spring of Life website and with making the ebook available online. Their professional support has helped make content and books available to readers.

I thank my older brother, who encouraged me to begin writing and act on my long-held wish to write a book. I am grateful for this support from my family.

I thank those who have taught me, walked alongside me, and encouraged me in learning and service over the years. Looking back on the help I have received along the way, I recognise more clearly that writing these

reflections has depended on others' support and on learning through life shared with others.

Thank you for reading this far. Some questions in the book may reflect circumstances you are facing, while some of its content may call for further reflection. I hope these words will accompany you as you return to Scripture, seek God in prayer, and talk with trusted brothers and sisters in Christ to discern how to respond today.

There is no need to rush to sum up your whole life in a single answer. Sometimes the next step is to face a matter honestly, keep a promise, care for someone nearby, or acknowledge that we need help. We can take our present responsibilities seriously and continue relying on the Lord even when the way ahead is not yet clear.

I hope that the Spring of Life website and this book will continue to fulfil the same entrusted responsibility: to remain rooted in biblical truth, help people respond to God's call, and help them live out the mission He has entrusted to them. May these words help us know and trust Christ more deeply, support one another in the shared life of the church, and bring the truth we receive into our everyday relationships and choices.

The book is finished, but a life of walking with God continues. May we continue to know Christ more deeply, trust Him, learn to love others, and faithfully carry the responsibilities we receive today, whatever our circumstances. Glory be to God!

About the Author

Mandy is the author's pen name. She is a Christian currently living in Canada. She has studied biblical leadership and biblical counselling and continues to offer counselling to others. These experiences of learning and service provide an important background to her reflections on calling, spiritual growth, and putting mission into practice.

From developing the Spring of Life website to writing *Calling and Mission: A Life of Walking with God*, she continues to respond to the same responsibility entrusted to her: to remain rooted in biblical truth and help people respond to God's call and live out the mission He has entrusted to them.

This book shares the author's study of and reflections on Scripture. She continues to learn, seeking to have her understanding tested

against God's word and to put the truth she receives into practice in everyday relationships and responsibilities.

Rooted in biblical truth,
helping people respond to God's call
and live out the mission
He has entrusted to them.



Spring of Life • Calling & Mission