



SUNDAY

7-DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

“When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew 9:36 (CSB)

(Adapted from resources made available by the Kentucky Baptist Convention)

The *Calling Out the Called* initiative is a 3-year focus with the goal of seeing God call men to shepherd Friendship Baptist Association churches who do not have a pastor. Sixty five percent of FBA churches are bi-vocational and are finding it increasingly difficult to find someone to serve. In addition to the primary goal, this emphasis will encourage men and women in other ministry-related callings to respond as well.

Join us in praying that God will send forth laborers into His harvest. Pray specifically for the upcoming *Calling Out the Called Sunday* taking place at your church

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 1-The Called and Their Purpose

Kyle Noffsinger

*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; Before you were born, I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations. **Jeremiah 1:5***

Before He sent Jeremiah off on his Herculean task the Lord reminded the prophet of something very important. The Lord told Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). You know the verse. We all know the verse. It is of course a favorite of ours when we discuss Pro-life issues. While this statement by God does lend enormous insight and credibility to being “Pro-Life,” it also speaks to a real Purpose of Life issue. Yes, God creates all life, but He does not merely create us and leave us. No, we are created by God, and we are created for God just as the Scriptures teach.

Whether they know it or not, there are many in the pews of Friendship Baptist Churches who are missing their purpose. Before they were formed in the womb God set them apart as preachers. Men He formed for the purpose of shepherding churches and proclaiming the Gospel. Pray that these men would answer God’s call upon their life, find His true purpose for their lives, and join Him in His harvest. Augustine said, “Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”

Join Me in Praying the Following:

1. Pray that men will respond to God’s clear call.
2. Pray that they will find rest in God’s call.
3. Pray that the harvest will be great.
4. Pray that God will be glorified as a result

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 2- Pray for Laborers

Alan Witham

*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." **Matthew 9:35-38 (ESV)***

In this scripture we see **Jesus pointing out a predicament**. The predicament relates to the condition of people all around us. Verse 36 describes them as "harassed" and "helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." There are many people all around us, that are lost and in need of the gospel. There are others who are saved but need the effective ministry of a pastor/shepherd. Both lost and saved need a ministry of gospel preaching, pastoral care, and godly leadership toward salvation, maturity in Christ, and Christian service.

The predicament that Jesus described also relates to the great number of people around us possessing spiritual needs. In verse 37 Jesus stated, "the harvest is plentiful." The predicament also involves the fact that many among that vast group of people have a readiness to hear and respond to the gospel. God is at work, opening their minds to the truth and their hearts to respond in faith to Jesus. In John 4:35 Jesus stated, "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." "White" indicates the harvest is "ready." People around you are ready to hear and ready to respond. Many are receptive to being taught, disciplined, and led.

The predicament that Jesus described also points to a lack of laborers in the harvest. In verse 37 Jesus stated, "The laborers are few." There is a disproportionate number of pastors and laborers than there are people in the harvest. When we look at our association and the state of Georgia and the spiritual needs within it, we realize there is a stark shortage of God-called ministers. Our churches often share their struggle to find God-called senior pastors, worship leaders, musicians, and youth ministers. What are we to do? Where do we begin in addressing this predicament?

Jesus pointed to a solution. Jesus never points out problems or predicaments without providing solutions. His suggested solution in verse 38 is to "earnestly pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Prayer is a necessary starting point for addressing the physical and spiritual needs of the people around us. This predicament calls for a special type of praying. The verse describes it as "earnest prayer." Sincere, fervent, specific, and continued prayer for the Lord to send Laborers into the harvest is the beginning point of Jesus' solution to our predicament.

Action Step: Will you start or continue praying earnestly for the Lord to raise up God-called men to be sent out to pastor in our churches? Will you pray that other ministry leaders will be called out, trained up, and sent to help with the Lord's harvest?

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 3- Why Are You So Special

Don Mathis

Read Ephesians 3:7-14

Lately I have been spending some special time with the Book of Ephesians. Paul's letter to the Ephesian church is a special blessing. In this letter we learn about who we are and all that we have because of God's grace. We discover the truth that grace is the reason we are saved in the first place. We are reminded how lost we were before the Lord came to us and delivered us from the bondage and deadness of our sins. We learn that, in Jesus, we are brought near to God. We learn that through Jesus, we are in His kingdom. We are members of his family. We are stones in the living temple of God. For me, the journey to this place in this book has been a joy, a challenge, and a blessing.

Paul reveals his identity as "**a prisoner of Jesus Christ.**" Paul gives us *insights* into life that we do not want to miss. He transformed his time in prison into a ministry. Paul says that he was given a "*dispensation.*" This word means, "*stewardship, administration, or management.*" This word refers to a person who was responsible for taking care of the business of another. In Paul's case, he was given the oversight of taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. He was tasked with telling them about God's love, His salvation, His grace, and the place they had been given in His kingdom.

Paul did not choose this ministry for himself, he was appointed to it by the Lord, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Timothy 1:12). Paul wants his readers to know that he was not Sunday School teacher-called, mom-called, or self-called, but he was called by God to this ministry.

Is God calling you? Of course, teachers, preachers, and mothers may help us to understand what God is calling us to do, but our "calling" must come from God. Yes, we need more pastors and other ministers in Christ's churches, but we must be sure one's calling is from God.

It is God's plan that Jews and Gentiles hear and respond to the gospel but "how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

*"The Lord is **not** slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* **(2 Peter 3:9)**

Paul did not just wake up one day and decide to be a preacher. He did not decide on a whim to turn his back on his heritage, his religion, and his people. It is a life for which he was chosen.

Paul the prophet tells us why he was also Paul the preacher. Paul did not choose this path through life. He was at a point in his life where he was asking God, "what do you want me to do today?" That's how we need to begin each day. People are lost and need Jesus. God may be calling you and others in your church to preach, teach and share the. Are you willing to ask God what He wants you to do today?

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 4- Wherever Their Call Takes Them

Joshua Hutchens

He told them, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest. Now go; I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves."
Luke 10:2–3 (CSB)

Jesus begins with an observation: "The harvest is abundant." Jesus' observation makes clear that most of the work has already been done. The ground has been broken. The seed has been planted. The fields have been cared for and weeded. Now the fields are white with harvest. All that follows is the joyful work of gathering the harvest.

But then Jesus identifies a problem: "the workers are few." The harvest is ready to be gathered, but there are not sufficient field hands to go out and gather it. This would be troublesome. dilemma if Jesus didn't also give us the simple solution to the problem: Pray. Pray to the One to whom the harvest belongs, the One who has prepared the fields for the gathering. Just as he has planted and tended, he will also ensure the gathering by sending out workers into his fields.

This one-verse parable of the harvest demonstrates clearly to us both God's sovereignty and our responsibility. On the one hand, there is a need for workers to go out and gather the harvest, but on the other hand, the harvest is already there! The mission of our churches is first and foremost God's mission, and he has done the work to prepare for the harvest. The work of the workers, therefore, can hardly be called work at all! It is the joyful privilege to go and gather what God has planted and grown, and yet, in his perfect plan, God has ordained that we, the workers, would be the means of gathering the harvest! He has chosen to use us to complete his mission.

So, Jesus instructs us to pray for workers, and, therefore, we must pray constantly! Yet we miss something if we stop reading at the end of verse 2 because Luke 10:3 says, "Now go." Praying for workers does not exempt us from the work. Rather it prepares us to hear the command that will come to each of us according to our own gifting and calling. We pray for workers to be sent so that we may be ready to hear when Jesus says to us, "I'm sending you out."

We must pray as Jesus commands while being fully aware that he will send us as the answer to our own prayers! The truth is that every believer is a Holy Spirit-gifted worker in God's mission, and the role of a worker is simple — submission to the commands of the Lord of the harvest, wherever he sends us. As we pray for the completion of the joy of gathering in God's harvest, we must also prepare to hear that command that will also come to us: "Now go; I'm sending you out."

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 5-The Power of the Gospel

Jamus Edwards

*“When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ ‘Master,’ Simon replied, ‘we’ve worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I’ll let down the nets.’ When they did, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear.” **Luke 5:4-6***

Peter, James, and John were professional fishermen. They fished all night and caught nothing, and yet when Christ spoke the Word and commanded the fish to come, they immediately caught more fish than they could count. A few verses later, Jesus told them, *“From now you will be catching men”* (Luke 5:10b). We can share our faith until the cows come home (and we should), but apart from Christ, no one will be saved. We can’t save anyone on our own, but Jesus Christ can save *anybody* by His power! The power He uses to save is the Gospel.

*“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the **power** of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” **Romans 1:16***

Our emotional appeals cannot save. The 12-step program does not open hearts. No man-made strategy or device can cause the new birth. The Gospel message alone has the power to save! When we share that Christ died for sinners, has been raised from the dead, and that *anyone* who believes in Him can be saved. That is when the Holy Spirit goes to work, and sinners respond in faith and repentance. The Gospel is not simply a sweet, spiritual message. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a divine bomb from heaven that lovingly wrecks people’s hearts and changes them. What that means is the pressure is off for us to save anybody! God does not call us to get results; He calls us to be faithful. We share the Gospel and Christ does all the rest.

Only Jesus can get the fish in the boat, but we are called to cast the line. We can’t just sit back and expect the fish to jump in the boat. Some may argue, *“If God is sovereign, He’s going to save who He’s going to save anyway. I don’t have to share the Gospel.”* We can talk about the sovereignty of God in salvation all day long, but if we don’t share the Gospel, people will not be saved--period. Romans 10:14 asks, *“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?”*

Join me in praying the following:

1. That God would strengthen our faith in the power of the Gospel alone to save sinners.
2. That we would share the Gospel with great confidence, knowing that God can save anybody.
3. That we would not use the sovereignty of God as an excuse not to share the Gospel, but as motivation to faithfully sow the seeds while we watch God do the work.

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 6- Perseverance in Church Ministry

Brad Chalfin

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are the household of faith.” Galatians 6:9-10

We see countless men who are leaving the gospel ministry today due to many factors like gross misconduct, ministry burnout, and retirement. I believe another reason is due to disillusionment. At a recent North American Mission Board luncheon in Brentwood, Tennessee, the main speaker shared a startling statistic: “That half of all trained Baptist seminary students will leave church ministry within their first, five years.” Church work is not for the faint of heart. It is difficult and hard. If we would ask any pastor whether he has ever considered leaving the ministry, he probably has or will soon. There have been times when I wanted to throw in the towel and walk away for good. Why should we persevere in our Christian vocation? There are eight good reasons to endure to the end in our sacred service to the Savior.

- 1. God’s personal calling to the gospel ministry (Isa. 6:8).** The Lord never makes a mistake. If he has called us to serve him, he can keep and sustain us to do His work.
- 2. Preaching/teaching God’s Word in the church (2 Tim. 2:15).**
- 3. Seeing individuals come to saving faith in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 1:16).**
- 4. Discipling new believers to grow in their walk with Christ (Mark 4:8).** It is a tremendous feeling to help new converts go from crawling, walking, and running the race of faith.
- 5. Bringing vision to God’s people to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).**
- 6. Partnering with others to build up the community for the good of others (Jer. 29:7).**
- 7. Sharing key experiences with families of the faith (Rom. 12:15).** We have the honor and privilege to join our people in their births, salvations, baptisms, graduations, weddings, and funerals. We are forever connected with them.
- 8. Blessings that come in fulfilling God’s purposes in personal life and ministry (Eph. 1:3).** We are blessed by the best! The Lord is so good and gracious to his servants.

Just as God calls, saves, and sanctifies us, our faith will persevere to the end. If God has called us into the gospel ministry, we can endure to finish the race well. Do not give up. Hear our Heavenly Father say one day, “...well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:23).

CALLING OUT THE CALLED DEVOTIONAL

Day 7- Pray for Ministry Couples

Seth Carter

“Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife...” 1 Tim. 3:2

Pray for the wives of the men God is calling across our association and state. The priority of the *Calling out the Called* initiative involves *praying* for the called. This is the obvious place to start since our Lord identifies prayer as the answer for more laborers in Matthew 9:37-38. As you pray for those whom God is calling and raising up across Friendship Baptist Association, spend time praying for their wives as well.

For married couples, ministry is a team effort. While church history shows some cases where a pastor’s ministry is blessed despite a wife’s lack of support, the norm is for complete unanimity between husband and wife in serving the Lord. One such example of this comes from the love story of Charles and Susannah Spurgeon.

The “Prince of Preachers” married his “Susie” on January 8th, 1856, describing her as *“the greatest of all earthly blessings.”* She described their marriage as *“two pilgrims treading this highway of life together, hand in hand, heart linked to heart.”* Many are familiar with Susannah’s devotion to her husband’s tremendous ministry, but what’s less known is the episode the Lord used to solidify that devotion during the time of their engagement. Months before the couple was set to be wed, Charles was invited to preach at an afternoon service and asked Susannah to travel with him. As she recalled, *“We went together, happily enough, in a cab, but, by the time we had reached the landing, he had forgotten my existence; the burden of the message he had to proclaim to that crowd of immortal souls was upon him, and he turned into the small side door...without a moment realizing that I was left to struggle as best I could.”*

Susannah was terribly upset that her fiancé could so easily forget and leave her behind. When she returned home, she vented about the experience to her mother who in turn gave her the most helpful marriage advice she would ever receive. Susannah’s mother told her that Charles was *“no ordinary man and his whole life must be dedicated to the service of the Lord.”* She also told her that she *“must never, never hinder him by trying to put herself first in his heart.”* Though hard to hear at the moment, that advice changed the course of Susannah’s life. Shortly after that fateful conversation with her mother, Susannah wrote the following words, *“It was the ever-settled purpose of my married life that I should never hinder Charlie in his work for the Lord...I thank God, now, that He enabled me to carry out this determination.”*

Brothers and sisters, may this story impact you as it did me, and may it impact the way you pray for those married men whom God is raising up and calling in churches across our state. As you pray for them, don’t forget to pray for their wives. In other words, as you pray for the raising up and calling out of “Charlies,” don’t forget to pray for the strength, patience, and sacrifice of the “Susies.” Pray that as God is raising up men to fill the bi-vocational pastorates across our association, that there would be an army of “Susies” standing at their husband’s sides making it their *“ever-settled purpose”* to not hinder their husband’s work for the Lord, but to join him in it as another *“pilgrim treading the highway of life and ministry together.”*