

Believing God's Call

SCOTT HOEZEE

Look up the word “tingle” on a search for words in the Bible and in most translations it pops up three times; and every instance is the same. God reveals that he is about to do something so startling that it will make the ears of all who hear about it tingle. We actually saw that in God’s words to Samuel that we looked at in an earlier program in this series about the calling of God on our lives. Sometimes what God calls us to do or to become a part of is so shocking we feel our ears and our spines and our whole body tingle; but once the tingle wears off, might we be tempted to find it hard to believe that this will actually happen? Might we doubt whether we want to get involved in something like that? How can we believe God’s call when we encounter it? We will ponder that question today on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, this is now our third program in a fairly short four-part series: “When God Calls”; and so, so far in this series we have wondered about how we hear God’s calls. I mean, it is not always handwriting on the wall or getting a piece of certified mail from God; so how do we know when God calls? We thought about that. Can we be sure it is God? Then we thought about understanding the call. So, we believe it is God, but now what exactly is he telling us to do? So, that is sort of what we have looked at a little bit so far.

DAVE BAST

Right; and it involves a process of discernment always. Most of the time, as we all recognize I think, we are not going to hear an audible voice. We are not going to be visited by an angel...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Like the Virgin Mary was when told her calling was to bear the Son of God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

But, we had a wonderful guest in our last program, Andy McCoy from Hope College, who talked about looking at *where* you are in life, what your circumstances are, what the needs are around you, what you might be about in a different stage whether you are a student or whether you are a retiree, and then ask *who* you are really. What are your gifts? What are you drawn to? What are you inclined to? Because most of the time, God is going to work through that; and then as we saw with the story of Samuel and old Eli, he will use mentors perhaps or friends who can help us with their good advice, too. So, yes, it is all about being willing to listen, being able to hear and discern: Yes, God might actually be asking me to do this particular thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, once you figure out it is God and what it is, then next up is can you believe it. Do you believe that this is really....Are you serious, God? That sort of thing; and I think we expect that that would happen in our lives.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I know that when I started college, if anybody had asked me, I would have told them the last thing I wanted to be was a pastor. Then I felt God was calling me to be a pastor, and for weeks I refused even to pray about it because I was a little afraid of what he would say. I mean, I didn't want to learn Latin and Greek and Hebrew and have four more years after college. I just started college. It seemed impossible to me, but of course eventually I caved in and here I am, but... So, we kind of think, well yes, that happens to us, right? You would expect that to happen to me or to a friend, but not in the Bible, right? In the Bible, everybody believed God's call right away, right?

DAVE BAST

Yes, well, here is exhibit A of why that is not true. Today, in this segment at least, we want to look at the story of Moses, and it is a pretty long story, so we won't actually read from all of Exodus Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, but it starts with the famous encounter that Moses had with God at the burning bush. So, Moses is just hanging out. He is a shepherd in the wilderness. He is tending the flocks of his father-in-law. He has been there for 20 years, and incidentally, he is 80 years old at this point...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

He has had a checkered past. Years ago in Egypt he had to flee, but that has long since gone in the past; and one day as he is standing there he sees a bush that is on fire, but it doesn't seem to be burning up, and so he turns aside and he hears the voice, you know: Take your sandals off...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Moses, this is holy ground. I am the Lord. I Am Who I Am; and I want you to do something.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I want you to go get the people out of Egypt. I have listened to their cries, and so you have got to go get them. Go get them from underneath Pharaoh. That is the call: You will be the leader of my people; the leader of what we will call the Exodus eventually; but again, Moses didn't say: Okay, you are God...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I'm not, and so I'll do it.

DAVE BAST

Oh, Lord; how good to hear from you. I will go immediately. I will be your guy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Moses argues, actually, with God. It is an argument with five parts. Part one: Moses says to God: Look, I'm a nobody; Pharaoh will never listen to me. God says: No, I will be with you so I will take care of that. Oh, okay, Moses says; but then Israel won't believe me. I mean, you don't even have a name, do you? I mean, we have never heard your name, God.

DAVE BAST

Who do I say sent me?

SCOTT HOEZEE

So then, God gives Moses his name. Okay, Moses says, now I've got your name, but they are still not going to believe me. The people will say: You are making this up. You never talked to God. So God gives him a couple magic tricks that he can do to convince them...some signs; and then he says: Okay, well look; talking is not my thing. I'm a stutterer, I am always tongue-tied. Public speaking isn't my gig. God says: Don't worry. I'll open your mouth.

DAVE BAST

In fact, I will send Aaron. He can be your...he will do your talking for you.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He will give you help; and finally, Moses just goes for broke to say what he has really been trying to say all along: Call somebody else. I don't want to do it. And God then, you know, says: No, you are going to do it and that is it. It is almost like a comedy routine.

DAVE BAST

It really is; it is almost funny. It is like we saw a little bit of a glance in an earlier program in this series on Isaiah and his experience of his call. It is as if Moses channeled Isaiah and said: Here am I, Lord. Send somebody else.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and it is not the only example in the Bible. God will later tell Samuel to anoint David, the runt of the litter. I mean, all the more strapping brothers Samuel was just sure, and God said: No, anoint David; and Samuel said: You can't be right. You are calling me to anoint this little guy?

DAVE BAST

Right; his brothers are so much more impressive. Or there is Timothy, speaking of youngsters...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Repeatedly in the New Testament in Paul's letters it seems like Timothy kind of was knocked in the early Church because he was too young. He didn't have the experience. So, it is very interesting to me how often some of the key servants of God felt that they were unqualified...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

Unprepared, inappropriate. Moses is going to be the champion who announces to Pharaoh, you know, this great act of the Exodus: Let my people go; and he is not even a good speaker. So, even Jesus, I guess we could say, might have had some of that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes...we don't want to get into any theological trouble here or anything, but you know, on a human level we know that Jesus was tempted his whole life. Even in the wilderness, the devil said: *If you are the Son of God, you know...doubt that, and so forth.* Jesus' family didn't think he was doing the right thing once he quit carpentry. They one day said that he was out of his mind—that he was off his rocker. When Nathaniel first heard about Jesus he said: What, from Nazareth? Nothing good comes from that hick town...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, everybody around Jesus doubted that he was doing what he was supposed to be doing. On a human level, I wouldn't...you know, it is not impossible that the devil said...

DAVE BAST

Planted that suggestion.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Are you sure you are doing what you are supposed to be?

DAVE BAST

Yes, how can you be the Son of God? How can you be the Messiah? So, the question then is for us, too. If all of these great characters in the Bible experienced this sense of doubt, or perhaps unworthiness or unpreparedness, how can we actually come to believe when we sense God is calling us to do something, that we can really do it? That is what we will ponder next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, Dave, we were talking about biblical characters, Moses being the lead example, but others, too, who got God's call all right, and couldn't believe it. It is like: No, you've got the wrong person. I cannot do this. I don't have the gifts. Choose somebody else and ask me to do something else. Kind of surprising that that actually happens in the Bible, but it certainly also happens to us. So, what people say around us can sometimes cause us to ask questions: How can God be calling me to be a doctor when I did so lousy in chemistry in high school; or why does God want me to be a school teacher? My own grades in school were only B- or worse; so, how can I do the thing God wants me to do? Why would God want me to start a charitable organization when I got fired because my boss said I was so bad at business? You know, these doubts crowd into our minds; even when we are pretty sure it is God calling us and we are pretty sure what he is calling us to do, doubts often crowd in.

DAVE BAST

Right; and sometimes those can even be planted by others...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

We speculated a little bit about Jesus; and we certainly don't want to imply in any way, shape, or form that Jesus felt himself unqualified to be the Messiah; but others certainly thought that he was...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

He didn't come from the right place—just a carpenter, you know—even his family members sowing that doubt; but there is a wonderful passage in Paul's letter to the Romans that sheds light, I think, on the idea of those whom God calls he also qualifies and gives gifts in order to fulfill that calling. So, let's listen to Paul in Romans Chapter 12, beginning in verse 3.

SCOTT HOEZEE

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith God has assigned.⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,⁵ so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: Prophecy, in proportion to faith;⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching;⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

DAVE BAST

What jumps out at me at the very outset, and maybe we should just make this point: Paul says we should think of ourselves with sober judgment, which I take to mean, try to have a realistic view of yourself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Yes, it is possible to doubt your qualifications. It is also possible to over-estimate them. So, we all probably...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Equal but opposite errors.

DAVE BAST

Yes; we all probably know examples of people who felt they were called to do something or other, and those around them said: Errrr, not really; and in that case they were right. Paul also says something else here.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and you know...I mean, on one level these passages where Paul makes the analogy to a body was to cut out spiritual competition. No gift is more important than the other. The hand needs the foot; the toes need the fingers, and so forth and so on; but for our purpose in this program and in this series on calling, the other thing that we need to recognize here is that Paul is saying if God calls you to do something, he needs you to do that thing. You know, we tend to focus on our individual roles: Here is what I do; here is the corner in which I am working; but God does and has to keep his eye on the big picture. For the Church and for the kingdom of God to function in this world the way God wants it to, he has to call lots of people to do lots of different things, or it doesn't work; and so, if we are of a mind to refuse to go along with what God legitimately is calling us to do, we are kind of throwing a monkey wrench into the works here. I mean, this isn't going to work, even for God, if we don't play along.

DAVE BAST

I think that is such a wonderful point that needs to be underscored. We really have to do our part. I don't know, I will just throw this out there because this struck me not so long ago. I happened to be reading toward the end of the book of Acts—Acts 27—which is the story of Paul's...it is very exciting. It is his sea voyage to get to Rome, and there is a big storm and a shipwreck and all that; and in the middle of the story, an angel appears to Paul and says: I don't want you to worry. I know this is scary, but your life is going to be preserved, and all of the shipmates that you have onboard with you I am going to give their lives, too, and you will all be delivered; and then, just as they approach an island, they can hear the surf and it is dangerous, the sailors try to sneak away in the lifeboat of the ship, and Paul turns to the Roman officer and says: If those guys leave, we are all going to die. So, you know, the officer steps up and does his little thing... You know, the importance of us doing our part, of us fulfilling our job, of us playing the role that God has called us to play... We cannot sort of sit back and say: Well, it's God's business. He will make it happen. He works through us, and it is crucial that we do our little thing, whatever that might be.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That reminds me, some people might remember from many years ago, the comedian George Gobel...kind of a nerdy kind of a guy with the brush cut...but he would often on Johnny Carson or talk shows...he would often talk about his World War II combat experience, and he would say: Well, as you know, I fought the whole war at a radar installation in Oklahoma; and people would laugh; and he would say I don't know why you laugh, evidently that is where they needed me, or they wouldn't have put me there; and he would also say not one Japanese fighter got past Tulsa either. You should know that...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, the comedy aside...

DAVE BAST

Self-deprecating...but true, you know.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The comedy aside, that idea: Well, evidently that is where they needed me because they put me there. In the Church, that is sort of what we really have to say: Evidently God needs me to do this because he put me there...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And if I refuse to do it to the best of my ability...to refuse to let God work through me in this task, whether it was one I would have chosen for myself or not, if I don't do that the body of Christ cannot walk...it cannot function...it cannot do what God needs it to do.

DAVE BAST

So, you have all these different gifts, Paul says, and they call for different abilities and different people exercising them. Nobody does it all, nobody has it all, but some can speak...that is what he means by prophecy; they can preach, they can teach; some can serve...that is what the word *ministry* means; some can exhort, or sort of encourage people; some can give...they have the wherewithal to be generous; some can lead; some can be cheerful; some can be compassionate...

SCOTT HOEZEE

I love the...

DAVE BAST

What has God enabled you to do?

SCOTT HOEZEE

I love that last item that was in the passage we read a minute ago. Who would have think that cheerfulness counts...

DAVE BAST

Is a gift, yes, that's for sure.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As a spiritual gift; but it is. Being cheerful sometimes is what God needs you to do as an exercise of compassion and ministering to people; and in all of it, of course, in that passage, too, it is all about what I think you mentioned earlier, Dave, about humility. That we accept that we all do different things. Nobody is more or less important than anybody else, and in humility I accept my station in life—what God has called me to do—and trust that God will do great things through that.

DAVE BAST

So, let's...before we close this whole topic out and end this program, try to think of some practical examples or practical issues that might arise in the course of attempting to fulfill our calling from God. That is what we will consider in just a moment.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and our third program in a four-part series about when God calls us; and Dave, in this program, we have been thinking specifically about... Okay, so we get the call; we understand...we discern what God wants us to do, but then sometimes we resist it or we find it incredible that we could ever possibly do it, or we would rather do something else maybe; and yet, we said in the last segment, Dave, that God needs all of us to do the things he calls us to do because he has his eye on the big picture...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is a well-oiled machine; it is a well-functioning human body, as Paul's analogy in Romans 12 said; and so, in humility we do what we are called to do because that is how God's kingdom moves forward.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and we are all good at making excuses. Moses was a champ, but some of us rise to his class, I think. You know: Why me? I can't really handle this; I'm not good at that; let somebody else do it; I don't have the time; I don't have the skills or the inclination, and the list goes on and on and on; and at some point, you just need to step out in faith...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And faith, of course, is a wonderful biblical word and it is a wonderful New Testament attribute; and especially there is a great chapter in Hebrews—Hebrews Chapter 11—we sometimes call it the roll call of faith or the heroes of faith—and it is all about people who kind of stepped out and did what they needed to do, and maybe they didn't even realize that they were serving God's purposes when they did, but that is the way it worked out.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is also important in this passage, which we are going to read in just a minute from Hebrews 11, and a couple of the first few verses from Hebrews 12...we will kind of smash them together here...but it is also going to be important to see that even when you do answer God's call, it doesn't mean your life is going to be easy. It might even make it harder.

DAVE BAST

From Hebrews 11, beginning at verse 8: By faith Abraham (and listen to how many times the word faith occurs in this) by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place he was to receive as an inheritance. And he set out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰for he looked forward to the city that has foundations whose architect and builder is God. ¹³All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the land they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return; ¹⁶but as it is, they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

^{12:1}Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely; and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. ²Looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

So, there that famous image of the great cloud of witnesses from whom we draw inspiration in the running of *our* race. We all have a race set before us, the author to the Hebrews says. These people did too, and they ran it, and they ran it well; and it wasn't easy. It made them feel like they were aliens on the earth; but, they were faithful...by faith, by faith, by faith they did what God called them to do, even though, yes, it often did make their lives harder, even as Jesus had to endure the cross, the worst thing ever; but that was part of what was involved in being faithful to their calling.

DAVE BAST

As we pointed out in the very first program, the fundamental call of God to each of us is the call to set out and follow Jesus, and that is what it means to become a pilgrim in terms of Hebrews Chapter 11. You are on a journey; you are following the pioneer—the one who perfected our faith—who finished it, and who also blazed the trail, kind of like Daniel Boone. through the wilderness; he showed us the way to go and we walk after him, and not settling for a life that is totally earthbound, but seeking a better city, that is the city of God, the life of the world to come; so, it is a journey.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and it reminds me there is a line I think in Shakespeare somewhere referring to the undiscovered country, by which Shakespeare was referring to the future, and these people were future-oriented, but they didn't live to see even the fulfillment of what they did, which is interesting, because in all of our lives, too, most of us, no matter what we do in the Church or in our job, most of us are not going to live to see the full fruit of what our faithfulness did. We are just never going to see it. We are never going to know whose life we touched. Once in a great while, you know, you run into somebody who says: Do you remember what you

said to me 15 years ago? No. Well, you said this and this, and it turned things around for me. Are you kidding? Wow! Once in a great while we see that, but we will never see the full impact that we have had, and this is fine, but the point is, God works through our faithfulness, as he worked through these peoples' faithfulness and their good deeds to, you know, achieve that better country...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The city whose foundations are laid by God himself, which is God's kingdom.

DAVE BAST

And so, I guess we could reemphasize the point that if we are going to follow our callings, if we are going to obey them, if we are going to hear, discern, believe, and then do...actually do what God is calling us to do, we are doing that in service of the future, maybe future generations that we don't even know about; and we won't, as you say, see the fulfillment, just like these pilgrims in Hebrews. It makes me think of a wonderful story that my friend and mentor, Max De Pree told in one of his books, about this great hall in Oxford—one of the universities—it had massive oak timbers holding up the roof, and the day came when those timbers had rotted finally and had to be replaced; and somebody said: Where are we going to find big enough trees to replace these timbers? And they said: Well, in the great wood; which had been planted three centuries earlier with oak trees just against the day, you know, when those beams would need to be replaced; so, that is looking ahead and serving the future.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and you know, again, most of us in the exercise of our call, it is just going to be the ordinary things you do every day, you know...you are a school teacher, you are going to teach math to some bored 9th graders; you are going to stay cheerful while you ring up somebody's groceries in the grocery store. Whatever it is, that when we do it faithfully and when we do it well, when we believe God's call, God will use us; great things will happen; and as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, the one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it!

DAVE BAST

Yes, he will; and he will do it through us. Amen to that.

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeper into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Dave Bast with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we wrap up our series: "When God Calls," by reflecting on scriptures that guide our response to his call. Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to let us know what scripture passages or topics you would like to hear discussed on *Groundwork*.

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