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# TAKE AIM WITH YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY

## Spiritual/Strategic Focus Points for Success

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

In some religious circles people talk about a *call* on their life—a sense of mission and purpose—as an assignment for how to direct and devote their energies. A typical *call* might be into medical missions work, pastoral ministry, etc. While I would never argue with anyone who spoke about a *call* on their life, I do believe that language creates two terrible misunderstandings in the minds of most followers of Jesus.

First of all, it implies two classes of spiritual citizens—*the few* believers with a special *call*, and *the many* others who, without such a *call*, relegate themselves to spiritual insignificance and inactivity.

According to the Bible, all believers are *called*; in fact, the very meaning of *church* implies being “*called out*.” We have been *called out* of darkness, and *called out* from our former way of life. Jesus *called out* to people, inviting them to follow Him out of their existing circumstances—Peter and John left their nets, Matthew his tax office. The invitation stands for everyone, “*Follow Me*.” Each of us has an equal part to play in God’s kingdom; some are eyes, others are ears, but all of us are parts of His body.

Secondly, a *call* can place too much emphasis on broad factors, like our occupation or our geographic location, and not enough emphasis on daily devotion and moment-by-moment discipleship and ministry—as though God is primarily interested in our ultimate destination or vocation. If my *calling* is to be a pastor in Santa Cruz, was I fulfilling God’s plan when I simply led student Bible-studies at UCLA working as a gardener in Bel Air 35 years ago? Can people miss their *calling*—and if they do, is that the end of their ministry effectiveness?

It’s the journey, *not* the destination (other than Heaven) that matters. Our *calling* is to follow Jesus, day by day, realizing that He will lead us differently than we would have known to go on our own, and differently than He leads others (see John 21:18-22). I think that is why Jesus’ Earthly itinerary was so random: His *calling* was simply to do God’s will (see Hebrews 10:7), and “*God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power*,” so he could go “*about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...*” (Acts 10:38).

In no way, do I wish to defraud ministers of their sense of ministry purpose, but years of serving Jesus have taught me that our ministry assignments shift with time like the colored pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope. Frequently, the “*lost*” sense of vision/passion experienced by ministers is actually an indication that a fresh season and new calling is at hand. Different seasons of life/ministry call for different postures and arrangements. In His wisdom, the Lord has made sowing (seed) a process with multiple and distinct activities, and the ensuing harvesting methods differ according to the crop so that we will ever seek His counsel (Isaiah 28:23-29). Kingdom aircraft cannot be flown on autopilot!

## FOCUS POINTS

Because each of us are unique beings and we are likely at different points in our life/ministry, it is somewhat presumptuous for anyone to suggest 3-4 key points for getting your life/ministry on track (again), or to make you more successful. But if you will release me from the pressure to provide you with an exhaustive list guaranteed to make a difference despite any other factors in your life, I can share a few thoughts with you that have been helpful to me.

Let’s begin by redefining *success* in biblical terms. God told Joshua he would have *success* if he carefully did according to God’s word (Joshua 1:8). But the promise had nothing to do with possessions, positions, or accomplishments to which Joshua could one day point as proof of *success*; rather, it was a promise that Joshua would have greater and greater insight—he would become more circumspect in his decisions and acquire greater expertise for living and leading. Biblical *success* is best understood as “*growing in wisdom and stature before God and man*” not necessarily as growing in numbers on Sunday morning. (See (Luke 2:52; Psalm 34.) The two are not exclusive of one another, but neither are they the same thing!

### *Four Simple Reminders*

***Make Disciples***—Develop and serve others in ways that advance them in Kingdom enterprise (Colossians 1:24-29).

***Deny Yourself***—Grow accustomed to contradicting your natural ways of thinking, and learn to live/minister by revelation (Mark 9:27-35).

***Fulfill Your Ministry***—Function according to your unique design, adding what you’re supposed to add to the whole mix of His body, the church (Ephesians 4:11-16).

***Extend Grace and Kindness***—God is gracious and merciful, and His mercies are over all; He is kind in all His deeds, so represent Him well (Psalm 145).