

EXODUS 31: CALLING

SERMON-ALIGNMENT CURRICULUM

by Kevin McGill

From Vision to Calling

I believe a shift is happening within our generation. It was once believed that vision was essential for the modern life. Amid the hustle, commitments, mixed messages, and paradigm shifts, we were losing sight of how the world was supposed to be. So we relied on God to pull out a big canvas and simply “paint the picture.”

People often quoted Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” We need a vision from God. Whether it was a vision for America, my family, or myself, I just needed God to remind me of what it was supposed to “look” like.

In fact, the original Hebrew word *hazon* meant a prophetic word from God. But like any idea, over time, its original purpose was co-opted by other motives. Today, vision often emphasizes human ambition and strategic planning. It’s become personal and self-defined—not from God, but from me. How many times have you been asked, “What is your vision for life?” That’s why I believe we need to shift from talking about vision to talking about calling. **Vision** is self-generated. **Calling** is God appointed.

Group Discussion Questions:

Vision is defined as a clear picture of a future life you aspire to. Its usually crafted into a future-forward statement. Do you have a clear “vision” for your life? If so, what is it? And if not, why?

The Call of Bezalel

In Exodus 31:2, God says He has “called” Bezalel—the Hebrew word here is *qara*, meaning “to summon.” God is giving an assignment. Interestingly, the Bible uses vision 77 times, but call nearly 600 times. Bezalel, like you and me, is called to a specific task—like a soldier, official, or king. A calling gives us an assignment.

Seeking a vision means asking God for a picture of the future. Seeking a call means asking God for your assignment within His plan.

Every day brings a new set of problems. You’re always asking yourself, “How should I solve this?” But a picture of the future doesn’t provide enough detail for daily decisions. It won’t tell you, “Should I buy a second car? Should I drop out of college?”

A calling clarifies. When I ask, “Should I call it a night and be with my family, or stay at the office a few more hours?” I turn to my calling: “What is my calling as a pastor? As a dad?” It doesn’t answer every question, but it provides direction.

Group Discussion Questions:

How does understanding God's calling (Exodus 31:2–5) differ from pursuing a personal vision, and how might that difference change the way you make daily decisions? (Exodus 31:2–5; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:23–24)

(Consider how Bezalel's calling as a craftsman—rather than a priest or prophet—shows that God's Spirit empowers ordinary work as sacred. How might that reframe your sense of purpose in everyday tasks?)

Where in your life do you sense God is "summoning" you—not to a grand vision, but to a faithful assignment right now? (1 Corinthians 7:17; Micah 6:8; John 15:16)

Reflect on how your unique responsibilities, relationships, and skills might already be part of God's specific calling for you in this season.

Understanding Your Assignment

Exodus 31 gives us a good starting point:

Ordinary people filled with the Spirit...

...Given ability, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship by God...

...To complete various tasks for God's mission...

...In community with other Spirit-filled workers

Exodus 31:1–5 (ESV)

The Lord said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft."

Who Are Called? - Ordinary people.

Verse 2 says, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah." Who is Bezalel? He isn't from a priestly family, isn't related to Moses, and his name rarely appears in Scripture. He's an ordinary person—and that's the point.

When we think of calling, we picture pastors, presidents, Nobel laureates. Not some guy named Gary from your pickleball club. But calling is for everyone.

"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God."

These ordinary people are filled with the Spirit. We tend to think God chooses only the already-special. But that's backward. It's not the naturally gifted who attract the Spirit's filling—it's the Spirit who bestows the gift. The Spirit makes one special.

As Tim Keller once paraphrased in *Songs of Jesus*:

"Christians shouldn't look at historical figures as great heroes that have vanished, never to be seen again. They weren't capable of it the first time. It was God. And He is still here."

The passage continues: “with intelligence, with knowledge, and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs.” The anointing of the Spirit isn’t just for pastors and missionaries—it extends to intelligence applied in art, work, and creativity.

It’s the child who, at age 7, sketches a perfect replica of Leonardo’s Mona Lisa without training. It’s the uncle who can take a part and put a 3d printer without having to refer to the owner’s manual. It’s your friend who can look at your books and tell you why your checkbook isn’t balanced.

The Bible surprises us: the Spirit even anoints small gifts—like hospitality, attention to detail, or the ability to set a beautiful table. We often limit calling to spiritual authority, but God takes joy in all creation. He values every part of your design. The problem isn’t God’s joy in you—it’s how little we value how He made us.

As you discover your calling, you’ll realize that every aspect of your design is part of it.

Group Discussion Questions:

Why do you think God delights in using ordinary people like Bezalel to accomplish extraordinary purposes, and how does that challenge our ideas of who is “qualified” for God’s work? (Exodus 31:1–5; 1 Samuel 16:7; Acts 4:13; 1 Corinthians 1:26–29)

Consider how the Spirit’s filling, not human status or talent, defines God’s call and empowers every kind of work—from craftsmanship to leadership.

What gifts or abilities have you overlooked in yourself because they seem “too ordinary,” and how might God want to use them for His glory? Has anyone in your life diminished your gifts, and if so, share with your group. (Romans 12:4–8; Colossians 3:17; Exodus 35:30–35)

When have you sensed God’s Spirit working through something small or unnoticed in your life—something you might not have thought mattered? What did that moment teach you about His calling? (Zechariah 4:10; John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Discovering Your God-Given Design

1. Lifelong experience – Design is a journey, not a single moment. We’re not waiting for God to suddenly upgrade us with new skills. Bezalel’s design grew over years of experience, effort, and natural talent.

2. Three signals – Discovery can’t be rushed, but here are some helpful signs:

- What comes naturally?
- What do you do that consistently helps others?
- What requires sacrificing time, comfort, or resources?

3. A discipler – Profiles and assessments are useful, but one of the best tools is a discipler—a spiritual guide who speaks truth into your life.

Purpose and Alignment

Finally, all this unfolds in God's purpose. *Exodus 31:4–5* says, "to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft."

Bezalel's talent found purpose in constructing God's dwelling place on Earth. When your God-created design aligns with your God-given purpose, you experience a defining moment—a shift in how you view life, work, and ministry.

As Rick Warren writes:

"The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. ... You were born by His purpose and for His purpose."

Group Discussion Questions:

Discuss the three signals that help you define your calling.

- **What comes naturally?**
- **What do you do that consistently helps others?**
- **What requires sacrificing time, comfort, or resources?**

Sabbath Protection

Exodus 31:12–13 (ESV)

And the Lord said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.'"

Moses places the Sabbath command at the end of the tabernacle instructions—right after the call. In fact, he consistently pairs instructions with Sabbath rest throughout the book of Exodus.

God pairs instruction with Sabbath rest. He knows us. He gives directions, and we immediately turn them into workaholicism and legalism—believing that through our work we'll find validation for ourselves and salvation from God. That's when we fall.

Once you've discovered your calling, you'll be tempted to do everything you can to keep it. As Father Ronald Rolheiser said, "What started as a virtue becomes a vice."

Discovering your calling is the easy part. Depending on the one who called you is harder. Our vocation is littered with stories of leaders who began well but didn't persevere.

Consider King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:1–21). He began his reign at sixteen, sought the Lord faithfully, and brought prosperity, strength, and innovation to Judah. Yet in his later years, his pride led God to strike him with leprosy. Isolated until his death, Uzziah's life is remembered as one that started in strength and faithfulness but ended in shame and weakness.

God's calling always includes rest—because your assignment is never meant to replace your dependence on Him.

Group Discussion Questions:

Why do you think God pairs calling with Sabbath rest throughout Exodus, and how does this rhythm protect us from turning our service to God into self-reliance or pride? (Exodus 31:12–17; Exodus 35:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; Hebrews 4:9–11)

Consider how Sabbath rest is not the absence of work but the practice of trust—remembering that the One who calls us also sustains us.

Where in your current calling do you feel the pull to “prove yourself,” and how might regular rhythms of rest remind you that your worth comes from God rather than your productivity? (Psalm 127:1–2; Galatians 3:3; John 15:5)

Think about a season when your strength or success began to eclipse your dependence on God—what warning or grace did He use to draw you back to Him? (2 Chronicles 26:1–21; Deuteronomy 8:11–14; James 4:6–10)