

Calling Out the Called:

A Preaching Resource for Pastors, Preachers, Teachers, and Evangelists in Alabama Baptist Churches

Prepared by the

Calling Out the Called Taskforce
of the
Alabama Baptist State Convention and
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Purpose:

This collection of six sermon outlines has been crafted to assist pastors, preachers, teachers, and evangelists in Alabama Baptist churches in nurturing a culture that encourages individuals to discern and respond to God’s call to vocational ministry and missions. Developed to help churches “call out the called,” these sermons provide biblical foundations and practical guidance for identifying, inspiring, and encouraging those whom God may be calling to serve in roles from local church ministries to global missions.

Included Sermons:

1. **1 Corinthians 12** – Answering the Call to Serve: Many Parts, One Body
2. **Ephesians 4** – Called to Serve in Unity: Walking Worthy of the Calling
3. **Romans 12:1-2** – A Call to Live as a Living Sacrifice
4. **Isaiah 6:1-10** – Answering the Call of God with Conviction
5. **Matthew 28:18-20** – The Great Commission: Embracing Our Call to Make Disciples
6. **1 Timothy 3:1-7** – The Call to Godly Leadership

Use and Distribution:

This resource is intended for **pastors, preachers, teachers, and evangelists** within Alabama Baptist churches to use as is or adapt as needed. Churches are encouraged to **use, modify, and freely distribute** these sermons to foster a culture of calling, helping individuals recognize, explore, and embrace their calling to vocational ministry. This resource is meant to support leaders in establishing an environment where the call to serve—from local church roles to worldwide missions—can be recognized and strengthened.

1 Corinthians 12 – "Answering the Call to Serve"

Central Theme: Every believer is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit, and these gifts are meant to equip and unite the church as one body. The question is: Will you respond to God's call to use your gift to serve His purpose?

1. Recognize the Source and Purpose of Your Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)

- **Purpose of Gifts:** Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, rooted in God's grace, not human merit. Paul reminds the Corinthians that spiritual gifts should glorify Christ, uniting rather than dividing the church.
- **Call to Ministry:** Spiritual gifts invite believers to action, contributing to the church's mission. Gifts are for "the profit of all" (1 Corinthians 12:7).
- **Quote:** "God has a purpose for each of us. If you are still alive, God is not done with you." – Adrian Rogers
- **Illustration:** Barna research shows that 82% of church attendees see themselves as "spectators" rather than "participants." Who will answer the call to step into their God-given role?

2. Rejoice in Diversity, Unite in Purpose (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

- **Diversity of Gifts:** Paul speaks of a variety of gifts, each fulfilling specific roles within the body of Christ.
 - **Types of Gifts:** Examples include teaching, administration, hospitality, and healing.
 - **Unified Purpose:** Despite the variety, all gifts serve the purpose of glorifying God and building up the church.
- **Quote:** "We are not saved to sit but saved to serve." – W.A. Criswell
- **Application:** Encourage congregants to consider how their unique gifts can contribute to the church and the Kingdom.

3. Respond to the Call to Serve Selflessly (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

- **Manifestations for the Common Good:** Gifts like wisdom, knowledge, and discernment are tools God gives to meet the needs of others and further His mission.
 - **Illustration:** The story of George Mueller's orphanages, which ran entirely on prayer and God's provision, highlights how faith enables extraordinary service.
 - **Quote:** "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." – C.T. Studd
- **Application:** God gives gifts according to His will, but it's our responsibility to respond with humility and faithfulness. Challenge listeners to ask, "How can I use my gifts for others?"

4. Embrace Your Role as Essential in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

- **Unity in Diversity:** Just as the body has many parts, each believer plays a crucial role in the church's functioning. Every gift, no matter how "small," is vital.
- **Illustration:** Like a sports team, where every player has a specific role, the church suffers if a member withholds their gift.
- **Quote:** "Character is who you are in the dark." – E. Y. Mullins

5. Trust God's Design in Your Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

- **God's Choice in Gifting:** Paul reminds us that God distributes gifts "as He wills." We are called to trust His wisdom, knowing that every believer is uniquely gifted for God's mission.
 - **Illustration:** A jigsaw puzzle where every piece has a place, just as each believer's gift completes the church's mission.
- **Application:** Emphasize the call to pursue our gifts actively. Encourage congregants to desire the gifts that best serve others, not those that bring personal glory.
- **Quote:** "It is in giving that we truly find our life purpose." – Billy Graham

Conclusion: A Call to Respond

- **Challenge:** Will you answer the call to serve? The gifts are given, but the Holy Spirit awaits your willing heart.
- **Scripture Affirmation:** Reflect on 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."
- **Prayer:** Ask God for courage and clarity to step into one's role in the body of Christ, trusting Him to work through each person.

Ephesians 4 – "Called to Serve in Unity: Walking Worthy of the Calling"

Central Theme: God has given His people gifts to equip and unify the church for the work of ministry. This message challenges those who feel called to serve to step forward, empowered by the Spirit, to build up the body of Christ in love and unity.

1. Walk Worthy of Your Calling with Gratitude (Ephesians 4:1)

- **Foundation of the Calling:** Paul, as a “prisoner of the Lord,” urges believers to “walk worthy” of their calling. This call springs from gratitude for all God has done, not mere duty.
 - **Motivation for Service:** God’s love compels us to serve from the heart, not out of obligation.
 - **Illustration:** Paul’s imprisonment underscores his deep commitment to this calling, as he speaks as one who has given his all.
- **Quote:** “Every believer is God’s first-born; and so higher than the kings of the earth.” – John Trapp
- **Application:** Challenge congregants to reflect on the weight of their calling. Are they walking in a way that reflects the value of Christ’s sacrifice?

2. Serve with Humility, Gentleness, and Patience (Ephesians 4:2-3)

- **Humility, Gentleness, and Patience:** A worthy walk begins with lowliness and gentleness. Ministry should be marked by serving others without seeking personal gain or recognition.
 - **Quote:** “We are not saved to sit but saved to serve.” – W.A. Criswell
 - **Lowliness and Gentleness:** True ministry values others over self.
- **Maintaining Unity of the Spirit:** Unity is created by the Holy Spirit, and our role is to maintain it through love, forgiveness, and patience.
 - **Illustration:** A band playing together in harmony represents the Spirit’s unity in the church.
- **Application:** Encourage those feeling called to ministry to examine their heart’s readiness to serve with humility and a forgiving spirit.

3. Build Unity on the Foundation of Faith (Ephesians 4:4-6)

- **Shared Foundations of Our Faith:** “One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” These foundations unify all believers, enhancing the church’s beauty through diverse gifts.
 - **Unity in Diversity:** Different callings strengthen, not divide, the church.
 - **Illustration:** Like a well-functioning orchestra, diverse instruments create a richer sound together.

- **Application:** Emphasize the importance of unity in these core truths, and challenge those sensing a call to ministry to foster unity in their communities.

4. Build Up the Body in Love (Ephesians 4:7-10)

- **Gifts Given by Grace:** Each believer receives grace through Christ’s gifts, and no gift is more valuable than another.
 - **Illustration:** A skilled builder uses each tool for a specific purpose, just as each gift in the church has its place.
- **Christ’s Authority to Give Gifts:** Jesus’ triumph and ascension signify His authority to distribute gifts for the benefit of the church.
 - **Quote:** “If you want unity in the truth of God, through the Spirit of God, live near to Christ.” – Spurgeon
- **Application:** Challenge those called to ministry to recognize their gifts and consider how to use them to build up the church.

5. Equip and Empower Others for Service (Ephesians 4:11-16)

- **Purpose of Leadership Gifts:** Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers equip the saints for ministry. Their role is to train and guide, not to do all the work alone.
 - **Illustration:** Church leaders are like coaches on a team, equipping and guiding rather than taking every shot.
 - **Call to Action:** Encourage active service among the saints; the church’s power lies in an equipped congregation.
- **Application:** Challenge congregants to see themselves as participants, not spectators. Those called to ministry should recognize that their role is to equip and empower others.
- **Unity and Maturity:** God desires for His people to achieve “unity in the faith” and “knowledge of the Son of God.” Leaders help believers avoid being “tossed to and fro” by false teachings.
 - **Illustration:** A mature believer is like a well-rooted tree, unshaken by passing winds.
 - **Quote:** “A church that is only united in itself, but not united to Christ, is no living church at all.” – Spurgeon
- **Application:** Challenge congregants, especially those sensing a call to ministry, to commit to continual growth and to help others mature in their faith.

Responding to the Call to Serve

- **Challenge:** This passage invites believers to step into roles where God’s Spirit works through the gifts He has given each person.
- **Application:** Encourage those called to ministry to pursue their gifts actively in service of the church, maintaining unity and seeking God’s guidance.
- **Prayer:** Close by asking God to stir the hearts of those He is calling to service, empowering them with courage, unity, and love.

Romans 12:1-2 – "Called to Become a Living Sacrifice"

Central Theme: God calls each of us to present our lives as living sacrifices, to be transformed, and to find our true purpose in serving Him. This message encourages those who feel called to ministry to embrace God's call by surrendering fully and allowing Him to work through them.

1. Offer Yourself as a Living Sacrifice (Romans 12:1)

- **An Appeal to the Will:** Paul begins with an urgent plea—"I beseech you, brethren"—highlighting that this call requires a personal choice. God invites us to offer our whole selves, but we must decide to do so.
 - **Motivated by Mercy:** Our service is motivated by gratitude for God's mercies, as revealed through salvation, grace, and the Holy Spirit (Romans 1–11).
 - **Quote:** "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God... present your bodies as a living sacrifice." – J.B. Phillips
- **Application:** Challenge listeners to consider whether they have fully surrendered to God's call. Are they willing to lay down personal ambitions to follow God's leading?

2. Seek Holiness, Pursue What Pleases God (Romans 12:1)

- **Holy and Acceptable:** We are called to live holy lives, just as sacrifices in the Old Testament had to be "without blemish." This means a life of purity and devotion.
 - **Continuous Offering:** Unlike animal sacrifices, which died on the altar, a living sacrifice is an ongoing offering, continuously dedicated to God's purpose.
 - **Quote:** "The sacrifice is living because it is brought alive to the altar and stays alive at the altar."
- **Reasonable Service:** This is an act of intelligent worship, where believers respond to God's call with their whole selves—mind, body, and spirit.
- **Application:** Encourage those feeling called to ministry to see surrender as a pathway to purpose. Serving God with our whole self is a response of love, not loss.

3. Resist Conformity, Embrace Transformation (Romans 12:2)

- **Resisting Conformity to the World:** Paul warns against being shaped by worldly values, which oppose God's ways. To "not be conformed" requires resisting pressures to live for self or material gain.
 - **Illustration:** Society often tries to "squeeze us into its mold," urging us to pursue wealth, status, or pleasure above all else. Paul's call is a radical departure from this mindset.
- **Embracing Transformation through Renewing the Mind:** True transformation happens as God renews our minds. This renewal changes how we think, act, and view the world.

- **Illustration:** Just as a caterpillar undergoes metamorphosis to become a butterfly, believers are changed from within as they draw closer to God and His Word.
- **Quote:** “The life based on doing will never know the transforming power of God because it ignores the renewing of the mind.”
- **Application:** Encourage those called to ministry to actively seek God’s transformation. Challenge them to prioritize time in Scripture and prayer, letting God reshape their perspectives and values.

4. Discern God’s Will with Devotion (Romans 12:2)

- **Proof of a Transformed Life:** Paul says that a renewed mind enables us to “prove” God’s will. When believers embrace God’s transformation, their lives testify to what is good, acceptable, and perfect in God’s eyes.
 - **Discernment in Ministry:** Those called to serve must be able to discern and act according to God’s will, not personal desires or worldly pressures.
 - **Illustration:** Like a compass needle aligned to true north, our minds must be oriented toward God to truly navigate our calling.
 - **Quote:** “Resist conformity to the world and focus on God’s Word, then your life will be in the will of God.”
- **Application:** Challenge the congregation to seek God’s will in everything. Remind those called to ministry that God’s will becomes clearer as they allow Him to transform their minds and actions.

5. Serve Humbly, Seek Holiness (Romans 12:3)

- **A Warning Against Pride:** Paul stresses the importance of humility, especially for those gifted in ministry. Spiritual gifts do not equate to spiritual maturity, and those called to serve must guard against pride.
 - **Quote:** “Just because a person has spiritual gifts does not mean they are necessarily spiritually mature or a worthy example.”
- **God’s Measure of Faith:** Recognize that each person’s faith and gifting is from God, not something earned or deserved. This understanding fosters gratitude, not pride.
- **Application:** Remind those sensing a call to ministry that humility is essential. Ministry is a service to God and others, not a position of self-importance. Encourage them to use their gifts for God’s glory alone.

Conclusion: Responding to the Call to Serve

- **Challenge:** Romans 12 calls us to live as living sacrifices, to be transformed, and to embrace our God-given purpose. For those sensing a call to ministry, this means surrendering fully and allowing God to work through them.
- **Application:** Encourage all believers to see themselves as integral parts of the church body, called to serve and uplift one another. Those called to ministry are invited to embrace a life of full surrender and active service.
- **Prayer:** Close by asking God to give each listener courage, clarity, and commitment as they consider the call to live as a living sacrifice and serve Him wholeheartedly.

Isaiah 6:1-10 – “Answering the Call with Conviction”

Central Theme: Isaiah’s vision and calling reveal the majesty, holiness, and authority of God, and His invitation to His people to respond in reverence, repentance, and readiness to serve. This message encourages those who feel called to ministry to respond with conviction, recognizing God’s holiness and their need for His cleansing and empowerment.

1. Behold the Majesty of God’s Holiness (Isaiah 6:1-4)

- **The Vision in a Time of Uncertainty:** “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne.” Uzziah’s death represented a season of instability, but God revealed Himself as sovereign, seated on His throne, high and lifted up.
 - **Illustration:** Even when earthly leaders fail or pass away, God remains the eternal, unchanging King.
 - **Application:** For those considering ministry, this vision is foundational. God is present and reigning over every situation, and His throne stands above any earthly power.
- **A Glimpse of Heaven’s Worship:** “The train of His robe filled the temple... the seraphim cried out: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts.’”
 - **Majesty and Awe:** The vision shows God’s holiness and majesty, which demand reverence. The seraphim’s worship demonstrates complete submission and awe.
 - **Quote:** “Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigor... adoration must exceed activity.” – Spurgeon
 - **Application:** Those called to ministry must first approach God in humility and awe, understanding the sacredness of their calling. Encourage listeners to consider how this vision of God’s holiness challenges them to seek purity and reverence.

2. Confess Your Need for God’s Cleansing (Isaiah 6:5)

- **Isaiah’s Response – “Woe is me, for I am undone!”:** In the presence of God’s holiness, Isaiah immediately recognized his own sinfulness.
 - **Quote:** “God will never do anything with us till he has first of all undone us.” – Spurgeon
 - **Application:** God’s presence reveals our sin, especially for those called to proclaim His truth. A deep sense of our own need for forgiveness fuels humility and honesty in ministry.
- **A Recognition of Unclean Lips:** Isaiah’s confession focuses on the impurity of his lips, showing the power of words and the need for holiness in speech.
 - **Illustration:** Just as Isaiah confessed his “unclean lips,” those called to serve must recognize that God cares deeply about purity in every area of life, especially in speech.
 - **Application:** Encourage those sensing a call to consider their own words, attitudes, and actions, inviting God to cleanse and prepare them for His service.

3. Receive Cleansing for Commission (Isaiah 6:6-7)

- **A Divine Act of Cleansing:** One of the seraphim touched Isaiah's lips with a coal from the altar, symbolizing purification.
 - **Significance of the Altar:** The altar represents God's holiness and the need for purification before service. The coal symbolizes judgment applied to Isaiah's sin.
 - **Quote:** "Jehovah... can only fitly be served by those who are on fire, whether they be angels or men." – Spurgeon
 - **Application:** For those called to ministry, cleansing is essential. God alone can purify us, enabling us to speak and act with integrity. This purification may be uncomfortable but is necessary.
- **A Life Transformed for God's Use:** Isaiah's guilt was removed, preparing him for the calling ahead.
 - **Illustration:** Just as the coal purged Isaiah's lips, God uses trials and His Word to refine those He calls.
 - **Application:** Remind listeners that God's refining fire is needed to prepare them for the weight of ministry. Encourage them to submit to His work in their lives.

4. Respond with Readiness (Isaiah 6:8)

- **The Divine Call:** "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" God seeks willing servants, inviting Isaiah to be His messenger.
 - **Significance of the Call:** God's question reveals His desire for those who are willing to go. He does not coerce; He invites.
 - **Illustration:** Just as the missionary or pastor decides to go, so too must the heart of each servant align with God's invitation.
 - **Application:** Encourage those sensing a call to ministry to respond willingly, saying, "Here am I, send me!" A willing heart is essential to God's work.
- **Isaiah's Unhesitating Response:** Isaiah's immediate response—"Here am I! Send me"—demonstrates a heart eager to serve.
 - **Illustration:** Isaiah's readiness was born from his encounter with God's holiness and recognition of his own cleansing.
 - **Application:** Challenge listeners to consider their own readiness to respond. Are they willing to go wherever God leads? Remind them that responding to God's call requires courage, but He equips those He calls.

5. Go Forth in the Mission with Faith (Isaiah 6:9-10)

- **A Difficult Mission:** God warned Isaiah that his message would not be readily received and that the people would resist understanding and repentance.
 - **Illustration:** Ministry often involves challenges, and the message may be difficult. Like Isaiah, those called to serve must persevere, knowing that God's approval is the true measure of success.
 - **Quote:** "When we say, 'Here am I! Send me' to the LORD, we should expect that He will say 'Go.'"

- **Application:** Remind listeners that God’s call to ministry involves perseverance, even in challenging circumstances. Their responsibility is to obey, leaving the results to God.
- **The Promise of a Remnant:** God assured Isaiah that though many would reject the message, a remnant would remain faithful.
 - **Significance of Hope:** God’s promise of a remnant reminds those called to ministry that their efforts are never in vain. Even if few respond, God preserves a remnant for His purpose.
 - **Application:** Encourage listeners to have hope in God’s promise. No matter the visible results, God’s word will accomplish His purpose.

Conclusion: Living with Conviction in Response to God’s Call

- **Challenge:** Isaiah’s call shows the seriousness, humility, and courage needed for ministry. For those sensing a call, the pathway begins with reverence, continues through cleansing, and moves forward in faith and obedience.
- **Application:** Invite those sensing a call to approach God’s throne, seek His cleansing, and ask for the courage to respond with conviction. Remind them that they are not alone—God empowers, purifies, and sends them for His glory.
- **Prayer:** Close by asking God to instill a deep sense of His holiness in each heart, to cleanse those called, and to send them forward with courage and faith.

Matthew 28:18-20 – “The Great Commission: Embracing Our Call to Make Disciples”

Central Theme: Jesus’ final instructions in the Great Commission call His followers to make disciples of all nations, empowered by His authority and presence. This message encourages those sensing a call to ministry to respond with conviction, dedication, and a commitment to spreading the gospel and nurturing believers.

1. Acknowledge Christ’s Authority (Matthew 28:18)

- **Jesus Declares His Authority:** “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”
 - **Significance of Authority:** Jesus begins with His authority to remind His disciples that this commission is a command, not a suggestion. His authority ensures that the work will succeed, no matter the obstacles.
 - **Illustration:** Just as an officer reminds a soldier of his rank before giving an order, Jesus establishes that He, with all authority, sends them.
 - **Quote:** “Power in the hands of some people is dangerous, but power in the hands of Christ is blessed. Oh, let him have all power!” – Spurgeon
 - **Application:** For those called to ministry, this reminder of Jesus’ authority is foundational. It assures them that they do not go out in their own strength but are under Christ’s ultimate authority, facing no power or opposition that He cannot overcome.

2. Answer the Call to Go (Matthew 28:19)

- **The Commission to “Go”:** “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”
 - **Active Engagement:** Jesus sends His followers with a purpose—to go out into the world. The call to go is a command to engage actively in spreading the gospel beyond one’s immediate circle.
 - **Quote:** “Jesus said, ‘Go’ to some very imperfect disciples... ‘You are as good for my purpose as anybody else would be. There is no power in you, I know, but then all power is in me, therefore go ye.’” – Spurgeon
 - **Application:** Encourage those considering ministry to realize that God often calls those who feel unqualified or imperfect. The command to go assures them that Jesus will provide the strength and ability needed for this mission.
- **Making Disciples, Not Just Converts:** The goal is to make disciples, not merely believers or supporters.
 - **Meaning of Discipleship:** A disciple is a student, one committed to learning and growing. This command emphasizes that discipleship is a lifelong journey of growth and obedience.

- **Application:** Challenge listeners to think beyond initial conversion and consider how they might engage in helping others grow in their faith. Those called to ministry are tasked with fostering true discipleship, guiding others to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

3. Acknowledge the Global Scope (Matthew 28:19)

- **A Mission to All Nations:** Jesus' words mark a shift from His earlier ministry, which primarily focused on Israel, to a universal mission.
 - **Inclusivity of the Gospel:** The gospel is for all people, transcending race, nationality, and cultural barriers.
 - **Illustration:** Just as Jesus crossed boundaries by ministering to the Samaritan woman (John 4), He calls His followers to reach all people without distinction.
 - **Application:** For those sensing a call to ministry, this mission to all nations challenges them to broaden their perspective, embracing the diversity of people God loves. Encourage them to look beyond cultural or national boundaries, understanding that God's kingdom is inclusive and global.
- **Baptism as a Symbol of Allegiance:** "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
 - **Significance of Baptism:** Baptism signifies the believer's union with Christ and allegiance to the triune God. It is an outward sign of an inward change, symbolizing purification, identification with Jesus, and initiation into the community of faith.
 - **Quote:** "The experience of God in these three Persons is the essential basis of discipleship." – R.T. France

4. Teach Others to Obey in All Things (Matthew 28:20)

- **A Commission to Teach:** "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."
 - **Beyond Knowledge to Obedience:** True discipleship involves a transformed life, aligning with the teachings of Christ.
 - **Illustration:** Just as a builder follows a blueprint to complete a project, disciples need guidance to follow Jesus' teachings in every aspect of life.
 - **Quote:** "Hitherto Jesus alone has been the teacher... Now they take over his role of teaching." – R.T. France
- **An Assurance of His Continual Presence:** "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 - **The Comfort of His Presence:** Jesus does not send His followers out alone. His presence provides protection, power, and peace, ensuring that He is with them in every moment.
 - **Illustration:** Just as a child feels secure walking with a parent in a crowded place, those called to ministry can trust that Jesus is by their side, guiding and supporting them.

- **Quote:** “The promise of His presence is complete. ‘The whole of every day’ ...Not just the horizon, but each day as we live it.” – D.A. Carson
- **Application:** For those sensing a call to ministry, the assurance of Jesus’ presence is foundational. Remind them that they are never alone in the work of ministry; Jesus accompanies them, providing strength, guidance, and protection.

Conclusion: Is God Calling Me to Fulfill the Great Commission as a Minister, Pastor, or Missionary?

- **Challenge:** The Great Commission calls every believer to participate in God’s mission. Those called to vocational ministry are entrusted with a greater responsibility to lead, guide, and teach others in obedience to Jesus.
- **Application:** Encourage listeners to consider how they might participate in the Great Commission, whether through vocational ministry or everyday witness. Remind them that the authority, instruction, and presence of Jesus empower them for this mission.
- **Prayer:** Close by asking for God’s guidance, courage, and strength for those called to ministry and for every believer to embrace their role in making disciples. Pray that each person would respond to Jesus’ command with a willing heart and faith in His promise to be with them.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 – "The Call to Godly Leadership"

Central Theme: In this passage, Paul outlines the qualifications for spiritual leaders, emphasizing godly character as the primary criterion for leadership in the church. This message encourages those sensing a call to ministry to reflect on their lives and commit to pursuing the qualities that define a true servant of God.

1. Desire Leadership as a Noble Pursuit (1 Timothy 3:1)

- **Desiring Leadership as a Good Work:** "If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work."
 - **Clarifying the Role:** Paul introduces the role of a bishop (*episkopos*), meaning "overseer"—a leader responsible for shepherding God's people.
 - **Importance of Character:** Paul doesn't endorse leadership simply based on ability or desire; rather, he establishes that godly character is essential.
 - **Illustration:** Just as a shepherd must care for the flock attentively, a church leader must embody diligence, integrity, and humility.
 - **Application:** Challenge those considering ministry to examine their motives. True spiritual leadership seeks God's glory and the well-being of others, not personal honor.

2. Demonstrate a Life Above Reproach (1 Timothy 3:2-3)

- **Blameless:** "Nothing to take hold upon."
 - **A Life Above Reproach:** This means there should be no significant area of one's life that gives others cause to question their integrity.
 - **Quote:** "The word is a metaphor, taken from...an expert and skillful pugilist, who so defends every part of his body that it is impossible for his antagonist to give one hit." – A. Clarke
 - **Application:** Encourage listeners to pursue a life of integrity, where others can look up to them without reservations. This applies to all believers, not just leaders.
- **Husband of One Wife:** "A one-woman man."
 - **Faithfulness in Relationships:** A leader must be fully committed to their spouse, demonstrating purity and faithfulness.
 - **Illustration:** Just as marriage is a covenant relationship, so too is the call to serve God's people—a commitment that requires integrity and fidelity.
 - **Application:** Those called to leadership should understand the importance of integrity in all relationships, being trustworthy and devoted to their commitments.
- **Temperate, Sober-Minded, and of Good Behavior:** "Not given to extremes" and able to think clearly.
 - **Balanced, Serious, and Respectful:** Leaders should exhibit self-control, balanced thinking, and a dignified lifestyle.

- **Quote:** “This does not mean he has no sense of humor... Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry...” – Wiersbe
- **Application:** Leaders must maintain balance in their actions and speech, demonstrating maturity and respectfulness, which build trust among those they serve.
- **Hospitable and Able to Teach:** Ready to welcome and teach others.
 - **Welcoming and Instructive:** A leader’s life and home should be open to others, and they should be skilled in guiding others in the truths of God’s Word.
 - **Illustration:** Just as Jesus taught His disciples, a church leader should be willing to guide, mentor, and welcome those seeking to know God more deeply.
 - **Application:** Challenge those called to ministry to consider their openness to hospitality and readiness to teach. Effective leaders share their lives as much as their words.
- **Not Given to Wine, Not Violent, Not Greedy for Money:** Self-controlled and content.
 - **Avoiding Harmful Behaviors:** Leaders must be moderate, gentle, and free from the love of money.
 - **Illustration:** Like a ship needs a steady anchor, a leader’s life must be grounded and free from addictions or vices that can harm their integrity.
 - **Application:** Emphasize that a godly leader relies on Christ for strength and satisfaction, not on external substances or personal gain.

3. Devote Yourself to Faithfulness and Purity (1 Timothy 3:4-5)

- **Leadership Starts at Home:** "One who rules his own house well..."
 - **Faithful in Family Relationships:** A leader’s ability to lead at home reflects their ability to lead in the church.
 - **Illustration:** Just as a home provides a foundation for life, a leader’s family life provides insight into their character and priorities.
 - **Application:** Challenge those sensing a call to ministry to first focus on nurturing and discipling their families. Leadership in the church should flow from leadership in the home.

4. Demonstrate Self-Control and Respect (1 Timothy 3:6-7)

- **Not a Novice:** Mature in Faith
 - **Spiritual Maturity Required:** Leaders must not be new in the faith to avoid the dangers of pride and the traps set by the enemy.
 - **Illustration:** Like a tree must grow deep roots to stand firm, a leader’s faith must be grounded over time to withstand trials and temptations.
 - **Quote:** “Novices are not only bold and impetuous, but are puffed up with foolish self-confidence, as though they could fly beyond the clouds.” – J. Calvin
 - **Application:** Those called to ministry should view spiritual maturity as a journey and be patient as they grow. Let the call to serve become evident through a deep and rooted relationship with Christ.
- **A Good Testimony Among Non-Believers:** Respectable and well-regarded by others.

- **Respected in the Community:** Leaders must be seen as trustworthy by those outside the church, reflecting integrity and Christlike character.
- **Illustration:** Just as a light shines to reveal what's around it, a leader's life should shine Christ's love and truth, influencing others even outside church walls.
- **Application:** For those sensing a call, this criterion highlights the need to live a life consistent with the gospel, one that earns respect and points others toward Christ.

Conclusion: Answering the Call to Godly Leadership

- **Challenge:** Paul's criteria for spiritual leadership are centered on character and integrity, not talent or status. Encourage those sensing a call to examine their lives in light of these qualifications, committing to growth in Christlike character.
- **Application:** Remind listeners that these qualifications for leadership apply to every believer. Those considering ministry are invited to reflect and strive for these qualities, seeking the Lord's help to live lives above reproach.
- **Prayer:** Close by asking God to help those called to ministry to pursue these qualities earnestly. Pray for a renewed commitment to holiness, integrity, and service, that they may represent Christ faithfully to His people and the world.