



## My Initial Calling

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My Call to Ministry

My Wife's Call to Ministry

Our Call to Japan



## Introduce Yourself

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**Peer Discussion:** In 90 seconds, how would you describe your initial sense of being called to do something with your life?



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## My Lived Calling Experience

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My Call to Ministry

My Wife's Call to Ministry

Our Call to Japan

Our Call to Parenthood

My Call to Bi-Vocational Ministry

Our Call Back to the US

My Call to Higher Education

The Call to Research

Our Call to Care for Parents



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## What are callings?

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Is it best to discuss “a calling” or “callings?”

Are callings a blueprint for life or a process of discovery?

How does your answer to the above impact the way you discuss callings with missionaries?



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## AGENDA

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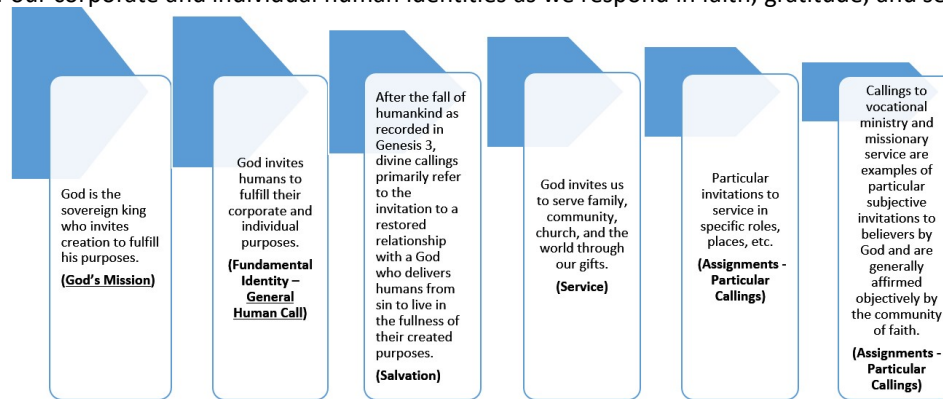
- ❖ A Brief Theology of Callings
- ❖ Motivation and Callings
- ❖ Work as Calling Theory
- ❖ Missionaries and Lived Callings



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## A Brief Theology of Callings (Lemke 2020)

**Divine calling** is the ongoing invitation by God to participate in his purposes and live in the fullness of our corporate and individual human identities as we respond in faith, gratitude, and service.



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## Theology of Callings Take-away

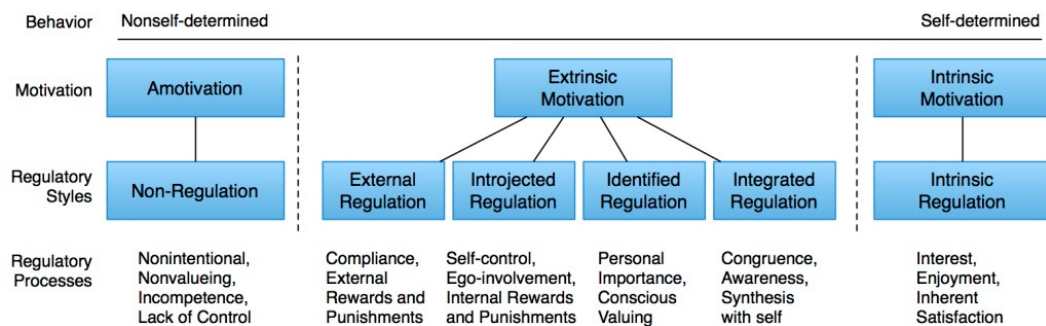
**Peer Discuss:** What is one thing that struck you about this brief theology of callings? How might it impact the way you discuss callings with missionaries?



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## Self-Determination Theory of Motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005)

**BIG IDEA:** Humans are motivated when their work environment includes:  
(1) competency, (2) relatedness, and (3) purpose/calling.



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## Missionaries and Motivation

Do missionaries struggle with motivation?

Do missionaries struggle with their purpose and callings?

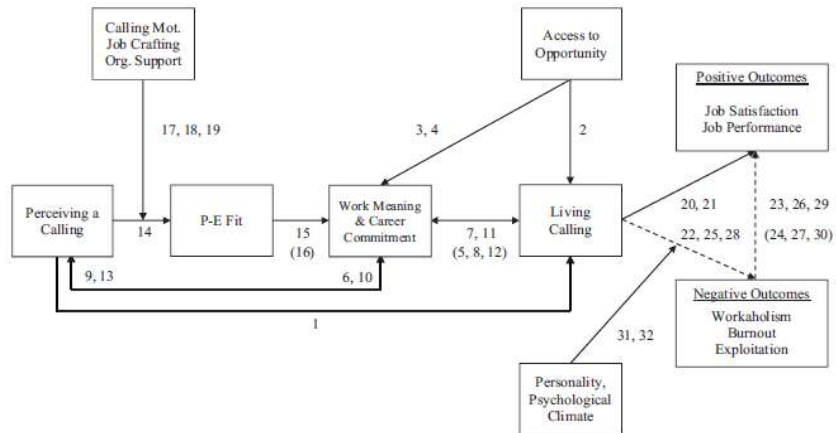


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## Work as Calling Theory (Duffy et al., 2018)

**Big Idea:** Callings are not primarily an initial experience, but a lived and ongoing experience.

**Note:** Lived callings can lead to positive and negative outcomes. Spiritual formation matters.



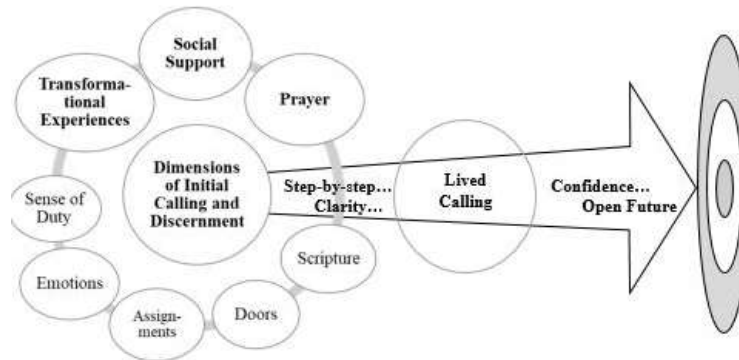
## Missionary Motivations and Callings

**Peer Discuss:** What do you think about the following recommendations?

1. Interests, gifts, strengths, and motivations should generally align in order for people to for people to have a sense that they are able to live out their callings. Explore this alignment with missionaries.
2. Calling is not enough. Competence and relational support are also essential to sustain motivation and a sense of lived callings. Make sure that your people are trained to live out their callings!



## Calling as a Dynamic Lived Experience (Lemke 2020)



## Missionaries and Lived Callings

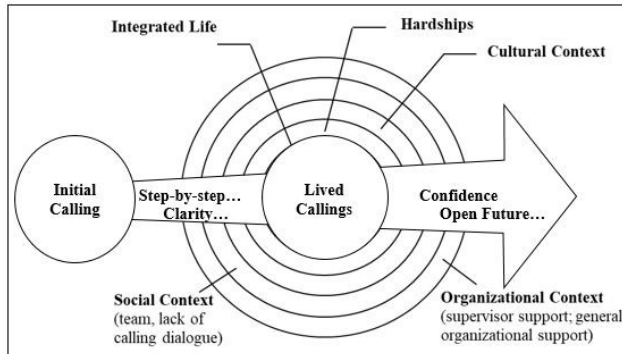
**Peer Discuss:** What do you think about the following recommendations?

1. During initial interviews, don't just ask about one's initial sense of calling. Ask them how they are living it out now.
2. Don't just ask about calling in the initial interview. Continue to ask about perceived callings and barriers/opportunities for living them out.
3. Develop training for personal and corporate discernment.



## The Context of Lived Callings (Lemke 2020)

**Calling(s) is a process of listening and responding. It involves growth in clarity and confidence, and openness to future change.**



**Integrated Life:** spiritual formation, learning attitude, and self-awareness

**Hardships:** life context, spiritual warfare

**Social:** teamwork, open dialog

**Cultural:** cultural gifting; listening to context

**Organizational:** general organizational support and supervisor support

## The Context of Lived Callings (Lemke 2020)

**Category 4 (Social Context):** The ongoing discernment of calling and living it out requires the social support of one's spouse, friends and family, fellow expatriates, and team members and out to be explicitly discussed in both social and organizational contexts

- **Emergent Concept A (Team):** Effective teams provide an important context for social support, discernment, accountability, and effectiveness (34 Sources, 108 Ref.).
- **Focus Concept B (Lack of Dialogue):** Although dialogue about the process of living out one's calling is not typical it is a recommended topic for integration into organizational practices and relationships (27 Sources, 39 Ref.).
- **Additional Concepts**
  - Relationships with other expatriates support lived callings (23 Sources).
  - Spouses support calling discernment (22 Sources)
  - Family, friends, and supporters provide important network capital (20 Sources).



## The Context of Lived Callings (Lemke 2020)

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**Category 5 (Organizational Context):** Direct supervisor support and general organizational support that is accompanied by clear organizational calling and minimal organizational frameworks empowers missionaries to live out their callings.

- **Emergent Concept A (Supervisor Support):** Direct supervisors play an important role in encouraging, guiding, and resourcing missionaries to effectively live out their callings (27 Sources, 66 Ref.).
- **Focus Concept B (General Organizational Support):** General organizational support provided through the financial, networking, member care, and training functions of the organization help missionaries live out their callings (31 Sources, 48 Ref.).
- **Additional Concepts**
  - Some suggested that organizational burdens and lack of training are barriers to living out one's calling (20 Sources).
  - Notice that the local church is somewhat absent in terms of providing social and organizational support for these last two contextual categories.

## Supporting Lived Callings

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**Peer Discuss:** Review the handout with a list of tips for churches and organizations.

- ✓ What tips strike you as particularly relevant given this presentation?
- ✓ Identify three tips that you want to explore with your local church or organization.



## References and Recommended Resources

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- Cahalan K. A. (2017). *Calling all years good: Christian vocation throughout life's seasons* (Eds. Cahalan, K. A. & Miller-McLemore, B. J.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Denzel, B. & Kinnaman, D. (2018). *Christians at work: Examining the intersection of calling & career*. Ventura, CA: Barna.
- Duffy, R. D., Dik, B. J., Douglas, R. P., England, J. W., & Velez, B. L. (2018). Work as a calling: A theoretical model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 65*(4), 423-439.
- Hahnenberg, E. P. (2010). *Awakening vocation: A theology of Christian call*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Hay, R., Lim, V., Blocher, D., Ketelaar, J., & Hay, S. (2007). *Worth keeping: Global perspectives on best practice in missionary retention*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey.

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## References and Recommended Resources

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- Lemke, D. L. (2021). Perceptions of career agency and career calling in mid-career: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Career Assessment, 29*(2), 239-262.
- Lemke, D. L. (2020). Vocation and lifelong spiritual formation: A Christian integrative perspective on calling in mid-career. *Christian Education Journal, 17*(2), pp. 301-324.
- Schuurman, D. J. (2004). *Vocation: Discerning our callings in life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Smith, G. T. (1997). *Listening to God in times of choice: The art of discerning God's will*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Volf, M. (1991). *Work in the Spirit: Toward a theology of work*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

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## APPENDIX A: Research Study Details (Lemke 2020)

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### Importance of the Study

- Studies of missionary attrition focus on initial callings, but do not focus on lived callings (Hay et al., 2007).
- There are limited studies of calling in mid-career (Kim et al., 2018). I looked at 30-60 year old missionaries with at least 4 years of field service.
- A qualitative approach allowed me to focus on the lived experiences of those who were thriving in their callings.

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## APPENDIX A: Research Study Details (Lemke 2020)

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**Research Question:** What are the perceptions of agency, career calling, and divine calling among U.S. mid-career evangelical Protestant foreign missionaries?

**Purpose:** To describe perceptions of agency, career calling, and divine calling to understand factors that contribute to a sense of being able to live out one's calling.

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## APPENDIX A: Research Study Details (Lemke 2020)

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### Semi-structured Interviews (n = 35) averaging 71 minutes.

**Sample:** Identified four evangelical Protestant mission organizations with at least 100 fully personnel with established works in four global regions (2 large and 2 medium-sized; 2 denominational and 2 non-denominational).

### Initial filtering survey was used to build a diverse interview group (n = 35) including:

- 18 male and 17 female
- 28 married and 7 single
- Mean age of 44.9 years dispersed amongst age groups.
- Mean field tenure of 11.3 years
- Mean Team Size of 8.7 people
- Mean Team health scores of 7.6/10
- Mean Living a Calling Scale score of 6.27/7.
- Service in 25 different nations outside of the U.S.

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## APPENDIX A: Research Study Details (Lemke 2020)

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### Grounded Theory Analysis using NVivo

**Three-phase Analysis:** Open Coding (103 codes), Axial Coding (14 categories; 42 base concepts), and Selective Coding (2 Themes, 9 categories, 18 base concepts with emergent/focus designations).

**Saturation:** Conceptual saturation was reached at 23 interviews. Analytical saturation was established at 75% or 26 sources.

**Research Credibility:** Member Checking

**Researcher Reflexivity and Methodological Dependability:** Researcher Journal

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# Discussing Lived Callings with Missionaries

Dale L. Lemke, Ph.D.

## **Tips for Talking about Lived Callings with Missionaries**

Dale L. Lemke, Ph.D.

### **Theme 1: Calling is a Dynamic Lived Experience**

**Big Idea:** The Christian community needs a clarified definition of calling that moves away from a backward looking blueprint model and embraces a spiritual formation model that is more process and future oriented.

**TIPS:**

1. During initial interviews, don't just ask about one's initial sense of calling. Ask them how they are living it out now.
2. Don't just ask about calling in the initial interview. Continue to ask about perceived callings and barriers/opportunities for living them out.
3. Develop training for personal and corporate discernment.

**Big Idea:** Work as Calling Theory (Duffy et al., 2018) provides a helpful theoretical model for educators and candidate developers (HR staff) to emphasize: (a) living out perceived callings, (b) understanding interests and gifts as they relate to person-environment fit, (c) being aware of barriers in access to opportunity, (d) being sensitive to potential negative outcomes (burn-out) when negative personality traits emphasize lived callings in an unbalanced way.

**TIPS:**

1. Interests, gifts, strengths, and motivations should generally align in order for people to for people to have a sense that they are able to live out their callings. Explore this alignment!
2. Calling is not enough. Competence and relational support are also essential to sustain motivation and a sense of lived callings. Make sure that your people are trained to live out their callings!

### **Theme 2: Contextual Factors of Lived Callings**

**Big Idea:** Teams provide an important context for personal and communal discernment.

**TIPS:**

1. Invest in teams by equipping them with tools for discernment of callings.
2. Encourage teams to engage in listening prayer.

**Big Idea:** Missionaries want to discuss the way that God is leading them, but we are not engaging in these discussions.

**TIPS:**

1. Supervisors and regional directors are advised to regularly ask questions like, "How is God calling you to live out your callings?" or "What challenges or opportunities to your calling are you facing?"

2. Annual reviews or planning processes may want to include similar questions related to callings.
3. Home assignment seminars and debriefings may want to include similar questions related to callings.

**Big Idea:** Missionaries in this study did not identify the local church as providing positive support to one's lived callings. While missionaries are asked to describe their initial calling to become a missionary, they are not generally engaged in meaningful dialogue with churches about lived callings.

**TIPS:**

1. Local churches are encouraged to ask missionaries questions about how God is leading them in their ministries.
2. Local churches are encouraged to ask questions related to the organizational and social support that they are receiving on the field as it relates to discerning and living out their callings.

**Big Idea:** Missionaries and pastors should be encouraged to identify peer mentors outside of their organizations to find social support and discuss lived callings.

**TIPS:**

1. Missionaries sometimes feel guilty about cultivating these relationships with expatriates or members of other organizations, but developing these relationships should be affirmed.

**Big Idea:** Direct supervisors play a critical role in supporting the lived callings of missionaries.

**TIPS:**

1. As previously noted, supervisors are encouraged to engage in on-going discussion of callings.
2. Reported support is not from higher levels in the organization (regional directors, etc.). This doesn't mean that they should not ask about callings, but it does mean that they should intentionally push the conversation down to direct supervisors.

## A Theology of Divine Callings (Vocation)

**Calling:** A perspective on life and work that emphasizes the ongoing invitation by God to participate in his purposes and is motivated by a desire to serve God and others.

