

God's Calling for All Christians

By Deron Biles

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Genesis 1–2. Note the verbs used to describe God's creative activity. Four Hebrew verbs are used to describe God's activity, which are translated as **created**, **made**, **formed**, and **fashioned**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What do these verbs suggest about God's creative activity?

Assignment Two

Use an electronic Bible program or log onto a free site online, such as www.biblegateway.com. Search for the phrases "do not fear," "do not be afraid," and "fear not." See how each one is used throughout Scripture. The ways these phrases are used in Hebrew in the Old Testament or Greek in the New Testament are virtually identical in every occurrence. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What do you notice about the occasions for which God instructs us not to be afraid?

Assignment Three

Read 2 Kings 24. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What were the reasons the people of Judah were taken captive to Babylon?

Scripture to Memorize

But now thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine." Isaiah 43:1

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that all Christians are called by God to a relationship with Him, faith in Him and service for Him.

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He and his wife Jaye have been married twenty-eight years and have four sons: Joshua, Timothy, Jonathan, and David. They also have three daughters-in-law and one granddaughter. Deron served as a pastor for fifteen years and has also served as interim or transitional pastor in nine churches.

Deron is the author of *After God's Heart: Becoming the Man God is Seeking* along with its companion volume, *After God's Heart: Becoming the Man God Is Seeking, a Forty-Day Bible Study*. He is the coauthor of *Seminary Education by Extension: Process, Principles, and Practices*. In addition, he has written or cowritten manuals on pastor search committees, making resumes, interim ministry, and associational ministry. Deron and his wife currently reside in North Richland Hills, Texas.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

When you hear someone say, “God called me to do this,” what does that mean? Have you ever wondered how they know that? Did God speak to them, did He write it down, or was it some weird experience they had?

Maybe you have wondered if the people whom God “called” have some super-spiritual and elite status as Christians. God’s Word gives us the answer, and it might surprise you. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the truth is God has called you!

Read Isaiah 43:1–13 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. Created . . . formed. God is our Creator. Our lives are not the result of an accident, a big bang or chance. We were given life by God. The magnitude of our universe and the intricacies or complex designs of our lives bear witness to His handiwork. Paul tells us in Romans 1:20 that creation reveals its Creator so clearly that humankind is without excuse if we choose not to believe in Him.

But He didn’t just create us; He formed us. This is a more intimate relationship. This word describes an intentional process of sculpting us into the image He designed. Think about a potter forming clay into the precise image he desires. See Jeremiah 18–19. Think about that. God made you just as you are! You aren’t an accident. God doesn’t make mistakes. Maybe God’s forming process in your life is not yet complete. You can trust your Creator to form you into whom He wants you to be. Paul said it this way in Ephesians 2:10, “We are His workmanship.”

The words used here are the same words the Bible used in the account of creation. God is telling His people that what He did in the first creation, He does again as He creates them.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the words the Bible used to describe God’s creative activity.

Verse 1. redeemed. Next God reminded us through Isaiah that He redeemed us. Redemption is not something we could accomplish on our own. Our sin demanded God’s judgment, but God has provided for us what we could not attain for ourselves. The word carries the idea of a kinsman-redeemer—a close relative who redeems family, land or people who have fallen into debt. See Leviticus 25:25–55. The kinsman-redeemer preserves or restores the family honor and protects the family’s inheritance. It is similar to the Old Testament concept of a Levirate marriage, in which a close relative (usually a brother-in-law) marries a widow who has no children to rear offspring in the name of the deceased to preserve the family’s inheritance. We see both of these principles combine in the story of Boaz and Ruth.

In this verse, God declares He is our Redeemer. This passage is a foreshadowing of the ultimate redemption of God for us in Christ.

called. Next, God reminded His people that He called them. This word conveys the idea of a

commissioning. God has called us to a special purpose. The personal nature of this calling is expressed in the fact that God has called us **by name** (compare Isaiah 40:26). You are not just an anonymous figure like a random byte in a multiple terabyte computer. God calls you personally to Himself.

On the basis of our calling, we are His. We belong to Him. That's why God began this passage with the instruction to fear not. We don't have to fear because we belong to Him. In verse 1, God instructs us not to fear because He has redeemed us. In verse 5, He tells us not to fear because He is with us. Those are just some of the advantages of being His.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the biblical admonitions *not* to fear. They also can report on what we learn from God's instructions on avoiding fear despite our circumstances.

Studying the Passage

God's presence removes our need for fear. God promises His abiding presence with His people. This was one of the final promises of Jesus to His disciples. Just before He ascended to the Father, He promised them, **I am with you always** (Matthew 28:20). The comfort of God's promise sustains us.

On Your Own

Think about a time when you felt the presence of the Lord. What did that feel like? Did God reveal anything to you? In the space below, write about your experience with God's presence. I knew God was with me when . . .

God's presence was timely for the people of Judah. When God made this promise in Isaiah 43, they must have felt as if He had left them. They were experiencing the judgment of the Lord. Because of their sin, God allowed them to be taken captive to a foreign country. Babylon was the major world power in that time. In the year 586 BC, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and most of the people were taken into captivity into the land that is today known as Iraq.

God is promising them in this passage that He would bring them back. Verses 5–6 indicate that from the **east, west, north, and south**, i.e., from wherever they have been taken captive, God is able to bring them back. In essence, God told His children that He created them, they are His, and He will bring them home.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on the reasons Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon.

Studying the Passage

In verse 10, God explains the responsibilities of our calling. **You are My witnesses . . . and My servant whom I have chosen**. There is a specific task for which we have been chosen. God presented four responsibilities of our calling in verses 10–11. We are called to **know** Him, to

believe in Him, to **understand** who He is, and to be **witnesses** for Him to the world.

To know God is to be in relationship with Him. To believe in Him is to accept His plan for your life. To understand Him is to grow in your relationship with Him. To be a witness is to tell others about Him. That's why God called you, and that describes who He is calling you to be.

Discussion Questions

What is the significance of God's calling us into relationship with Himself? What are the implications?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Ultimately, God has created us for His glory. By His grace and the sacrifice of Christ we have a relationship with Him, but He has not invited us into a relationship simply to change our eternal destination. He has called us for a purpose.

In Isaiah 43:1–4, God reminds His people of their identity. We are a people who have been created, formed, redeemed and called by God. God has given special attention to you.

Next, in Isaiah 43:5–6, God promises His abiding presence with His people. God did not just create us and leave us here on our own. His presence comforts and guides us. It marks our identity and reminds us that we are His.

Finally, in Isaiah 43:7–13, God reminds His people of the purpose of their calling. God delineated four responsibilities of our calling in verses 10–11.

Believers today are called to **know** Christ, to **believe** in Him, to **understand** who He is, and to be **witnesses** for Him to the world.

That's the calling of God on your life. That is why He created you.

All Christians are called by God. You are called by God. How are you living up to God's desire for your life? Think about your calling. List some specific actions you are taking to grow in your relationship with God, some things God has taught you from His Word, and some areas in your life where God is working.

1. How am I growing in my relationship with Christ?
2. What has Christ taught me recently from His Word?
3. What are some areas in my life where Christ is working?

Follow up Question

Ask someone you're comfortable with to share their personal testimony and how they see God working in their lives.

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.