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“Now That I’m Called” Essay

Kristen Padilla wrote “Now That I’m Called, A Guide for Women Discerning a Call to Ministry” because she wanted to provide a clear outlet for women who feel called to ministry to confirm their callings as well as give confidence and clarity to those who may have been timid to walk into certain roles in the church or on the mission field because they felt their gender inhibited them. The book is broken down into eight chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. The chapters comprise of topics like: “Calling in the Old Testament”, “Calling in the New Testament”, “The Calling of Women in the Old Testament”, “The Calling of Women in the New Testament”, “Does the Bible Restrict the Calling of Women?”, “What Are Spiritual Gifts?”, “Do I Need a Theological Education?” and “The Benefits of Mentors and Internships.” Each section dives deeper into what this looks like for certain people in the Bible who were called by God, and how they walked into their ministry and how they fulfilled their calling.

Some of the people that were called in the old testament include Moses, Jeremiah, David and Joshua. The book covers a series of each of these person’s individual callings, ministries, and fulfillment of their ministries. One of the most impactful examples from the book is the calling of Moses. Moses was a flawed human being that God used to do great things. He had a speech impediment and God called him even despite that. Moses had real doubts and even asked God to choose someone else, but God wanted Moses because he knew that His own glory would shine through and be all the more powerful because it was coming through Moses who literally could not do it on his own. “The question is not who *is* Moses, but who is *with* Moses (Padilla 26).” God never leaves us nor forsakes us and I think this is the real punch line of the whole book and concept of ministry: “The ‘I AM WHO I AM’ swallows up the ‘Who am I?’(Padilla 26). God “qualifies us when he calls, sends, and goes with us.” God chooses him not because Moses deserves or earns it, but because God will be glorified through Moses. “Moses’s call is God-sized, which means only God can enable Moses to fulfill it.”

In the New Testament we are given a whole other set of people walking in ministry including: Jesus, Peter, Paul and Timothy. Peter is called to be a shepherd and to preach the gospel. At some point in his ministry, there were “seven men chosen to serve the widows and the poor” because the responsibility was falling on Peter and other apostles to fulfill this need when they were given a higher calling to preach the word of God… not that one calling is better than the other, but the point is that we were not all designed to step into every ministry, which is why God designates certain gifts to certain people so that there is balance within the body of Christ. Some ministries may be good, but not what God has designed you for. “Many of us will be tempted to say ‘yes’ to every ministry opportunity that comes our way. God may have called you to ministry, but he hasn’t called you to *every* ministry (Padilla 53).”

The calling of women in the Old Testament is encompassed by God sending these women into different ministry forms: Deborah, Huldah, Rahab, Esther, Tamar, Ruth and more. Women in biblical times did not have all the rights that we do nowadays. Their main role and purpose in life was in the home; marriages were not equal partnerships, women did not have the right to initiate a divorce, nor did they necessarily receive anything if their husbands divorced them. They were seen as poor leaders and under either the father’s or their husband’s authority.

Some of the New Testament women that were covered in this book include: Mary the

mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Mary the sister of Martha, Priscilla, and Junia. MARY the mother of Jesus is probably one of the most important because she is the means through which the God of the universe comes into the universe in the flesh. “The presence of God always accompanies the calling of God (Padilla 87).” She calls herself servant of the Lord which is super significant because the only people that were called this were those people who were directly called by God into service for the people of God like Moses! Mary was a figure who’s calling broke away societal barriers left and right like when approaching Elizabeth (her elder) and Elizabeth greeted *her* instead of the other way around since Mary was inferior as the younger one. God decides to take one of the lowliest creatures on the spectrum to be the vessel through which he put on flesh. The amount of humility that God displays here is so crucial and defining of who he was coming into the world for. “Jesus’s flesh, DNA, features, and human mannerisms all come from his mother, Mary. God the Son takes on *her* human flesh (91).” In addition to this she is the first person to receive the Holy Spirit before Pentecost and besides Moses, she is only other human in the scriptures who experienced the glory of the Lord in an intimate way without being consumed. Why does God choose such an unlikely candidate to be he spokeswoman and divine entrance into the world? Because he doesn’t look at the things the world looks at. In 1 Corinthians 1:27 it says that “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” Not many women measure up to Mary’s calling in the New Testament, but we do have some empowered women that stand out. There’s the Samaritan woman, whom was the first real evangelist, the women disciples, who were “with Jesus” and alongside the twelve disciples, Mary the sister of Martha sits at Jesus’ feet in the posture of a disciple, Priscilla whose name was always mentioned first when referring to her and her husband, which some scholars take to be hinting at that she was the more important role in the church and Paul’s ministry at the time, because name sequence is a huge ordeal during this time. Then there’s Junia who is said to be outstanding and esteemed among the apostles and also held as their equal in authority alongside her husband Adronicus. A lot of debate has arisen over the years in regards to a woman being an apostle and some even argued that Junia was a man… but after historical research it was found that the name “Junias,” the male form of Junia, wasn’t present during this time (it lacked the accent mark that made it masculine). Overall, the ministries that women were apart of in Paul’s ministry were: teachers and instructors, evangelists disciple makers, co-leaders of churches, deacons, benefactors, interpreters of Paul’s letters, apostles, and Paul’s coworkers in ministry. Joel 2:28-29 really speaks truth to what is being said here:

“And afterward,
    I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
    your old men will dream dreams,
    your young men will see visions.
**29**Even on my servants, both men and women,
    I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Transitioning from the bulk of the book, Padilla moves into more specific ways that God makes us into the people we need to be to carry out the calling and ministries he has set before us. God equips his people with specific spiritual gifts to help further his kingdom. These gifts are clues that help us distinguish what our callings are! Whatever gifts God has given you, he is going to see them to fruition as well as help you grow in them, and strengthen certain ones as deemed necessary for your walk-in life.

**“**So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12**to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13**until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11-13

“It is Jesus Christ who gives ministers to his people. The Greek is *emphatic –* Christ *himself.* This is still true today.We are called by Christ, gifted by Christ, for the building up of the people of Christ (Padilla 134).” Spiritual gifts are exactly what they sound like, *gifts*. They aren’t something we earned or even came close to deserving, but they are merely evidence of God’s grace lavished on us so that he might use us to show his love and communicate the good news to the world. The few that the author covers in this book include: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-shepherds, teachers and preachers. It is echoed in a fair number of scriptures that everyone should desire to have the gifts of prophecy. “Prophecy that comes from God is designed to lead to worship of God (Padilla 139).” Some questions have been asked as to how prophecy can be still in use today since the entirety of the Bible is holy and sovereign and it would be going against scripture to add on to that. The book is super great a defining what this looks like today and how it is used in a correct manner. I feel like we can get carried away when we first hear the word “prophecy” because the first thing that comes to mind are the prophets of the old testament who literally wrote the inspired scriptures. “But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.” 1 Corinthians 14:3 “It is used for exhortation, evangelism, and instruction (Padilla 139). “The gift of prophecy is expressed by men and women when they exhort, convict, encourage and give wisdom. This might occur in a home Bible study, a Sunday homily, or even in a one-to-one explanation of the Bible, for example.” This is what prophecy looks like today! We do not receive new revelation in terms of scripture today, but God uses prophets to build up the church (by calling out who they are).

 The next big spiritual gift that the book covers is the pastor (and/or) shepherd. “Being a shepherd is not gender-specific.” “It is a metaphor that is descriptive of people’s role […] it doesn’t matter whether or not the sheep or children, youth, adults, senior adults, men or women; they are still God’s sheep. And those who shepherd them are their pastors.” From this perspective, almost anyone who is a mentor could be given the role of a shepherd, and this is something I did not really put together before. This leads into the spiritual gift of teaching which is very similar to pastoring in some senses. It is a high calling and not one to be messed around with. There is even a warning about becoming a teacher in James 3:1: “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” Then is transitions into preaching where Padilla voices that “preaching” doesn’t necessarily mean you are the senior pastor. It is also not exclusive to a certain gender. Padilla claimed that when she was younger she was afraid to call the gift she had “preaching” because she was under the misconception that in order to “preach” one must be a “pastor.” For the longest time she referred to it as “speaking” the word of God… then she put one and two together and realized it didn’t matter what you called it, she was still doing the biblical definition of “preaching.” “Sometimes confusion exists on this issue because gifts have been equated with church office, but these are not the same (146).” One doesn’t have to be given the title in order to preach; we are all called to preach the Gospel. “The preaching gift doesn’t metamorphose into speaking when a female exercises the gift instead of a man, or when the audience changes from men to women or from adults to youth (147).” The purpose of gifts are to equip God’s people for ministry. Every one of God’s people is called to a form of ministry, and that can literally be your neighbors or coworkers or fellow students. “Know this: the God who is calling you will gift you for the call he has given you. He will see it through (149).”

“Do I Need A Theological Education?” is the last big question that this book brings up. The way it answers also keeps in mind this day and age and the fact that not everyone can afford the time and/or money to do this, which is why covering everything with prayer is so important. You might reason that there wasn’t seminary in the Bible, so why should I go? Padilla goes into a lot of different reasons that someone would pursue a theological education, but the one that really stuck out to me was that it is our duty to be as fluent and educated in our “profession” the same way a doctor has to go to medical school or a lawyer to law school. Those made for ministry, should go to “ministry school.” Some of the benefits to mentorships and internships are being in a place where you can have a first-hand experience with what you may want to do with the rest of your life is super fundamental in helping you prepare for you future! “Go forth in trust and obedience. Jesus teaches us that our Father is good and trustworthy. Everything that I have said in this book boils down to the goodness and sovereignty of God over our calls and ministries. Trust him to see the call he has given you through to its completion. *Obey* him, even if obedience is *difficult* and you don’t understand *why*.” I feel like this is the best way to end this essay because our calls all begin with a step of obedience in the right direction.

Bibliography

Padilla, Kristen. *Now That I'm Called: A Guide for Women Discerning a Call to Ministry*. Zondervan, 2018.