



Bill Klein: ([00:03](#))

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned him just as God called them.

Bill Klein: ([00:13](#))

So situations come and go, jobs come and go, circumstances change, but God's call remains the same for every believer.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:24](#))

You're listening to the Faith & Work podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:33](#))

Hi, welcome to the Faith & Work podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, joined here by Brian Gray of the Denver Institute for Faith & Work.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:39](#))

And a hearty welcome back to Bill Klein, Dan Steiner, who joined us during our previous episode to talk about their new book, *What Is My Calling? A Biblical and Theological Exploration of Christian Identity*.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:49](#))

And previously, we talked about how the word calling is commonly used in faith communities and how those definitions often deviate from how scripture defines calling.

Joanna Meyer: ([01:00](#))

So gentlemen, remind us of a brief definition of what the Bible says it means to be called.

Dan Steiner: ([01:07](#))

Yeah, you bet. Thanks, Joanna.

Dan Steiner: ([01:08](#))

I think in essence, our calling as God's people is to Christ, and therefore to live a life patterned after the characteristics that are reflective of a Christlike life; love, kindness, hope, holiness, peace, humility, etc. That's the common calling that we all have as his people.

Dan Steiner: ([01:31](#))

And the expectation or the fruit of that, is a certain life as opposed to finding a particular type of a job or role.



Brian Gray: ([01:41](#))

Okay. Compared to that, you talked last time in the podcast... I'd highly encourage folks, if you're jumping in on part two, there were just some really rich biblical foundations that we discussed in part one of the podcast in the previous week. Hit pause here, go back and listen to it, and jump back in with us.

Brian Gray: ([01:57](#))

But Dan and Bill, you talked about a number of categories of calling, that calling tends to be towards a specific task, or role, or job. People usually use it in a way that's very individualized. "My calling is personal to me." In that it can be pretty subjective. Can be like the ACE of spades. It's like a trump card that is hard to contest if the Lord has called or said you should do something.

Brian Gray: ([02:26](#))

And oftentimes, people experience frustration that calling can be hidden. It's something that has to be discovered out there.

Brian Gray: ([02:33](#))

So you talked about a number of different ways, and held over some of those and other examples over what Dan just described.

Brian Gray: ([02:40](#))

Dan, what I heard in your definition and from a previous conversation are two categories, our Christian identity, and my personal activity in the world.

Brian Gray: ([02:51](#))

How would you say those two should relate to each other, if not through calling language on the latter?

Dan Steiner: ([02:59](#))

Absolutely. I think there's a tendency, as we talked about last time, doing something, activity, accomplishing, effectiveness. This is so much of what we're pushed towards by way of valuation of a person's worth and what they provide by value to an organization, or even society as a whole.

Dan Steiner: ([03:18](#))

It's so easy to place that as the leader in the dance, so to speak, between the relationship of those two.

Dan Steiner: ([03:25](#))

What we say is when you look at scripture and see that we're called to be a certain sort of a people, it doesn't mean that we aren't supposed to accomplish something. But what should lead that dance is who we are in Christ and the life that we live, the manner in which we live our life as we go about whatever the activity is and whatever the context of life that we find ourselves might be, which can include our work, but also expands far beyond the work that we might be doing for or not for pay.



Dan Steiner: ([03:49](#))

So I think that's the way that I would frame the relationship between the two. They are related, but which one is leading the dance needs to be clarified.

Bill Klein: ([04:01](#))

Yeah, I think, just to briefly re-echo that, there's a direction. The being leads to doing.

Bill Klein: ([04:10](#))

What you do doesn't determine who you are. Who you are, or what you do should flow out of who you are. And so what we're trying to stress, as we think the Bible does, that God has called Israel to be the people of God as a light to the nations.

Bill Klein: ([04:28](#))

God calls the church to be the body of Christ in the world, for the world, to redeem the world.

Bill Klein: ([04:35](#))

And so we find our identity in who we are.

Bill Klein: ([04:39](#))

And now who we are leads to loving God, loving our neighbor as ourselves, putting into practice what Jesus instructs in the Sermon on the Mount and etc.

Bill Klein: ([04:54](#))

All those things about doing are because of our identity and who we are, our being in Christ.

Joanna Meyer: ([05:05](#))

What's so challenging is what you're describing runs up into the practical reality. We need to figure out what would God have us do in the finer details.

Joanna Meyer: ([05:16](#))

And I can think of an instance that happened today, where I was talking with a loved one about a book she was reading in which it was talking about the intimacy and vibrancy of life with the Holy Spirit. And one aspect of that life is that you will have the excitement of discovering God's assignment for you in that there's this sense of God has put you in a place and he wants you to do a certain thing.

Joanna Meyer: ([05:39](#))

And I realized that that type of thinking is so common for many people, including me, in our faith experience. And yet that may not be what you're describing what it means to be called.



Joanna Meyer: ([05:50](#))

How clearly does God lead modern day Christians to specific purposes? And does he really have an assignment for every believer?

Dan Steiner: ([05:59](#))

Man, that's a loaded question, Joanna, in so many ways.

Dan Steiner: ([06:03](#))

And what I'd like to do is just in fact go back to an old Testament passage that is so often quoted, or as I describe endearingly, is the most cross-stitched passage in the entire Bible, and that is Jeremiah 29:11 where God says to Israel, not to an individual, but he says to Israel, "I know the plans I have for you to prosper you."

Dan Steiner: ([06:24](#))

And I think Bible Gateway came out a few years ago and said that was the second most referenced or researched passage on their website, second only to John 3:16.

Dan Steiner: ([06:33](#))

And I think that idea resonates with so many. They want to know that God is for them.

Dan Steiner: ([06:38](#))

But what's interesting is if you go back to the first part of that chapter, where does the prophecy, so to speak, or the message for God's people begin?

Dan Steiner: ([06:46](#))

It's, "You are in not your homeland, but you're in a foreign land. You're being stubborn and refusing to do that which I've commanded you to do, and that is to represent me wherever you go as my image bearers. Simply settle own, make gardens, and build homes, and have babies, and live your life. It's in the most ordinary and mundane spaces that I want you to be faithful. I'll take care of the rest, but would you just settle down and be faithful in the most mundane and ordinary? "

Dan Steiner: ([07:11](#))

And I think for us culturally, it's hard for us to accept that as truth. That is God's rubric, in essence, of faithfulness. Are you going to settle down and be faithful in the ordinary and the mundane spaces of life, as opposed to trying to pursue the grand and something that is big and is going to make waves or headlines somewhere?

Dan Steiner: ([07:31](#))

And so I think that's the message that we really need to sit with individually and corporately. Can we accept that that is, perhaps, simply all that God is asking of us as it pertains to faithfulness?



Dan Steiner: ([07:42](#))

Can we sit with that as opposed to pursue the grand plan or even believe that's even possible, as opposed to sitting with the mundane and ordinary and saying, "How can I be faithful? How can we be faithful in these spaces?"

Bill Klein: ([07:55](#))

Well, also Joanna your comment need not be dismissed completely. There's a sense in which a person can find fulfillment, satisfaction, joy in a specific endeavor. But it's when we put the language that God has picked that one out for you and if you miss it, or you neglect it, or you don't find it, then you've missed something significant or crucial. Then a person is in a situation which is untenable.

Bill Klein: ([08:34](#))

And this is made even worse because many of us hear these triumphal stories of people who Lord God's calling in their lives that led them to accomplish great things and to have personal fulfillment.

Bill Klein: ([08:52](#))

And many popular books talk about it. If you find that place where God has called you, your life will take on new and expansive meanings. And if you haven't had that experience, or if you never find that place, then are you a second class Christian, or do you just keep searching, or what are you to do?

Bill Klein: ([09:20](#))

There's no future in that. There's no outcome that's life giving.

Brian Gray: ([09:26](#))

So Dan and Bill, as I'm listening, I'm imagining many Christians who have had experiences in a context of group or personal discernment for aspects of their life where they've sensed that God is leading them towards a specific end. Maybe it's a specific place, maybe it's to do something specific.

Brian Gray: ([09:50](#))

How would you differentiate discernment in this type of manner? Is that normative? Do you believe that still happens for people if that is not equated to the idea of calling as we're unfolding it here?

Dan Steiner: ([10:05](#))

Absolutely. Yeah, no. I think that's a really important question to put on the table, Brian, and as I worked with seminary students and taught on this topic, I would have to qualify in a classroom and acknowledge that there are students in this classroom that have a specific story instance, burning bush type moment that they can point to as to why they are pursuing seminary or the occupation that seminary is going to lead to.



Dan Steiner: ([10:30](#))

And at the same time sitting in that same classroom, there are also students who simply have discerned or desired to be theologically educated, either as a pastor, or as a flight instructor, or as a nuclear engineer for the United States Navy, or other students that I've been around who never had a life altering specific moment in which they had clarity about going to seminary pursuing a particular job.

Dan Steiner: ([10:54](#))

So this experience or reality is so broad. Yes, does God still appoint, or open doors and help us see that there is something specific in front of us? Absolutely.

Dan Steiner: ([11:06](#))

But back to what Bill talked about in our first conversation together last time, is that normative? I don't believe it is, and I think we have to be really careful that we don't unintentionally build out a normative expectation for all people that God is going to ordain them, or call them to a particular job, task, or role.

Dan Steiner: ([11:25](#))

And with that, I would say we might want to sit with other stories in scripture that don't get air time, so to speak, with the calling conversation.

Dan Steiner: ([11:33](#))

What about someone like Esther, the one book in the Bible where God's name is not specifically mentioned, yet it's obvious that God was working behind the scenes when we look through the rear view mirror of what was going on.

Dan Steiner: ([11:44](#))

But she was simply utilized at such a time as that, and what did it look like for her to be faithful? She wasn't seeking out a divine appointment.

Dan Steiner: ([11:51](#))

Or someone like Rahab who discerned in a moment what's the right thing to do here with these people, and she ends up in the genealogy of Jesus.

Dan Steiner: ([11:59](#))

They weren't searching for some calling. They were in a particular moment and discerned what was right to do. So I think we've got to be able to hold space for both and not lift up either as the only way in which we can determine or decide or discern a faith way forward.

Bill Klein: ([12:15](#))

Right. And I would just underscore that many of the incidents in the Bible that are so significant, and often the ones that are highlighted when people are talking about calling are the exceptions, not the



rule. And that's why they make it into the Bible in some senses, because these are the spectacular times when God does a unique thing. So it's wrong for us to take a unique circumstance like a burning bush, or a vision in the night, or a dream and then say, "That's normative."

Bill Klein: ([12:51](#))

That may be very well be the exception. What about all the other people, all the other Christians, all the other church members who are going through their lives and never have anything like that?

Bill Klein: ([13:01](#))

Well, that's what's normative, and most of the time, what we have to use is our sanctified common sense led by the Holy Spirit, using our gifts, our aspirations, our experiences, our circumstances, our age, all those different things to discern what is the right course of action.

Bill Klein: ([13:22](#))

And that's what we do as faithful Christians. Not sit around waiting for a calling.

Brian Gray: ([13:28](#))

Bill, since about 15 years ago and studying Ephesians with you, I've picked up this little phrase that came out of that time regarding what you've just said.

Brian Gray: ([13:37](#))

"But are you Paul, or are you the Ephesians?" I'm pretty comfortable being the Ephesians. And so it's just this categories of what the Bible describes versus prescribes, what is normative versus not are really helpful for us to hold onto and have our sense of value and identity rooted in who we are in Christ, as opposed to those things which feel more special, perhaps more heightened, more fantastic. There can be freedom from that for people.

Bill Klein: ([14:11](#))

Exactly. I'm glad you were listening in class, Brian. That's good.

Brian Gray: ([14:18](#))

I think I got an A, but I think the greater was really soft.

Brian Gray: ([14:25](#))

Dan, I want to ask a practical question based on some of the work that you've been doing. You've done some professional coaching and you've worked with people who are wrestling with issues of direction in their life professionally.

Brian Gray: ([14:37](#))



And this is a part of a multimillion dollar industry that's been expanding. How do these ideas of calling as our identity, versus stewarding our activity in the world, if you will, my language, how does that jibe with this huge trend we see culturally, Christians and non, around discover your strengths and act upon them? What comments would you make there?

Dan Steiner: ([15:02](#))

Yeah, I think that's a really helpful question, Brian. And I go back to some things that we talked about just a moment ago regarding the doing and the being.

Dan Steiner: ([15:11](#))

"Which of those is leading the dance," I think is how I put it.

Dan Steiner: ([15:15](#))

When it comes to discovering your strengths or developing your strengths, talents, abilities, and so forth, I think that's absolutely imperative for all people, especially in a time in which jobs are changing. You have to work in a new space. You're all of a sudden taking on a role that you weren't hired for, but now you're all, of a sudden, having to oversee a type of a project or manage something that you don't have education for whatever else it is.

Dan Steiner: ([15:38](#))

Yeah. We need to develop these skills. We need to be competent, but competency and character, competency and this identity in Christ reality, shouldn't be fully divorced from one another.

Dan Steiner: ([15:50](#))

And in my coaching, what's interesting is oftentimes, it's work-related competencies that become the starting points of my conversation, my work with a client, but inevitably, we end up talking about and focusing on what we might call the softer skills, the assertiveness and confidence. Those are two soft skills that I end up working with people on more than anything else.

Dan Steiner: ([16:11](#))

What interesting too is when you read recent leadership literature, empathy is now being lifted up as the number one skill that managers and leaders must have within the workplace in order to keep employees around. This great resignation that we hear talked about, three to four million people leaving their jobs every month, and most often people don't leave a job because they don't like the job. They leave their boss, or they to leave a culture within an organization.

Dan Steiner: ([16:34](#))

And so we're, all of a sudden, now collectively recognizing the importance of what it means to be a certain sort of leader, not just expect certain types of tasks to be done, or bottom lines to be raised, and so forth.





Dan Steiner: ([16:46](#))

So, we need to be completely confident. We need to grow these strengths and these abilities, but that conversation cannot. I would say it's should not be divorced from the conversation of who we are and what we bring to the table by way of, "What sort of a worker am I as I'm interpersonally relating to my clients, my customers, my colleagues, those that are above me below me, etc?" That's what matters.

Dan Steiner: ([17:08](#))

The world is recognizing that. Are we as God's people and those in the church having these same conversations and asking, "Does who I am, does who we are matter more than what we do?" But again, not divorcing that from growing in competency, and effectiveness, and quality, and so forth.

Bill Klein: ([17:27](#))

Yeah. I think Paul's counsel in 1 Corinthians 7 is very appropriate at this point where he says, "Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned him, just as God called them."

Bill Klein: ([17:47](#))

So situations come and go, jobs come and go, circumstances change, but God's call remains the same for every believer. And that's what Paul's key is, to live as a called person in no matter what you do, whether you have a job or don't, whether you're living at the CEO level, or you're one of the people who clean the bathrooms at the end of the day.

Bill Klein: ([18:14](#))

Christians are in both roles and they're both called.

Dave Haanen: ([18:21](#))

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Dave Haanen: ([18:42](#))

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Dave Haanen: ([18:54](#))

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Dave Haanen: ([19:01](#))

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Joanna Meyer: ([19:07](#))

Brian, I'd love to get your thoughts on this. I know we talk a lot about work as a tool for spiritual formation in our lives. And I know you had mentioned let's not escape this conversation with calling without talking about how it shapes us.

Joanna Meyer: ([19:19](#))

What have you wanted to know from our experts, and your thoughts, Brian, on how calling shapes us spiritually?

Brian Gray: ([19:26](#))

Well, I think this is one of the practical implications. If our calling as followers of Christ is about our identity or to paraphrase, calling answers questions of our who we are, our how we live in the world, why we live in the world, as opposed to my what and where, well, there's implications for the way that we're formed to live and to bear that identity.

Brian Gray: ([19:52](#))

What's the connection between spiritual formation and bearing the image of Christ in this way?

Bill Klein: ([20:01](#))

Well, I think calling has everything to do with our spiritual formation as believers. In fact, it's the primary issue here even though we've left it to the end. Maybe we're leaving the best to the end, I don't know.

Bill Klein: ([20:13](#))

But our call is to become like Christ, to love God and our neighbor, to live according to the values of the Sermon on the Mount. And we could go on and on in the other places where scripture guides us in terms of our identity and how we're to live.

Bill Klein: ([20:38](#))

And these are the qualities I think that we should focus on for the components of our calling, rather than trying to find some hidden or mysterious calling out there using certain special tactics that are presented in seminars or Christian self-help books of various types.

Bill Klein: ([21:02](#))

So our passion ought to center in this understanding of calling to be like Jesus, to minister to others in the body of Christ, to feed the hungry, to help the poor. All of these require a different kind of person



and there is where spiritual transformation must be taken seriously, hearts that are open to what God wishes to do in, and then through us.

Bill Klein: ([21:28](#))

And so calling means to be transformed to be like Jesus, not finding some ideal job, passion, task, or vocation.

Dan Steiner: ([21:40](#))

Yeah. And with that, I think there's... And each person and community needs to take a look at how intention I plays a role in what they're pursuing formation in and towards.

Dan Steiner: ([21:53](#))

So are we more hopeful or intentional about the formation that takes place? Do we just go through the motions for whatever person that their go to spiritual disciplines may be, or going to church, being a part of worship gatherings and so forth? Do we just go through the motions hoping that we're transformed along the way, or is there a level of intentionality, as Peter said in the second letter, to make every effort to apply to our faith and grow in love, and kindness, and self-control, and so forth. And not a second proof of the spirit type list.

Dan Steiner: ([22:26](#))

And he says, "If these qualities are yours and increasing, they neither render you useless nor unfruitful in the kingdom."

Dan Steiner: ([22:32](#))

Who wouldn't want to be fruitful and effective? I think we all do. But again, what's the rubric and are we making every effort to pursue formation towards those ends?

Dan Steiner: ([22:41](#))

So alongside your former question, Brian, of gaining competency and growing in strength and ability, are we also as intentional about becoming people who are more loving, and more compassionate, and more generous, and so forth, and does our intentionality reflect that which we're trying to become?

Dan Steiner: ([23:03](#))

It's not just hoping that we look like that, but it's actually intentionally pursuing formation, and having mentors, having others in our community come alongside us and say, "Can you help me grow in these ways? I need to become more humble. I am the most prideful person I know," rather than saying, "I'm the most humble person I know."

Dan Steiner: ([23:17](#))



"Can you help me become more humble because that's going to help me lean more into my identity of who I am in Christ?"

Dan Steiner: ([23:24](#))

I think that intentionality is really an important part of that formation process.

Joanna Meyer: ([23:28](#))

At the risk of sounding cheesy, it makes me realize that we should be devoting as much energy that we give into discovering our strengths, into discovering how we can be more like Christ. And that's a process that God's laid out so explicitly for us in scripture. Those could be marching orders for a very rich and impactful life, if we would just follow them.

Joanna Meyer: ([23:51](#))

And that's the beauty of the vision of calling that you've provided in this book, so thank you so much for the work that you've done here.

Joanna Meyer: ([23:58](#))

Brian, any closing thoughts that you would want to add to our conversation?

Brian Gray: ([24:02](#))

No. I just appreciate, this feels counter-cultural in the most helpful informant ways.

Bill Klein: ([24:09](#))

Would it be inappropriate for me to have one final word, or actually to let the Apostle Peter have one final word?

Joanna Meyer: ([24:19](#))

Yes, yes, please.

Bill Klein: ([24:21](#))

Because these words from 2 Peter, and I think Dan alluded to them just a bit, but in 2 Peter 1:3-11, these are so critical and I wish that, if there's one thing to leave with our listeners, that this would be worth them looking to and pondering, for they put together a lot of the questions or the issues that we've been trying to wrestle in this podcast.

Bill Klein: ([24:55](#))

Listen to Peter's words, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life, through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them, you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add



to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Bill Klein: ([25:56](#))

"But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you'll receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ."

Bill Klein: ([26:21](#))

We all have this calling in Christ. So, as Paul urges us, live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Brian Gray: ([26:32](#))

Amen. Thanks, Bill.

Joanna Meyer: ([26:34](#))

Amen. Heartfelt. Thank you to the professors, Bill Klein and Dan Steiner, and we'll provide more resources about their book at the end of the podcast. Thanks, gentlemen.

Brian Gray: ([26:45](#))

Thank you.

Dan Steiner: ([26:45](#))

Thank you.

Joanna Meyer: ([26:49](#))

Gosh, what a glorious way to end this important conversation about calling with Bill Klein and Dan Steiner.

Joanna Meyer: ([26:56](#))

In our show notes, we will link to Bill and Dan's Book. A reminder, it's called, What Is My Calling? A Biblical and Theological Exploration of Christian Identity, and it will be available for sale April 12th.

Joanna Meyer: ([27:06](#))

Also, we'll link to a free download of Denver Institute's ebook called A Study of Calling: New Thoughts For An Old Idea.

Joanna Meyer: ([27:14](#))



And finally, if you've been intrigued by this conversation and you're in the Denver area, I want to remind you that applications for the 5280 Fellowship are open through May 2nd. The 5280 fellowship is a nine month intensive formation program for people in the first half of their careers, and it focuses on the integration of their faith with work and the way they engage culture. It's an amazing life changing experience.

Joanna Meyer: ([27:37](#))

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Joanna Meyer: ([27:41](#))

And thanks again for listening.

Joanna Meyer: ([27:46](#))

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Joanna Meyer: ([27:57](#))

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