

Exploring the Celestial Transformation: Calling and Provision of a Heuristic Study

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of God's divine calling and His provision for Ministers within the Christian faith using a heuristic inquiry framework. It argues that God calls Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to service and provides accordingly for the sustenance of that call. Firstly, He calls them into knowing and obeying Him. That ultimately leads to service. What does spiritual calling entail? What are the perceptions of God's call to his disciples? How does God call disciples into Ministry? These are the three questions the study attempted to contribute answers to. Data was collected from seven co – researchers who were between 29 and 54 years of age. Semi – structured interviews were used to collect the data. The data was analyzed and synthesized using Moustakas's (1990) approach, and four themes emerged. The results revealed that there are different approaches used by God to call His people into Ministry. Age and gender are not the major variables considered in the calling. The study concluded that a relationship with God is an important factor in the call of the Lord.

Introduction

There is increasing interest amongst scholars to research the call of the Lord motif (see, for example, Fleischer 2017; Nus 2003; Muhlenberg 2017; Baker 2008; Wooldridge 2008). The general observation amongst theists is that God exists and He still calls His people into different Ministries. Theologians seek to present propositional evidence for theism and firmly believe that the calling of God naturally attracts His provision (Fuqua 2022). He uses different ways to call people into various offices. Some are called to be Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Pastors, and others Evangelists (Ephesians 3:11). These offices rank the same in His eyes. Consequently, scripture suggests that there is no superior office and no superior methodology of calling (1 Corinthians 12:8 – 13, Galatians 3:26, 28). The Gospel of Jesus Christ is meant to exalt Him rather than motivate people. In itself, the Gospel has the potential to encourage the broken and inspire those who are on the verge of giving up. However, the Gospel is not motivational speaking; it is the Word of God, presenting grace to the lost and winning them to Christ. It is different from just motivational speaking in the sense that it carries power and brings life (Jakes 2018). Thus, the called Ministers not only present their thinking but also deliver the Word of God, rather than merely reciting motivational words.

Different scholars have different viewpoints on how a calling is defined. According to Baker (2008), a Call denotes a divine directive presented to humanity to live harmoniously with God, His Kingdom, and nature in general. This definition suggests that there should be a peaceful existence between God, man, and the environment. It is a general definition in light of the purpose of existence. Baker's further exploration of the term, while citing Calvin, seems to advocate that there is an inner and outer call in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The outer call refers to the ordering of the Ministry of the Church, while the inner call, or secret call, comes directly to the heart from God. The church is

depicted as the body of Christ, and thus every human being is invited to join the Ministry of the church (Isaiah 55:1). The Lord Jesus liked to use riddles in his calling of people. In other words, his invitations were not direct. In the annals of Isaiah 55:1, for instance, He appeared to be inviting the thirsty to come and drink from special water provided by Him. This could not be literal water, and it is safe to surmise that this was an invitation to or a calling of people to come to Him. Other scholars referred to such a universal call as an effectual call (Wooldridge 2008; Stephens 1999). Wooldridge agreed with Baker and Stephens regarding the compelling call. He declared a calling as an election and God's providential invitation to all through the preaching of the Word of God. It is, in essence, a call to all to have a relationship with Jesus Christ (Wooldridge 2008). Another interesting definition explains a calling as a deep attraction to a particular vocation, type of work, and course of action or life path. This specific definition tackles both the business world and the spiritual aspect. This researcher theorizes that the spiritual angle of calling is an integrative experience that affects many aspects of an individual's life (Glenn – Burns 2004).

This paper intends to focus on the calling exerted by God to Ministers of the Gospel and also to contribute to the often – neglected field of practical Christian spiritual transformation by arguing that Christians should respond to God's calling and provision for spiritual transformation. Although it employs a constructivist epistemology and interpretivism perspective, experiential outcomes are heavily emphasized. He calls them to preach the Gospel and govern His Church. This is the ecclesiastical call. This paper argues that Ministers of the gospel should be called by God and not self – appoint. Self – appointment of ministers has led to an increase in false prophets who extort believers 'hard – earned money. Such self – appointed Ministers disregard church ethics (Mujaji 2021). Therefore, a need to regulate churches and validate pastoral callings has arisen. God calls certain people to spiritual transformation so that they can be leaders of His sheep (Wooldridge 2008). Celestial transformation in the context of this research means renewal through Christ Jesus. Transformation is a life that goes on from accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior, to living with Him and expressing Him. It is, in essence, the Kingdom life expressed in numerous passages in the Bible (Matthew 5 – 7, Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 4:20). A life of living for Jesus Christ. After all, Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) in which Christians should live, in which they should live the kingdom life. Celestial transformation involves repentance and acceptance of a new life in Christ. The called are first called unto Christ, and then God gives them an office to hold. In light of this, Christians have been transformed from children of darkness into children of God who are the light. As God is clearly revealed to Christians, He reflects, realigns, and rejoins in ways that reveal His glory (Dos 2015).

The call, as stated by Badal, is full of mystery and is solely given by God. The splendor in the calling is that God calls people out of darkness into his immaculate light, and He calls them saints (Romans 1:7). He calls people to know and serve Him (Badal 2016). Lawson highlighted some of the signs of calling. Firstly, he emphasized the importance of an inner compulsion, which is an attentiveness of some heaviness being brought upon one's spirit, that he is directed into preaching Ministry. Secondly, he highlighted the importance of an outside influence, which essentially involves the confirmation and counsel of other believers regarding the calling. This could be another pastor, a Prophet, or an elder in the Church. Thirdly, Lawson revealed that there must be a loving concern for others, as called by the one. True calling constitutes a concern for the well – being of others. Fourthly, the person realizes that he is unworthy of such a holy task and is often fearful to preach because of the knowledge of his own flaws. Lastly, the

person who is called must be observed and tested before he can be commissioned, which is the corporate confirmation (Lawson 2021). Above everything else, the one who is called must be someone who loves God, for him to render service to God and His people. Loving God leads to submission of faithful and genuine service to God's people (Jones 2014). The Bible is viewed as the foundation from which pastors should draw their values and morals. Scripture records some of the methodologies God uses to call his people. These include a call through visions, dreams, voice, and the Word, as well as sending angels. The Lord can also send Prophets to deliver the message. Sometimes it can be a combination of more than one method, as in the case of Samuel. His calling was through a voice while he was asleep. It can be construed that when God uses a voice, it means He Himself is present in that milieu as it can be seen in 1 Samuel 3:10. Prominent historians who were called through hearing God's voice or the word include Abraham, Jonah and Ezekiel (Genesis 12:1 – 2, Jonah 1:1 – 3, Ezekiel 2:1). Isaiah's call was through seeing a vision and through that vision he had the Lord speak to him (Isaiah 6:1 – 9). The Bible strongly supports the fact that God speaks or has a voice. From the very beginning, the Bible begins with the words 'and God said' (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11). However, proponents of naturalism deny God's capability to speak. Naturalism opposes any supernatural significance and suggests that he is not allowed to have a voice.

The argument portrays Him as too transcendent to reduce Himself to such a level (Adam 2004). The problem with the naturalistic theory is that not hearing from God speaking is analogous to many human interactions that suffer from a lack of clear communication. One may communicate, and the other party may not hear. Not hearing does not nullify the communication. To conclude that speaking is impossible because an individual is deaf constitutes shallow thinking and ultimately ignorance. The most critical aspect in hearing and discerning God's voice is clarity and developed spirituality. The exceptional God who created all things will forever speak, and many are yet to hear His exquisite voice (Nus 2003). The "still small voice of God" is a popular and accessible example for apologists to use to defend the fact that God speaks. Apologists argue that this still voice is God's way of speaking (Wooldridge 2008). The Bible also portrays God as a speaking one, and he speaks through dreams, signs, mundane events, and animals (see Genesis 9:13; Joel 2:28; Numbers 22:28). God also speaks through the audible voice of man. Through preaching His Word, God uses the loud voice of man to communicate, which is another preferred method of intimacy. This method seems familiar, unlike an inner dialogue. Sometimes it may be difficult to realize it is God speaking through the man at first (Hourton 1990). An essential way of communicating with God is through prayer, which also identifies the pastor as being called by God. Sometimes communicating with God through prayer may seem like groping in the dark, but it is, however, a very essential element and a foundational discipline with less controversy. The various forms of prayer lead to contention over the acceptance of the calling and the goodness of the specific form of worship used. The Christian community mostly accepts prayer in its basic form, which is speaking to God. Prayer and other disciplines, used perfectly, activate God's spirit. It is based on the work of Christ and is directed to the Father (Fee 1994).

The Damascus call of Paul is one aspect that justifies the diverse nurture of God. He can call and use anyone to glorify His kingdom through a special calling given to specific individuals, and make them diakonos. Paul's encounter with the Lord in Damascus changed his entire life. It is one event that was peculiar and dramatic. On his way to cause harm to the people of God, Paul was confronted by Christ and challenged about his war against God instead of submission to Him (Acts 9:3 – 6). Paul was convinced through that encounter that indeed Jesus Christ was the Lord of lords. He was left blind

for a period until God sent one of his servants to help him open his eyes. He received a total spiritual transformation and instantly started working for God. Many scholars refer to what happened to Paul as a call and not a conversion. This kind of thinking is what has led to salvation and transformation becoming anthropocentric rather than theocentric. This anthropocentricity has caused a profound effect on the discipleship and ministry of the church (Baker 2008). This research views the Damascus call of Paul as both a call and a transformed life for Paul. While Paul's calling was peculiar, God's call does not necessitate a duplication of the Damascus experience. Most callings of God happen gradually and subtly compared to the Damascus call. They tend to come as urgings and nudging rather than dramatic sound and light (Michael 2000).

Martin Luther popularized the understanding of work as a call or vocation. His theory brought change in medieval society on how they saw works outside the church as something that could also bring glory to the Lord. This was the beginning of revising the medieval concept that saw God as the highest form of work. Works like farming, baking, or any other vocation were seen as equal to the life of Godly contemplation (Veith 2001). Luther's theory posits that God calls his people into different professions so that He can spread His gifts to society. Such gifts are spread through ordinary people who perform work in the various societies (Wingren 2004). So Luther did not limit calling to church parameters but included anything that serves others. Luther's disposition appears to be more effective than ecclesiastical and seems to contradict scripture as recorded in Ephesians 4:11–12. Scholars like Volf also critiqued Luther's theory. Volf saw Luther's perspective on calling as too shallow and undeserving to be applied in the modern context. Volf suggests that work is better based on a person's spiritual gifts instead of calling. He supported this thinking with the idea that spiritual gifts are theologically linked to calling into salvation. His view was that if a person's calling is equated to a person's profession, then a person who changes a job would be labeled as unfaithful to God's Calling (Volf 2017). While Volf's disposition had some sense in it, his position tended to be unsound because there are many dehumanizing jobs that led to workers quitting.

The calling of the Lord attracts God's provision as earlier stated (see Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 3:20; Romans 8:31; Psalm 65:9; Job 38:41). In this study, provision is viewed as the means of grace that God gives for sustenance in Ministry. Matthevm postulates that grace is part of God's ultimate provision. Provision is the act of or process of providing, and the Hebrew word for a God who provides is Jehovah Jireh. This means "The Lord will provide" (New Day of Simplicity 2024). When He calls His people into Ministry, He always promises to be with them (Isaiah 41:10, Philippians 4:6–7). God provides revelation of Himself, which is one of the most significant provisions to believers. He reveals Himself by directly transferring genuine belief in certain people. He also reveals Himself as an infinite God who is faultlessly virtuous, omnipotent, and omniscient, on whom everything finite is essentially dependent. He reveals Himself because He desires communion with His people (Wahlberg 2014). God provided and spoke in the past; he says today, and he will continue to talk into eternity. Numerous people attest to hearing the voice of the Lord, and the journey continues to endure.

The Lord is calling his people into Ministry, and there appears to be a problem in understanding the whole meaning of calling. There also seem to be a lot of people who are taking office without being called in the ecclesiastical call of the Lord. Some, instead of being called by God, gain powers from other sources and then establish Churches. This could lead to the expansion of false Prophets operating in the Kingdom of God. Such occurrences may have calamitous consequences for those who do them and also

negatively affect the whole Church. There is therefore a need to uncover what calling is, understand the perceptions of Ministers about calling, and also examine the methods used by the Lord to call his people into Ministry. God's call embodies truth, love, peace, and righteousness. Understanding His Word and nature enables one to test any voice heard, comparing it to the divine attributes. Satan is the deceiver and the father of lies (John 8:44). He uses deception and tactics to deceive and manipulate believers away from God. The devil can also call people into his kingdom of deception. The spiritual battle between good and evil compels believers to have a strong sense of wisdom and discernment spirit (Quicoe 2023). The Bible promotes testing of spirits to ascertain if they are from God (1 John 4:1). If any calling is not in line with Biblical teachings, it is likely from the devil. It portrays itself as proud and refuses correction. The issue lies in discernment, prayerfulness, and full commitment to God to detect deceptive spirits.

Research Method

This heuristic study was approached from a subjectivist approach with a social constructivist and epistemological perspective. This perspective posits that all knowledge and meaningful reality depend on human practices, constructed through interactions between human beings and their world. It is developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Kennedy 2016). The conceptual framework for the study represents the relationship between celestial transformation, God's calling, and provision. The framework for celestial transformation was used to examine the participants' experiences of God's calling and provision. The elements of calling, construct, provision, and sense of balance intersect with the components of the celestial development framework, which include a strong sense of self, care, concern, and outreach to others. Sense of self was the primary angle used in this investigation since it provides a common perspective to the study. The researcher's epistemological stance and theoretical perspective led to the selection of a qualitative research design, specifically heuristic inquiry.

Participants were those who were willing to disclose their calling journey into Ministry. The research was open to participants of any Christian religious organization. The researcher approached some pastors, some of whom were known to the researcher, to ascertain if they would be interested in participating in this research. This made the sampling procedure purposive. Apart from the purposive approach, the participants were also selected through snowball sampling, in which participants were asked to recommend others they knew who might be interested in participating in the study (Ching 2015). A total of ten participants were initially selected, all between the ages of 29 and 54 years old. Out of the ten, three withdrew due to the cancellation of our interview appointment. A total of seven participants were eventually interviewed face-to-face. Moustakas (1990) supports a low number of participants in heuristic research. In theory, it is possible to conduct heuristic research with one participant. Heuristic inquiry places more emphasis on the subjective experience of the phenomenon in question (Snyder 2012). The heuristic process is autobiographic, and it also holds social and universal significance. Moustakas describes the key concepts and methods that serve as the underlying of heuristic research. He posits that the key processes are identifying with the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference (Moustakas 1990). The study employed purposive sampling, which seeks to recruit participants based on selection criteria.

Participants were notified of the study's intention, and their participation was voluntary. If at any point they felt uncomfortable continuing with the interview, they were allowed to do so. Amongst the seven participants, no one cancelled in the middle of the

interview. The researcher created a safe and friendly approach during the interviews and ensured the anonymity of the participants. Two of the participants (28.6%) were female, and five were male (71.4%). The data was analyzed using Moustakas's (1990) approach for heuristic analysis. Data analysis software was not used. To fully immerse themselves in the data for each participant, the researcher reviewed the recorded interviews and transcripts several times before beginning the data analysis, often setting the data aside and revising it later. The researcher coded and themed the data without using any qualitative data analysis software to ensure his intimacy with the data. Individual depictions were developed based on each participant's experience. The researcher used language and descriptions from the participants' transcripts to ensure that the depictions accurately reflected the lived experience. After drafting the individual depictions, the researcher revisited the original transcripts to ensure the depictions did not include or omit essential aspects of the experience.

Connecting with God and Finding Your Purpose in Life

This study explored the nexus of celestial transformation in line with calling and provision in the lives of seven members of the Christian religion. The members collaborated as co-researchers and shared their experiences of God's calling in their lives. The participants' views and perceptions of their calling into Ministry and celestial transformation were captured. Collectively, their depictions expressed how celestial transformation in their lives intersects with the experiences of those who identify as called by God. The participants consisted of two women and five men, ranging in age from 29 to 54. All participants identified as pastors in their different churches. Four participants had completed Theology training, one was still pursuing his studies, and one had no formal Theology training. Four themes emerged through the analysis of the data using heuristic inquiry. Individual contributions to each theme were captured.

Participants' beliefs regarding the importance of repentance and welcoming Christ in a believer's life were unanimous. They cited that venturing into spirituality helps identify one's purpose in life, which is key to living a fulfilling life. All participants acknowledge the importance of connecting with God through accepting Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior. Participants asserted that through their connection with God, their purpose in life is revealed, guiding them to follow God's will for their lives rather than focusing on themselves. That purpose is realized through focusing on God's work and being immersed in the Holy Spirit. Most participants suggested that when one finds their purpose in life and focuses on it, life becomes more bearable than trying to earn a living. Immersing oneself in effects that are not part of one's purpose in life leads to frustration and exhaustion.

A beneficial connection with God requires that one dies to self and focuses on the service of the Lord. According to Laffitte (2022), dying to self produces a fanciful adventure in faith and attracts numerous blessings. Connecting to God and dying to self also produces absolute satisfaction and spiritual power, which in turn yields confidence. Dying to self leads to a transformation of the heart, allowing the individual to lean on God truly. This transformation, which Wooldridge refers to as conversion, leads to salvation. Salvation, which leads to freedom from strongholds of sinful nurture and its effects of death, is a prerequisite to total transformation (Wooldridge 2008). Participants viewed their connection with God as a doorway to service and the realization of their gifts, enabling them to utilize these gifts for the edification of the Church. Connecting with God was viewed by participants as the primary mechanism that ushers one into service within His kingdom.

Furthermore, connecting with God cultivates a desire to be exclusively dependent on Him and to eliminate worry. Participants also viewed the dependence on God as faith, which brings an assurance of the God who is not seen (Hebrews 11:1 – 3). The faith motif kept coming up during the conversations with all the participants. All the participants thought faith in God was one paramount element of mysticism that has to be exercised on a perpetual basis. This view agrees with Oyakhilome, who posits that faith is essential in the daily walk with God. The primary component of faith is that it has to be constantly activated. The focus should be on believing His word rather than focusing on opposing circumstances in the spiritual journey. Faith gives the believer a reason to fully trust that something is received even before one can see it with the naked eye. Through faith, spiritual battles are first won and glorious victories are first granted in the spiritual realm before they become manifest in the physical realm (Oyakhilome, 2005). Without faith, scripture confirms that it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). The book of Matthew instructs God's people not to worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear. Moreover, it warns against worrying about tomorrow and acknowledges God as the supreme supply of the needs of His people (Matthew 6:31 – 34). Participant B alluded to the fact that his connection with God brought significant peace to his life. He said,

The greatest decision I ever made in my life was to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord. Ever since I gave my life to the Lord, I have realized blessing after blessing and constant peace in my home. My heart desires to know Him better every day, and there is no turning back. How can I even think of turning back when I know that in Him I am safe? My life before Christ was a mess, but since connecting with Him, I have experienced absolute joy.

Participants D and F also shared the same sentiments, affirming that they are safe in His arms. Connecting with God brings a sense of comfort and safety. The participants revealed that their connection with God makes them stop worrying and constantly walking in fear and doubt. It produces a peaceful aroma that should be shared with everyone. Participant E reflected on the respect his connection with God has presented in his life.

You know, there are many benefits I get through my spiritual connection with the Lord. One thing I realized is that even in my community, I'm respected by the people. I guess they sense the power of God within me. It's amazing what the Lord can do for you without you knowing. My spiritual walk has obviously attracted favour in many parts of my life.

Discernment of the Call

Participants revealed that it is crucial to hear from God. This helps in the sense that when He calls someone into Ministry, that individual can sense and be receptive. According to the participants, hearing from God gives clear directions for what Ministry the Lord is calling someone into. It also helps avoid the painful consequences of unknowingly rejecting the call. Additionally, participants shared similar theories in acknowledging that there are different approaches the Lord uses to call His people. One of the critical aspects that arose during the discussions with participants was how they perceived and experienced the call in their lives. This theme aligns well with the research question of this study. The calling was viewed by the participants as an act of God, leading His people into serving Him in a leadership role. It is God giving the called direction to shepherd the Church.

The data collected from the participants revealed different approaches the Lord used to call them into Ministry. All the participants felt it was critical to hear from the Lord regarding the call. Hearing from God could be directly from Him through hearing an audible voice, dreams, visions, and through His word. Additionally, it could be through a third party delivering the message to the one called. This could be another Pastor or a Prophet of God. Some participants highlighted that the call typically begins with a strong desire to preach or help others. Then the Lord, one way or another, eventually reveals His

intentions when the time is right. Obedience and uprightness were seen as essential in a call. The person who feels the call of God into Ministry must be blameless and must allow his steps to be ordered by God so that He may delight in his ways (Psalm 37:23). The call of the Lord is not something to be taken lightly and must not be ignorantly entered into. One must understand that the spiritual excursion is warfare and thus be prepared to allow God to lead the journey while the called try to be blameless in His sight (Davis 2013). God requires His people to be perfect in their vocation just like He is impeccable. If the people strive for perfection, the panoply of His power is manifested (Matthew 5:48, Ephesians 4:1). Similarly, God urges pastors to demand distinction out of their congregation and the people working with them in Ministry (Copeland 2019).

Three of the participants mentioned that their calling happened through receiving a dream from God. He appeared while they were asleep and gave directions on how they should lead his people. For participant B, the Lord appeared and revealed His intentions concerning his life in Ministry. He gave him a guiding verse instructing him to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant (Jeremiah 1:10). These are the exact words the Lord used when calling Jeremiah into Ministry. After sharing this dream with his pastor, his pastor believed him and instantly put him under his mentorship. Soon thereafter, there were several confirmations through other men of God. Participant B said;

It was one Wednesday night while I was asleep that I suddenly sensed the presence of a strong force in my room. Although I was sleeping, I could tell that someone or something was in my room. While still pondering what was happening, suddenly I clearly heard a voice speaking to me. After hearing the voice, I sensed this was God talking to me. The voice told me that I was called to serve God's people and that I was receiving power for the task. The Lord, through His voice, gave me a verse found in the book of Jeremiah 1:10. All I remember is that I was silent and fearful, for I had never had such a dream before. When I woke up, I was overwhelmed with shock. The dream happened like I was awake. Immediately after waking up, I took my Bible and began to read the scripture. I must say that from that day on, my life has not been the same again.

For participant E, the calling was realized when she felt a strong desire to preach and help others. She mentioned that there were no angel visitations or even a dream of God calling her. It was solely through a strong sense of calling and the confirmation by her husband and other Ministers of the Gospel. In an article he wrote as a testimony, he revealed that he experienced a call similar to participant E's. He admitted that for him, there were no miraculous occurrences when he was called into Ministry. He was just convinced in his spirit that the Lord was directing him into Ministry. As he continued to serve in various leadership and teaching positions, the Lord confirmed his calling through pastors and laypeople in the Churches he served under (Dmin 2020). Thurston (2020) calls this the progressive call, whereby a gradual series of events across the life of the person occur until it finally becomes clear to the person that Ministry is what God wants for him. By being fully involved in the things of the Lord and always praying together with her husband and other saints, Participant E began to sense an eagerness to preach. She says:

I am not sure when and how it happened. I was just too preoccupied with serving the Lord, the Church, and being a good wife to my husband. Before I knew it, I felt a strong desire to venture into Ministry. I always thought I was doing Ministry anyway. My husband sensed my calling before I did, which is why I guess he was giving me prominent positions in the Church, and the saints were not complaining. I think the ways of the Lord can never be fully understood. I have been ordained now and have received several confirmations in various ways.

The different participants' accounts make it evident that the Lord uses various methodologies to call His people into Ministry. For Participant C, his call into Ministry came when he least expected it. He was an usher helping to find space for people to sit

in the Church. His job also entailed assisting the pastor when he was praying for people. He was to hold the people in case they fell while being prayed for. He was not the only usher in the Church. This is why he was puzzled when the pastor, who is also a Prophet, called him out one Sunday and told the Church that God had instructed him to ordain this participant into the Prophetic Ministry. Jacobs (2010:86) says in her book 'The Voice of God' that many believers are beginning to experience what she calls a two – way prayer and are hearing the voice of God. Although this came as a shock to this participant, he embraced it with both arms and reluctantly went to be ordained. He said:

I always thought there were more spiritual people in the Church than I was. I was just in the growing phase of my spiritual journey when all this happened. When the Prophet called my name, I remember I was shaking as I went to the front. He immediately spoke some strong Words of ushering me into Ministry before pouring oil on my head. Afterwards, the whole congregation was instructed to stand up, stretch their hands towards me, and pray, both to assert the ordination and to thank God for appointing me. I remember when the oil touched my head, I fell on the ground and was instantly filled with the Holy Spirit. I rested there for some time before I could regain the strength to rise. When I stood up, I instantly felt that something had changed in me. It was like some heaviness had been removed from me, and I felt very light.

According to Thurston (2020), God sometimes calls people into Ministry strictly through other Christians before they ever considered it themselves. He calls this the set – apart – by – the – Church call. Thurston suggests that God empowers His people to speak on His behalf to different people. This was observable in the case of David in scripture. God said to Samuel to go and anoint David as king. This phenomenon was not revealed to David or even to his parents before, as he was still a young boy. God instead opted to reveal the appointment through the Prophet Samuel, and he poured oil on David's head (1 Samuel 16:1, 13). Erstwhile to David, God had done a similar thing with Saul (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1). For participant G, he heard a voice calling him during the day, and the voice told him he was called to lead God's people. This happened before he was a believer in Jesus Christ. By hearing the voice, he began to learn more about God and ultimately gave his life to Christ. This calling bears the same attributes as the Damascus call to Saul, who was later called Paul in Acts 9. Paul was rife in persecuting the people of God. Scripture reveals that as Paul approached Damascus, light shone around him from heaven. He fell to the ground and heard a voice telling him to stop persecuting God's people. That encounter marked the beginning of his spiritual journey (Acts 9:3 – 6).

God's Sustenance

All participants suggested that many benefits come with the call of the Lord, and the Lord provides for the sustenance of His work. Most participants indicated that the challenges outweigh the benefits of the call. The Lord provides financially for the nourishment of His work and also provides the workers to assist the pastor in his duties. Participants asserted that the most excellent provision from God was giving out His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross, so there could be the washing away of sins. The removal of sins is one of the merciful acts of His love. Matthevm acknowledges that mercy is what sinners need and is God's abundant provision. Had god dealt with humanity according to their sins, no one would be worthy of the call of the Lord, and consequently no one would be worthy to go to heaven (Matthevm 2015).

Additionally, participants acknowledged God for giving them life. It is the greatest gift given to humanity free of charge. Scripture reads: 'The thief comes only to steal, and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10 NIV).

Most participants attributed their Ministry successes and personal wealth to God. If it were not for the Lord, some participants thought they would not have a home or be married with children. Participant D says;

The Lord has really been merciful to me, my family, and the Church. I am a married man with two children, and the Church is stable and receptive to my Ministry. This is all in the hands of the Lord. We can cover all the Church expenses, have all the musical instruments we need, and I can't complain. The Lord even blessed me with a personal business which I ran on the side, and it's doing well. So the Lord has always been gracious. Above everything else, He provided His Word for me, which I can always refer to if I'm in problems.

Scripture reveals that the Lord shall supply our needs according to his riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). God in this verse promises provision to His people. It means when you are joint heirs with the Father, all your needs shall be met, both spiritual and earthly needs. The Lord knows that life requires more than spiritual nourishment and blessings. Therefore, it affirms that He takes an extra mile to provide those earthly necessities needed to sustain His people in the physical. He is a wealthy God who shares His wealth with the Church, which is His body. The Church should not be seen as a place for the poor but rather a place of peace and unlimited provision. Even in hard times, the Lord never stops His provision. The book of Romans says that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord (Romans 8:28). This suggests that all our needs shall be met as we continue to reverence Him. This means all the areas of the saints' lives shall blossom. The requirement, however, is to love the Lord unconditionally and lean not on your own understanding.

Overcoming Challenges

All participants perceived the call to be full of challenges, but the benefits thereof offset such challenges. The issue of dealing with disputes amongst members of the Church was one challenge outlined by most of the participants. Congregants do not always see eye to eye, and that can sometimes lead to conflict. Such conflict may include some congregants not speaking to each other. It becomes the role of the pastor and the other elders of the Church to resolve such disputes. Some participants posit that pastors are unfairly charged and always blamed for trying to render good deeds for the Church and communities. Participant E voiced out her challenges as a female Minister and said:

"It's so hard sometimes to be a woman pastor. Some people in our communities still view women as followers and not as leaders. It is tough to earn respect, particularly amongst males in the Church. But I have also observed that females also undermine themselves and each other. They don't feel worthy to be in leadership positions. It becomes hard for me when I have to speak as a pastor in community meetings, especially in funerals and other community-based functions led by predominantly men. The patriarchal society we live in is hard to crack. But generally, at the Church, people are very receptive and respect me as their pastor. I strongly believe that God called me and thus I do His work without fear, knowing that He is with me always."

The annals of the book of John expose that the world is bound to hate someone who does not belong to it. The world accepts the ones who belong to it. Once a believer emulates a Christ-centered life, it is bound to attract some hate or opposition. Christ is the one who chose believers out of the world, which is why the world hates them as it hated Jesus Christ too (John 15:18–21). Similarly, the Celebration Church (2022) also viewed believers in Christ as the most persecuted people in the whole world, with some nations compelling them not to publicize their belief in Him. Christianity, as highlighted by the celebration Church, is not for the weak, and it requires confidence in Christ and boldness to face whatever challenge may come on the way. Opposition makes the believers more like Christ (Celebration Church, 2022). The ruler of the world is the devil,

and he brings all this hate to the believers who follow Christ. However, the believers are not helpless victims at the mercy of the devil, but victors. They are not called to rise in opposition to the evil one, but rather to resist him. As they resist the evil one, he flees from them, granting them absolute liberation and victory (Sabbath Afternoon, 2012).

The Christian journey should be entered into in total reliance on God as the source of sustenance. Not contingent on one's own religious activities and ethical efforts to live a life pleasing to Him (McQuilkin, 2007:13). When attention is directed to God, He begins to reveal great and hidden things to His people (Jeremiah 33:3). He shows Himself strong on behalf of His people. Reflecting on His Word, particularly the work of the cross, would be very helpful in dealing with challenges. The cross provides the opportunity to comprehend what God can do beyond the usual daily routine of life (Evans, 2017). Through the cross, God deals with any difficult situation just like He invaded Jesus' tomb and rose Him from the dead. Similarly, He can invade difficult situations and bring peace to His people.

Conclusion

This study contributed to the learning literature by examining the celestial transformation in the lives of seven participants. The participants contributed a significant amount of energy and reflection in sharing their experiences. The participant's individual depictions gave the researcher essential insights into the phenomenon of calling and provision for those who feel called into Ministry. Using the heuristic method of inquiry, the researcher found a vantage point that allowed for the examination of his experience and that of the participants. The results revealed that Ministers of all ages are God's ambassadors, and He gives them power and equips them for the work. There was a strong correlation between the four themes and calling. Spiritual transformation appears to be a strong influencer on the discernment and acceptance of the calling. While there is no conclusive method of calling, God sustains his ministers in Ministry and provides for the sustenance of the call. Scripture puts clear structures and symbols of calling. The visionary, angelic, dream, prophetic, and confirmation motifs seem to be synonymous and represent different ways of calling. Transformation by the renewal of the mind greatly enhances reception and discernment of the calling. The results revealed that Discernment helps to differentiate between the call of the Lord and the call of the devil. All themes are highly linked to the calling of the Lord. Connecting with God through celestial transformation seemed to significantly influence the process of hearing from God. The calling of the Lord is key to constructive ministry, and confirmation was viewed as a repellant of self – appointment in Ministry, which has corroded the church. The calling of the Lord is also misunderstood and misinterpreted by those who use history to drive their interpretation, particularly when they approach the Bible with different hermeneutical constructs. Provision is imminent when the call is answered, and God does not abandon His Ministers. He desires an experiential transformation for His disciples and expects a deep devotion and response. A deeper study with different and more detailed argumentation and protection is recommended.

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