

# Understanding Your Call: Head, Heart, and Hands

If you are reading this, someone has likely asked you: Have you ever considered ministry? Maybe a pastor saw something in you. Maybe a mentor said you have a gift for this. Maybe you have been serving faithfully in your church for years, and people keep telling you that you should do this full-time.

Or maybe the question came from somewhere deeper. Maybe you have sensed God stirring something in you that you cannot quite name. Maybe you wonder if God wants more from you than what you are currently doing.

If you are wrestling with calling, you are in good company. Moses argued with God at the burning bush. Jeremiah protested that he was too young. Isaiah felt unworthy when he saw God's holiness. Jonah ran in the opposite direction. Gideon needed multiple signs. Even Mary asked, How can this be? God has been calling reluctant, inadequate, imperfect people into ministry since the beginning. Your doubts do not disqualify you. Your questions do not mean you have not been called.

## But How Do You Actually Know?

That is the question. Some of you are certain God has called you, and you need the credentials to formalize what you already know. Others are here because you are still trying to figure out whether this sense of calling is real or imagined.

Discerning calling is not about achieving absolute certainty that eliminates all doubt. It is about paying attention to what God is doing in you, through you, and around you.

## What Calling Is Not

### Not a Lightning Bolt Experience

Some people have dramatic moments. Most do not. For most people, calling unfolds gradually through circumstances, relationships, fruitfulness, and the church's confirmation. If you have not heard an audible voice or seen a vision, you are in the majority.

### Not the Same as Gifts

You might be a gifted teacher, but that does not automatically mean you are called to vocational ministry. Plenty of people have ministry gifts that God intends them to use as laypeople, not as credentialed ministers. Gifts are part of calling, but they are not the whole picture.

### Not Just a Feeling

I feel called is where many people start, but it cannot be where you end. Feelings are unreliable. They change with circumstances, moods, and spiritual seasons. Authentic calling involves feelings, but it is anchored in something more substantial.

### Not a Solo Decision

The body of Christ has a voice in discerning your calling. This is a gift, not a burden. When the church confirms your calling, you know it is not just you convincing yourself. You have the weight of the community's wisdom behind you.

Through this class, you learn some theology, history, and polity of the Church of the Nazarene. You begin to understand what we believe, how we got here, and how we are structured. All of that matters for ministry. But the question underneath all of that is this: Are you called? Not just do you want to do ministry. Not just are you good at ministry. But has God laid his hand on you for this work? The Head, Heart, Hands framework gives a way to think about calling that avoids two problems: reducing calling to emotion, or reducing it to function.

## Head: Rooted in Scripture and Formation

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Your call must be rooted in Scripture. This means more than knowing a few verses about calling. It means you are learning to see your life, your gifts, and your desires through the larger story of Scripture and the church's theological wisdom. The Bible is forming you, not just you quoting it, and you are allowing the church to shape how you interpret both Scripture and your own experience.

A grounded call is patient. It resists shortcuts. It understands that God's work in a person unfolds over time, through obedience, formation, and faithfulness. You learn to think theologically, to discern with the wisdom of the church, and to let Scripture shape your calling rather than using Scripture to justify what you already want to do.

### Jeremiah 1:5

*"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I set you apart."*

Jeremiah's calling is grounded in God's prior action, not Jeremiah's self-assessment. Calling precedes awareness. God equips those he calls, but he does not wait for them to feel ready.

### Isaiah 6:5, 8

*"Woe to me! I am ruined!" — and then: "Here am I. Send me!"*

Calling flows out of a transformed understanding of who God is, not a belief in one's own adequacy.

## Heart: The Inner Witness of the Spirit

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The inner witness of the Holy Spirit confirms your call. This is not emotionalism, impulse, or spiritual excitement that fades when ministry becomes costly. It is a settled, enduring conviction that God has laid his hand on you for ministry, a conviction that remains when affirmation is absent, when fruit is slow, and when obedience requires sacrifice. Early Methodists called this the witness of the Spirit, not because it was dramatic, but because it was trustworthy.

The Heart of calling shows up in perseverance. It is what keeps you praying when ministry is discouraging, keeps you faithful when recognition is lacking, and keeps you obedient when obedience is inconvenient. This inner witness is not proven by intensity but by consistency over time.

### Galatians 1:15–16

*"When God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me."*

Calling involves God shaping your inner life, your desires, your motives, your loves, so that ministry flows from who you are becoming, not what you can do. This is why calling is inseparable from sanctification. God does not simply call people to tasks. He forms people into Christlikeness for service. Character and calling grow together, or they collapse together.

Without spiritual formation, calling becomes performance without power, activity without depth, and leadership that cannot hold the weight it carries.

## Hands: Confirmed Through Practice and the Church

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Your call must be confirmed through practice, fruitfulness, and the church's recognition. This is critical: God calls, but the church confirms.

Calling is not theoretical. It is lived out in ministry. You serve. You act. You use your gifts in the Kingdom. And through that service, both you and the church see evidence that God is at work.

**Matthew 7:16**

*"By their fruit you will recognize them."*

Ministry is work. It is action. It is service. Your calling gets tested, refined, and confirmed through doing the things you sense God calling you to do. Fruitfulness in ministry is not always what we expect. It is not necessarily large numbers or public recognition. But it is observable evidence that God is using you to build his Kingdom.

### What Does Fruit Look Like?

A children's pastor sees kids who could not sit still for five minutes now asking questions about Jesus. A youth pastor watches teenagers who were indifferent start bringing Bibles and serving in the church. A worship leader notices the congregation saying they encountered God that morning. A chaplain sits with a dying patient who makes peace with God before death.

**Luke 16:10**

*"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much."*

You do not wait until you are licensed or ordained to start serving. You serve now, in whatever capacity God has opened to you. This is how calling gets confirmed, not by waiting for the perfect opportunity, but by being faithful in small things.

### The Church's Role in Confirmation

The church at Antioch laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them out. The apostles recognized Paul's calling to the Gentiles. Timothy received his calling through prophecy and the laying on of hands by the elders. The early church understood that calling is both personal and communal. The Spirit speaks to individuals, but the body confirms and sends.

In our tradition, this understanding is built into our polity. The church watches you minister over time. Your local church writes a recommendation based on what they have observed. Experienced ministers assess your gifts through ministry engagement. The Board of Ministry interviews and examines you. The District Assembly votes on your credentials. Each step is the church saying: we see what God is doing in you, and we want to walk with you in it.

### REFLECT ON THIS

Where are you right now in the Head, Heart, Hands framework? Which dimension feels most settled, and which one is still developing? What would it take for the church to confirm what you sense God doing in your life?

## Why All Three Must Work Together

Head without Heart and Hands produces people who can explain calling and talk about Jesus but have never experienced it. They know the theology but lack the fire.

Heart without Head and Hands produces emotionalism. People feel called to things that contradict Scripture or for which they have no gifting. Feelings become authoritative, and calling becomes whatever moves us in the moment.

Hands without Head and Heart produces functionalism. I am good at this, so I must be called to it. But giftedness alone is not calling. Plenty of people are good at things God has not called them to do in ministry.

All three together produce calling. You know theologically what God is doing. You experience the reality of his call spiritually. You see the confirmation through fruitfulness and the church's recognition.

### FOR YOUR MINISTRY

Calling is not a one-time event. You do not arrive at being called. You live into your calling day by day, year by year, sometimes decade by decade. As you engage this week, be honest about where you are. And be honest about whether the church has confirmed what you sense God doing in your life. Your formation comes from that honesty, not from presenting an inaccurate version of yourself.

## Conclusion: A Conversation You Live

Calling is not a destination you arrive at. It is a conversation you live. And like every meaningful conversation, it requires you to keep showing up, keep listening, and keep responding. You bring the Head that keeps your calling anchored in Scripture and the Wesleyan tradition you are being formed in. You bring the Heart, the interior witness of the Holy Spirit, the pursuit of holiness, the spiritual depth that sustains you when ministry gets hard. You bring the Hands, the faithful service, the fruitfulness, the willingness to act before you have all the answers or all the credentials.

God has been calling people into ministry for thousands of years. He has not stopped. And if he has called you, the evidence will be there: in the Scriptures that ground you, in the Spirit that bears witness, in the fruit that grows through your service, and in the church that confirms what God has already done.

***Go serve. Go grow. Go raise up others. And trust that the God who called you is faithful to complete what he has begun.***