

Many are invited to the family of God

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Most religious people believe in a calling. How people perceive the concept of a calling has much to do with the mental lens through which people view their religion and their world.

The correct view of a calling can help a person to spiritually mature. An incorrect view of a calling can hinder a person's growth.

Let's look at six erroneous concepts people have about a calling.

Feeling superior

Error No. 1: Since I am called, I must be right.

Jesus described the calling as an invitation (Matthew 22:1-14).

Since the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was for every person, ultimately everyone will be invited. However, some are invited sooner.

It is common for people among the Churches of God to confuse the terms *called* and *chosen*. Since people know that few are chosen, they sometimes overlook the fact that many are called (Matthew 20:16; 22:14).

According to Scripture, the invitation is not based on merit.

In 2 Timothy 1:9 Paul wrote: God has called people with a holy calling that is not according to their works.

People who view the invitation as an opportunity to feel superior to other people are not responding correctly to the invitation.

Looking to men

Error No. 2: Since I am called to follow special church leaders, they must be right.

First, this misconception diminishes the role of Jesus Christ.

You have probably read hundreds of times how the Father draws people to Jesus Christ (John 6:44).

John the Baptist explained that Jesus Christ was to increase, and he was to decrease (John 3:30).

Jesus Christ emphatically rejected the idea of giving preeminence to people. Read Matthew 23:5-12.

Paul taught that increasing the role of physical men (and physical groups) was carnal and divisive (1 Corinthians 3:1-5).

Second, this misconception discourages people from taking personal responsibility.

When people feel called to men or to a group, they often place more emphasis on physical proclamations than on what the Bible says.

God wants His saints to take responsibility by proving all things from the Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

The approach of Pharisees

Error No. 3: Since I am called to the truth, my doctrine must be right.

It is common for people among the Churches of God to confuse the terms *truth* and *doctrine*. By doing so, many place a misguided emphasis on doctrinal matters, including pet theories and private interpretations.

Although it is true that our Father has doctrinal expectations of us, religious systems tend to misinterpret the pure words of God.

We can learn from the mistakes of the Pharisees.

- When the Pharisees emphasized certain doctrinal details, Jesus reminded them that they were omitting the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23).
- When the Pharisees emphasized the traditions of the elders, Jesus reminded them that they were making the Word of God of none effect through their traditions (Mark 7:1-13).
- When the Pharisees emphasized their example of obedience, Jesus reminded them that they did not have a proper relationship with God (Luke 18:9-14).

God has not invited us to participate in a legalistic approach to special doctrine. God has invited us to have a personal relationship with Him and a good relationship with our neighbors.

What is the revealed knowledge that the senses cannot comprehend? (1 Corinthians 2:7-10).

Self-appointed judge

Error No. 4: If they do not agree with me, they are not called.

Do I really need to say anything about such a comment?

Unwilling to learn

Error No. 5: Since they are not called, they must be wrong. I cannot learn anything from them.

First, are you sure that those people are not being invited now?

Second, Jesus recognized the good things that people said, no matter what their background.

Many people would have a tough time recognizing value in the words of a centurion. Yet, Jesus said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:5-13).

Many people would have a difficult time recognizing value in the words of a woman of Canaan. Yet Jesus said: "O woman, great is your faith" (Matthew 15:22-28).

Jesus did not need to learn about faith from these people, but He recognized faith when He saw it.

On the other hand, we as disciples can learn from people outside our heritage, but we oftentimes will not admit that other people may know more about some things than we do.

Unwilling to help

Error No. 6: Since they are not called, they will not understand. I will avoid religious conversation with them until I warn them.

First, are you sure those people are not being invited now?

Second, saints can influence whether a person will be saved (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

It is true that Jesus said that sometimes a disciple should not give something holy to other people (Matthew 7:6). It is also true that Paul charged people not to strive about words (2 Timothy 2:14).

However, Paul believed that the way he and other saints interacted with people made a difference in their response to the gospel. His words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 instruct saints to recognize the circumstances of people with whom they come into contact and to deal with them accordingly.

Paul's approach is different from the one-dimensional method that many among the Churches of God today prefer. Many today choose to give a strong warning. They conclude that people in their audience are not being called anyway, so why try to reach them.

Those without

Notice what Paul also wrote about dealing with people "who are without."

■ Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:12: Walk honestly with those who are without.

■ Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:7: Potential leaders must have a good report of them who are without.

■ Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13: What have I to do to judge those who are without? God judges those who are without.

(For the record, judging those who are within must be based on biblical reasons and must be done in a biblical manner. Most church discipline is based on the personal whim of men and is done without due process.)

■ Paul wrote in Colossians 4:5-6: Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt that you may know how to answer every man.

Jesus' example

It is true that Jesus called the Pharisees names such as hypocrites, blind guides, serpents and vipers in Matthew 23.

However, you certainly realize that Jesus was tender toward people more often than He was firm toward them.

Also, saints must remember that, only days after Jesus warned the Pharisees in Matthew 23, He died for those same people.