

# The Call

## by Os Guinness

### Introduction

This is not a simple four-step manual but in-depth thinking about principles. Guinness covers a broad scope and includes many gems of wisdom. Deeply read himself, he refers to many great works of literature. The book includes a penetrating analysis of modern society, including western Christianity. Each chapter ends with personal questions. The book is for all who long to find and fulfill the purpose of their lives.

### Key Insights

"As modern people we are all on a search for significance. We desire to make a difference. We long to leave a legacy." "Our passion is to know that we are fulfilling the purpose for which we are here on earth." (1)

"Deep in our hearts, we all want to find and fulfill a purpose bigger than ourselves." (3)

"Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service." (4)

"Calling is the most comprehensive reorientation and the most profound motivation in human experience - the ultimate Why for living in all history." "Answering the call is the way to find and fulfill the central purpose of your life." (7)

"Only when we respond to Christ and follow his call do we become our real selves and come to have personalities of our own." (25)

"Calling is not only a matter of being and doing what we are but also of becoming what we are not yet but are called by God to be." "In this

context, calling is overwhelmingly God's calling people to himself as followers of Christ." (30)

"Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. Our secondary calling, considering who God is a sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him." (31)

"Do you want to accept a challenge that will be the integrating dynamic of your whole life?" (35)

"First, we must resolutely refuse to play the word games that pretend calling means anything without a Caller - and we must not allow people to play such games on us." "If there is no Caller, there are no callings - only work." (42)

"The one aim of the call of God is the satisfaction of God, not a call to do something for Him." (42, quoting Oswald Chambers)

"We are not primarily called to do something or go somewhere; we are called to Someone." (43)

"God normally calls us along the line of our giftedness, but the purpose of giftedness is stewardship and service, not selfishness." (46)

"The truth is not that God is finding us a place for our gifts but that God has created us and our gifts for a place of his choosing..." (47)

"Most of us, whether we are aware of it or not, do things with an eye to the approval of some audience or other. The question is not whether we have an audience but which audience we have. A life lived listening to the decisive call of God is a life lived before one audience that trumps all others - the Audience of One." (73)

"I live before the Audience of One. Before others I have nothing to prove, nothing to gain, nothing to lose." (77)

"God's calling is the key to igniting a passion for the deepest growth and highest heroism in life." (82)

"The call of Jesus is personal but not purely individual; Jesus summons his followers not only to an individual calling but also to a corporate calling." (98)

"The decisive question for the West is its capacity to direct and discipline capitalism with an ethic strong enough to do so. I myself don't believe the West can do it." (134) Originally the menace of unrestrained economic impulse was held in check by the Protestant ethic.

"Capitalism, having defeated all challenges, such as socialism, now faces its greatest challenge - itself, because it devours the very virtues it needs to thrive." (135)

"Throughout history the most universally acknowledged problem with money is that its pursuit is insatiable." (136)

"...calling introduces into society a different style of operating that directly counters the market mentality. We do what we do in life because we are called to it rather than because we get paid for it." (141)

"We do it gratis pro deo ('free and for God')..." (142)

"...secularization affects religious believers just as much as it does atheists and agnostics. ...the modern world quite literally 'manages' without God. We can do so much so well by ourselves that there is no need for God, even in his church. Which explains why so many modern Christian believers are atheists unawares. Professing to be believers in supernatural realities, they are virtual atheists; whatever they say they believe, they show in practice that they function without practical recourse to the supernatural." (157)

"The call to follow Jesus Christ runs directly counter to this deadly modern pressure toward secularization." (158)

"The modern world has scrambled things so badly that today we worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship." (160)

"Privatization is the process by which modernization produces a cleavage between the public and private spheres of life and reinforces the private sphere as the special arena for individual freedom, fulfillment - and faith." (165)

"The problem with Western Christians is not that they aren't where they should be but that they aren't what they should be where they are."

"Jesus is not a 'religious leader' but Lord of all of life." (166-67)

"...the call of Jesus provides the priorities and perspectives that are essential for a focused life in an overloaded age." (174)

'I have chosen you,' Jesus said, 'you have not chosen me.' We are not our own; we have been bought with a price. We have no rights, only responsibilities. Following Christ is not our initiative, merely our response, in obedience. Once we have been called, we literally 'have no choice.'" (177)

"...calling provides the story line for our lives and thus a sense of continuity and coherence in the midst of a fragmented and confusing modern world." (177)

"Calling is central to the challenge and privilege of finishing well in life." (240)

## Key Chapter

### Chapter 4: Everyone, Everywhere, Everything

- Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.
- Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him.
- Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him.
- The vital distinction between primary and secondary calling carries with it two challenges
  - To hold the two together.
  - To ensure that they are kept in the right order.
- The truth of calling means that for followers of Christ, "everyone, everywhere, and in everything" lives the whole of life as a response to God's call.

- Do you want to accept a challenge that will be the integrating dynamic of your whole life? One that will engage your loftiest thoughts, your most dedicated exertions, your deepest emotions, all your abilities and resources, to the last step you take and the last breath you breathe? Listen to Jesus of Nazareth; answer his call.

(Summary Notes by Steve French)

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