

The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life

by Os Guinness.

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Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

After our move to London, my wife and I were involved for a few years with the Asian Christian Fellowship (ACF) at the University of Western Ontario, a university offering a smorgasbord of bewildering postmodern ideas. The ACF's mainly Chinese students were eager committed young Christians, but they kept their faith simple. They did not know how to integrate their faith, learning and calling in life. They were like many others who think that the only people who have a calling are pastors and missionaries. But the secular and the sacred dimensions of life are not two separate entities. If personal faith convictions, along with coats and hats, are left at the door, the totality of the faith is denied. It becomes then merely a harmless play area for believers. Yet the Christian faith has the proven capacity to affect history and transform cultures as well as radically alter individual lives. I wish Os Guinness' book had been available for the ACF students in their search for fulfillment and meaning in life and with their questions about careers and vocations.

Guinness argues for a broad and comprehensive view of calling. He shows that a calling by itself is meaningless unless there is Someone who calls. God calls Christians to a commitment to their life tasks with no reservations, no retreats, no regrets. A sense of calling should precede the choice of a job or career. Neither work nor career can be fully satisfying without a deeper sense of calling. Work, calling and vocations are identical. The Christian is called to discipleship everywhere and in everything. It is a natural response to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a result of God's grace working in our lives. As Guinness notes, "for everything of God and good in our lives without a single exception is all of grace. That covers calling too." Hence, calling is a metaphor for the life of faith itself. It is a life lived to the glory of God alone. When we see life as a calling, even the commonplace and menial are invested with "the splendor of the ordinary."

Since all of life is under the Lordship of Christ, politics cannot be an exception. But the author

rightly observes that Christian engagement in politics should always be marked by tension between allegiance to Christ and identification with any party, movement, platform, or agenda. The Church should not be held captive by political movements. The Church should never become politicized - an identification with political movements on either right or left *without critical tension*. With appreciation Os Guinness mentions the life and work of Abraham Kuyper, who remained engaged in public life. But he points to the secularization of Kuyper's institutions after his death and the pillarization of Dutch society as his followers withdrew into their own network of institutions and organizations and lost the outward thrusting, transforming power that is at the heart of the Gospel. "Calling resists pillarization," says Os Guinness, "by requiring an attitude toward, and action in, society that is inevitably transforming because it is constantly engaged." We must take a counter cultural position. As followers of Christ we dare not relax our antithetical stance toward the world even if we may have to suffer for it.

Os Guinness is the author of numerous books, including *God in the Dark* and *Fit Bodies: Fat Minds*. But he confesses that no book has burned longer or more fiercely within him than this one on calling. He does not suggest quick, easy and simple answers. He forces the reader to deep soul searching and self-examination before God. As you read this book, his passion for the subject is evident. In twenty-six short chapters he draws from the Scriptures, biographies, history and literature in order to help the reader rediscover the critical meaning of calling and its effect on daily life. Repeatedly he drives home the need that all must listen to Jesus and answer His call. In this fragmented and morally adrift world Os Guinness points us to the only One who can give hope and meaning to all of life - Jesus Christ.