

The Church Leadership Development Series:

**“AM I CALLED?”**  
**A STUDY GUIDE**

By Dave Harvey



**GREAT  
COMMISSION  
COLLECTIVE**

# Introduction

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Name that movie: “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

I’ll wait. . . .

Okay, for those who don’t know, it’s from *The Princess Bride*. And it’s a quote that’s run through my mind countless times throughout the years as yet another guy tells me, “I feel like I might be called to ministry.”

“Called?” I think. “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

This book sets out to answer a single question: “Are you called?” To answer that question well, you need help. Let me rephrase: to answer that question well, we *all* need help. We need help from the Bible. We need help from the Lord. We need help from friends and family, from coworkers and cousins. In other words, it’s not a question that should—or even can—be answered alone and overnight. It requires patience and wisdom. It requires the bravery of self-examination and the humility of others’ examination.

I wrote a book to help with this. It’s called *Am I Called?* and I’ve seen the Lord use it in ways I never would have imagined. But people usually read books alone. And people usually read books *fast*. This study guide for *Am I Called?* intends to huddle people up and slow people down. In other words, we’ve designed it to be used alongside others over the course of six weeks. Plan to go through it slowly and reflectively.

Will you be able to *definitely* answer that question six weeks from now? Probably not. But I’m confident you will have gotten closer to clarity. In fact, the desired outcome for this study guide is twofold: to guide you in exploring the next steps of your calling, and to give others—perhaps your elders, perhaps mature Christians you know—a body of data and reflections that they can review to help you along the path toward ministry or elsewhere.

Each week is structured around chapters of the book. For example, Week 1 follows Chapters 1–3, Week 2 follows Chapter 4, and so on. It will feature the following:

- Summary Small-Group Questions: The goal of these is simply to reflect on the *content* of the reading with others.
- Take-Home Training: These action steps will vary week-to-week. They may involve a conversation, a writing assignment, or something else. The goal of this section will be to make sure you’re *doing something* with what you’re reading, to put tools in your hand as you explore whether or not you’re called to pastor or plant. These may also be of service to those who are called by God to help confirm your call.
- Additional Study Resources: Each chapter will point you to optional material that will help you dig deeper into the topic at hand.

As you contemplate a call to pastor, I pray that these next six weeks will be both a compass for your future and a feast for your soul. As Paul says, it’s a noble thing to aspire for pastoral ministry (1 Tim 3:1). How much nobler, then, to do so with some trusted brothers who also have their Bibles and their hearts open for correction, for encouragement, and for whatever else the Lord might do.

— Dave Harvey

## WEEK 1: AM I “CALLED”?

### Chapters 1–3

#### **SUMMARY SMALL-GROUP QUESTIONS:**

1. Why are you reading this book? What do you hope to learn about yourself? What questions do you hope to answer?
2. “Before he calls us to ministry, he calls us to himself” (p. 36). Based on what you read in Chapter 2, why is it absolutely essential for every man who aspires to be a pastor to understand this?
3. On page 38, Dave describes a “trap” we must avoid. What is that trap, and how will we avoid it?
4. As it relates to preparing men for ministry, what does a seminary do well? What can a seminary *not* do to prepare men for ministry?



## TAKE-HOME TRAINING:

1. Write down for yourself the answers to Question 1 above. Be thorough. You'll return to them later.
2. One lesson from these chapters is that what God has accomplished for us through the gospel—not what we accomplish “for” God in ministry—secures our identity. With that in mind, let's use our imagination. We want to think through how a Christian's security in the gospel informs their response to the following scenarios:
  - You start in pastoral ministry, and things go really well really fast. People come to Christ, the budget grows, and folks start calling you asking you how you're doing what you're doing. How would you respond?
  
  - You start in pastoral ministry, and things go really bad really fast. In short, you fail spectacularly, the deacon board fires you, and in less than 24 months you're looking for a new gig. How would you respond?
  
  - You start in pastoral ministry, and . . . well, nothing really happens. The church stays basically the same, and you wonder if anyone else in the world could do exactly what you're doing. You wonder if you're replaceable. How would you respond?
  
  - You've been in ministry a while, and there's a guy on your staff who seems eminently more gifted, more likable, and more fruitful than you. How would you respond?
3. Read through 1 Corinthians 1 a few times. Meditate on it. Write down any observations you have that relate to your aspiration for pastoral ministry.
  
4. We developed an assessment tool found in Appendix B. Go through it, and share your results with your pastor or a church leader. Take him out to lunch and have a conversation about what you both saw.

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY:

*What Is the Gospel?* By Greg Gilbert

*The Cross and Christian Ministry*, by D. A. Carson

*The Gospel-Driven Church*, by Jared Wilson

“Brothers, Serve in the Nursery,” by Sam Emadi (TGC Article)

## WEEK 2: ARE YOU GODLY?

### Chapter 4

#### SUMMARY SMALL-GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Dave writes, "The man called to ministry is not some kind of super-Christian who lives by a higher code." Why is that good news? Why is that not an excuse to be spiritually lethargic?
2. Read through the prerequisites for pastors in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. What stands out to you as surprising? Describe the claims you think these passages makes upon an aspiring planter or pastor.
3. It's quite easy to see how, because of our sinful hearts, a list of moral qualifications could cultivate legalism. Describe the role of grace in determining the whether or not a man is "qualified"?
4. How do these biblical prerequisites protect Christians, churches, and even unbelievers?
5. Dave spends a lot of time talking about how service is the essential work of a pastor. He quotes D. A. Carson who says, "The question is 'How can I be most useful?' not 'How can I feel most useful?'" Why is that such a crucial difference?



## TAKE-HOME TRAINING

1. Read through the elder prerequisites again—slowly. List them out one-by-one. Some will overlap. Spend some time prayerfully asking yourself two questions: “Which of these am I, by God’s grace, doing well in?” and “If I were to disqualify myself from ministry, where am I most vulnerable?” If it helps you to focus, write down your reflections.
2. Meditate on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Prayerfully read through what Jesus says and ask yourself, “Where is God calling me to grow?”
3. On page 84, Dave answers the question, “What does the call to service mean for the summoned man?” Work through each of his answers with a friend. Ask them, “How do you think I’m doing in these areas”?
4. Fill out this [Personal and Ministry Accountability Form](#) and then go through it with a pastor, elder, or church leader. (Note: This form was originally used by Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. “Fighter Verses” refers to a Scripture memory tool from *Desiring God*.)

### OTHER RESOURCES:

*Character Matters*, by Aaron Menikoff  
*Spiritual Leadership*, by J. Oswald Sanders  
*The Hole in our Holiness*, by Kevin DeYoung  
*Weak and Strong*, by Andy Crouch



## WEEK 3: HOW'S YOUR HOME?

### Chapter 5

#### **SUMMARY SMALL-GROUP QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is the home “the hardest place to live the Christian life”? Has that been your experience, whether as a child or as a parent?
2. For married guys, what does your wife think about your growing aspiration toward pastoral ministry? What’s the strongest point of your marriage? The weakest?
3. For unmarried guys, how do you think the prerequisite “manages his household well” (1 Tim. 3:4) applies to you? How can you, even now, be a “one-woman man”?
4. Discuss Dave’s argument that “believing children” doesn’t mean “Christian children” but rather “faithful” or “submissive” children? In what ways was it helpful? What questions did it raise for you?
5. For men with children, where is God calling you to grow in faith for parenting? List each child and describe how you want to help shepherd their heart in this season.

## TAKE-HOME TRAINING:

1. Read through this chapter with your wife. If you have older kids, ask them to read along, too. Not married? Read through it with a roommate. Live alone? Pick your closest Christian friend. Then over a meal, reflect on what you read together. Focus on areas that need improvement, but don't forget to look for notes of encouragement, too.
2. Look at your calendar and sometime over the next two months, and take your wife on a "marriage retreat." Follow this plan [here](#) as best you can. (Note: That marriage retreat plan was originally created by Deepak Reju, a pastor and biblical counselor in the DC area.)
3. Write a letter of gratitude to a man whose marriage and family you admire.
4. Assuming your wife affirms your desire for pastoral ministry, have them write out answers to the questions, "Why do you think your husband should be a pastor? Does that excite you? Why or why not?" Don't make this overly formal! But it's possible you might share this with a pastor or church leader as you pursue pastoral ministry.

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY:

"Does an Unbelieving Child Disqualify an Elder?" By Justin Taylor (TGC Article)

"On Pastoring and Parenting," Pastors Talk Podcast Episode 172, with David Helm, Juan Sanchez, Michael Lawrence, and Jonathan Leeman

*When Sinners Say I Do*, by Dave Harvey

## WEEK 4: CAN YOU PREACH?

### Chapter 6

#### SUMMARY SMALL-GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Turn with your group to Titus 1:9–2:15. What does this passage teach you about the inseparable connection between pastoring and preaching?
  
2. Turn to Mark 4:1–20. What does this passage teach about the persistent, patient proclamation of the Word?
  
3. A man desires to pastor or plant a church. He's godly. He loves the Lord and his family. He loves the lost. He's got a shepherd's heart. He's theologically sound and can refute error with both the Bible and apologetics. But...he's just not a very good preacher or teacher. Sure, he can explain biblical truth one-on-one, but something happens when he gets in front of people. What's your counsel to this man? Is he suitable for ministry? Why or why not?

If the group disagrees, great! Tease out the nature of the disagreement. Perhaps focus on what unstated assumptions are being made about either the prerequisite "apt to teach" or what it means to be a pastor.

4. How might the call to preach practically shape a pastor's calendar? How might it shape your preparation for pastoral ministry?

## TAKE-HOME TRAINING

1. Who's the longest serving pastor you know? If he's local, take him out to lunch and ask him what he's learned about preaching and pastoring. If he lives elsewhere, arrange a call and ask him what he's learned about preaching and pastoring.

Ask him questions like:

- What has helped you to persevere in preaching?
  - What passages of Scripture have you returned to regularly?
  - How did you respond when it seemed like the Word wasn't doing any work?
  - What dangers did you face when your ministry enjoyed a season of fruitfulness?
2. Find an opportunity to preach—anywhere. Youth group. Nursing home. Soup kitchen. Middle school chapel. Seize the opportunity, prepare accordingly, and go for it. Record the sermon—preferably, video *and* audio—and force yourself to rewatch. Ask one of your pastors to watch it, too, and then provide for you both criticism and encouragement following this Sermon Evaluation sheet. (Note: The sheet was created by the good folks at Simeon Trust.)
  3. Don't settle for a one-off opportunity. Find a place where you can teach regularly and receive feedback. And remember: no platform is too menial. If your church needs a teacher for the 4- and 5-year-olds, consider it the place where the Lord wants you to train right now.
  4. You can't be a faithful preacher without sound doctrine. Email your pastor and other trusted Christian friend and ask them which three books you should read to better ground you in sound doctrine. Based on their responses, set up a reading plan over the next two years.
  5. Read through Ezekiel 37 and meditate on the power of God's Word. Write down how this both encourages and convicts you.
  6. Preaching is about more than simply saying true things from the Scriptures. It's also about applying them to your hearers. Look through this [application grid](#) brought to you by 9Marks and reflect on how your sermons can improve.

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY:

*Why Johnny Can't Preach*, by T. David Gordon

The Preachers' Talk podcast, by 9Marks and The Charles Simeon Trust

*Preaching*, by Tim Keller

*Expositional Preaching*, by David Helm

## WEEK 5: CAN YOU SHEPHERD, AND DO YOU LOVE THE LOST? Chapters 7 and 8

### Summary Small-Group Questions:

1. The previous week focused entirely on preaching; this week has expanded to include shepherding and evangelism. Why must a pastor prioritize these three disciplines? How are they interrelated?
2. Talk with the group about who you're shepherding and/or evangelizing now. What kind of fruit have you seen in their life?
3. How might these responsibilities to shepherd and evangelize affect a church planter's weekly priorities and calendar?
4. Talk with the group about practical ways to pop the "Christian bubble" pastors often find themselves in.
5. In this chapter, Dave says a church ought to have a plurality of elders. Talk as a group about the various leadership structures you've experienced in a church. How do they compare to the biblical witness? Why is team ministry important in building a church?
6. Let's imagine a scenario: a church has a plurality of elders, but one elder—the senior pastor, the guy who preaches the most—never loses a vote. Is that a healthy plurality? Why or why not?
7. Imagine another scenario: you're the senior pastor, and you lose a vote on a matter you really care about. Why might that outcome be good for both you and the church?

## TAKE-HOME TRAINING:

1. Read through and meditate on the following passages of Scripture: Ezekiel 34, John 10, Acts 20:17–38, and 1 Peter 5:1–5. Write down what stands out to you.
2. Memorize Acts 20:28.
3. On pages 138-139, Dave lists several leadership factors. Go through each one with a friend so that you can get a better handle on your strength and weaknesses.
4. List four non-Christians you have a good relationship with. Commit to praying for them, and finding some time in the next month to get together with the hopes of having an evangelistic conversation.

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

*The Shepherd Leader*, by Timothy Witmer

"Biblical Theology and Shepherding," by Bobby Jamieson (9Marks Article)

*The Plurality Principle*, by Dave Harvey (see this [accompanying study guide](#))

*The Imperfect Pastor*, by Zack Eswine

*What if I'm Discouraged in My Evangelism?* by Isaac Adams

*God Redeeming His Bride* by Robert Cheong

## WEEK 6: WHO AGREES? AND WHILE YOU WAIT . . .

### Chapters 9 and 10

#### Summary Small-Group Questions

1. Describe the difference between “internal call” and “external confirmation.” Ask each member of the group to describe whether they have one, both, or neither.
2. Does a genuine internal call always precede an external confirmation? Why or why not?
3. Why does a genuinely called man need neither a platform nor an official title in order to prepare for ministry? In fact, why might it be a dangerous sign for a man to insist on either?
4. How can we sincerely pursue an external confirmation with patience, but without insisting on a platform for public ministry?
5. For those who do feel an internal call, how can you start preparing for ministry right now?

## TAKE-HOME TRAINING

1. Remember that first assignment from Week 1? Read through your answers to those questions. Now write down your answers to the following questions: Did you meet your goals? What did you learn about yourself? What questions remain unanswered?
2. Now share both sets of answers—from Week 1 and Week 6—with a pastor, elder, or mentor. Go out for a meal and talk through what the Lord may or may not be doing in your life.
3. Prayerfully go through the questions Dave asks on Page 195.
4. Finally, get out a piece of paper and write two questions at the top: “Why do I want to pastor or plant a church? Why do I believe I should pastor or plant a church?” Before you write out your answer, read through the prerequisites in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 3 again. Read also through 1 Peter 5:1–5. Let Scripture reorient you, and then write out your answers to the questions above.

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

*The Christian Ministry*, Charles Bridges

*The Path to Being a Pastor*, Bobby Jamieson

*Test, Train, Affirm, and Send into Ministry*, by Brian Croft

*The Art of Divine Contentment*, by Thomas Watson



## Conclusion: So What's Next?

You've talked and thought and written down a lot over the past six weeks. So now, what's next? Here are a few ideas.

1. Keep praying.
2. If you are married, keep having conversations with your wife. She should be your #1 partner in all of this.
3. Look over everything you've written since you started this study guide. Arrange a time to sit down with someone—your pastor, or another church leader you trust—and do a comprehensive overview. Ask them beforehand if they would like to see any of the work you've completed through the six weeks.

The goal of this meeting is simple: to come up with concrete steps that will help you advance on the path towards planting, pastoring or eldership. Those specific steps will vary wildly depending on where you are on the path. For instance, some of you might start applying for jobs; some might simply start reading more theology books. Whatever the plan, make sure it's created in partnership with others.

4. Finally, schedule follow-up meetings with your pastor, elder, or mentor over the next year. Getting their help at the start was vital, but make sure to lean on their counsel throughout your journey as well.

Perhaps you're only a few months away from serving as a pastor or planter. Perhaps you are better suited towards the diaconate or small group leadership. Maybe you'll never work for a church in your life. Regardless, I pray these past six weeks have sharpened your focus in answering that all-important, noble question: "Am I called?"

As a believer, you *already* have a full-time ministry: to bear fruit as a disciple of Jesus Christ (John 15:1–16). And the most important call you will ever receive has already been made through the gospel and Jesus Christ. Make that the main thing! Then where you land will always be enough.

— Dave Harvey

APPENDIX A:  
Sermon Evaluation form from The Charles Simeon Trust

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_ Text: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES ON THE SERMON**

Introduction:

Main Content:

Conclusion:

## EVALUATION OF THE SERMON

### *Getting It Right*

1. What was the student's argument? Was it clear? How did it reflect the main point of the text?
2. How did the student relate the text to the context? How was literary, historical, and/or biblical context referenced? How was it related to the main idea of the book?
3. Was the structure of the text apparent in the sermon?
4. How did the student connect to the gospel? Was it grounded textually? What strategy was employed?

### *Getting It Across*

5. Was the introduction engaging? How did it draw you in?
6. Were the illustrations effective? Were they intended to explain or to stir emotions or both?
7. Were the homiletical points clear? How did they drive argument?
8. Were the applications clear? How were they related to the text?

9. How well was the sermon delivered? Did it reflect the tone of the passage? Were you persuaded?

*Assessment*

10. In what way did the sermon most encourage you personally?

11. What are the two most important things that could be done to improve?

12. What were the two best features of the sermon overall?

## APPENDIX B: Am I Called? Assessment Tool

This test is built around the six organizing questions from Dave's book:

1. Are You Godly?
2. How is Your Home?
3. Can You Preach?
4. Can You Shepherd?
5. Do You Love the Lost?
6. Do Others Agree?

Each question on the test is scored on a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing a significant weakness and 5 representing a significant strength. Some important things to note before taking this test:

While we recognize that the requirements of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 assume marriage and families, we believe single men can serve effectively and fruitfully in church planting and eldership.

The primary intent of requirements laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is to evaluate a man before he goes into ministry. Evaluation of men in ministry could include these categories, but they do not exist primarily for that purpose.

Scoring high on this test does NOT mean you are necessarily called to be a pastor. Scoring low on this test does NOT necessarily mean you are not called to be a pastor. Rather, this test is simply a tool to help you think more deeply about your own strengths and weaknesses, and what those strengths and weaknesses might reveal about your potential call to ministry.

### LET'S GET STARTED

Welcome to the Am I Called? Assessment! This tool is designed to help you evaluate God's calling to plant or pastor. While assessments are hardly new ideas, AIC takes the step of using data analytics to help interpret the results for you. Specifically, we spent the last two years collecting data from over 700 respondents who used the 1.0 version of the assessment. We analyzed items using state-of-the-art statistical analyses to ensure what you see on the results page is a precise and constructive result. We pray this tool is as interesting and helpful to you as the process of development has been for us!

The AIC Assessment will take about 5-10 minutes and is designed to be completed in one session. [Click here to be taken to the Assessment page.](#)