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# Toward an Integrative Theory of Vocation and Volition: Locating the Historical Concept of Christian Calling in the Contemporary Psychological Treatment of Motivation

Timothy S. Walker

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TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE THEORY OF VOCATION AND VOLITION: LOCATING  
THE HISTORICAL CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN CALLING IN THE CONTEMPORARY  
PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF MOTIVATION

By

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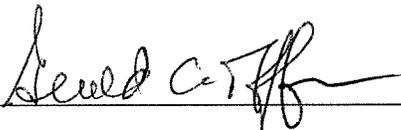
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to identify similarities between the Christian concept of calling and educational psychology's theories on motivation. This study includes a review of historical and contemporary literature concerning calling alongside a review of literature pertaining to Self-Determination Theory. I use these reviews first to understand how Christians have historically understood and applied the concept of calling as motivation. Secondly, they are used to determine if Self-Determination Theory relates to the Christian concept of calling. And, thirdly, they are used to discover areas in which Self-Determination Theory offers insight into the Christian concept of calling's potential capacity to generate motivation. The results of this research suggest that similarities between the two exist and that integration of the concepts can be achieved in an understanding of the biblical view of humanity's creation and intended purpose. Additionally, this research implies a need to build bridges between theology and educational psychology, as well as other scientific disciplines. Further study is recommended in applying the concept of an essential call within Christian education, particularly to classroom and teaching dynamics that engender perpetual motivation. Additionally, within the rich conversation concerning Christian calling there is need to push the conversation back to a foundational understanding of human nature, and to the purpose of God's call to humanity. There is also potential for the understanding of an essential call to enhance Self-Determination Theory, especially concerning the movement along the continuum from integrated motivation to intrinsic motivation. At a church level, the concept of an essential call could enhance personal well-being and subsequent church health, as well as equip missionaries to attend to relatedness, autonomy, and competence amidst difficult situations at home and abroad.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

It was a whistle. My father's call to us kids was a whistle. Never demeaning, as to a dog. Never harsh or alarming. It was more of a song, at least the first few measures of a song ... or maybe the last few. It was distinctive, familiar, gentle, and kind, yet nonnegotiable and decidedly motivating. Whether we were a few aisles over in the grocery store, across a crowd at the church fellowship, or down the street in a friend's yard, my father simply whistled his whistle and we came running. Rarely would we understand the comprehensive intentions or implications of that day's whistle, but for those ensuing moments life was clear, focused, energized, determined. And amidst a flurry of apprehension and anticipation, wrapped in the warmth of real belonging, there was motivation—pure, raw motivation. I have not heard that call for over twenty years and no matter how hard I try, I cannot summon its notes or melody or cadence to the front of my memory. But without any doubt, I know—in the deep recesses of understanding, I know—that if I heard it today, I would come running.

My father died before I recognized a desire to investigate the innate power in that whistle. Nevertheless, in reflecting on that familial childhood call, I recognize similarities in mystery and command to the broader concept of Christian calling. My hunch is that this personal childhood experience hints toward a reality of design, creation, and purpose, and that exploration into such design could yield understanding for harnessing its effects for practical application.

By some accounts, there seems today a cultural want for motivation. In comparing modern Western culture to the great cultures in human history, it is apparent that we are the first civilization to have little collective understanding of the purpose of life (Guinness, 2001). We live in a time of unparalleled means, but lack a unified understanding of an end and thus could

neglect the need to understand the concept of calling as motivation. Perhaps it is in response to this apparent lack of purpose and direction that educators are turning to the field of psychology to explore how to recapture motivation, first for the student, then ultimately for the culture. Pintrich (2003) observed a shift in the importance of motivation from the periphery to the focal point within educational psychology. This effort seems to be in response to a widespread cultural need. Yet, there is little talk of the historical concept of calling as motivation, at least in the sense of a Christian calling. Though remnants of its rich history have survived in some of the language, the actual idea of calling is, by some measurements, diminished—a condition that is particularly problematic as calling is regarded by some as essential for a humane and self-understanding society (Conyers, 2009).

This silence pertaining to calling as motivation is not limited to the secular classroom or culture. Veith (2011) claims that this silence is equally evident in Christian circles: “Odd that such a liberating, life-enhancing doctrine has become all but forgotten in our time, passed over in our seminaries, sermons, and Bible classes” (p. 16). Yet, others, like Iorg (2008) note a recent increase in the Christian chatter concerning calling, but insist that, “Few concepts are talked about more and understood less in Christian circles ...” (p. 5). Still, calling remains the inescapable reality it has always been, and quietly pleads for a hearing. Moreover, Schuurman (2004) appropriately places the responsibility of recapturing this concept of calling with the Christian church and church-related education.

Anecdotally, I have seen church and church-related education ascribe significant value to calling as it serves in the initial gatekeeping of admittance and employment yet, in contrast, offer little help in understanding how to harness the reality of this calling as perpetual motivation in the classroom, ministry, or throughout life. Adequate defense of a calling was mandatory for

admission into theological seminary education, and in-depth articulation of my calling was required for candidacy to the pastorate. Yet, for me as a young, would-be pastor, the concept of calling was vague at best. I knew I had heard a calling, and believed I could hum along to the tune if I heard it again, but I could not evoke the particulars of its notes or melody or cadence. So, I resigned to a silent celebration of the mystery and to a somewhat sterile description of its effects. It worked. The seminary admitted me and the church hired me, but surely, a nebulous relationship with a concept as rich and central as calling cannot be all that is available, all that is required, or all that is promised. On the contrary, “God’s calling must become stipulated and then demystified, making each student accountable” (Tiffin, 1984, p. 10). There is something within calling itself that beckons toward such clarification. There is something within calling that lays claim to my entire being in a way that transcends personality, giftedness, ministry, career, and life context. I can almost hum along.

My personal experience flows from a Southern Baptist Christian education context. I completed my undergraduate work at East Texas Baptist University and earned a Master of Divinity degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (GGBTS). Both experiences were immeasurably rewarding and indispensable to a growing personal sensitivity toward calling. In particular, GGBTS places a comparatively high value on the concept of calling and its integration into education, ministry, and life. The faculty, staff, and administration of GGBTS have shaped their curriculum, as well as co-curricular activities, around 21 essential leadership characteristics. Of these 21, four are specifically focused on living out one’s calling. They are listed as follows:

The faculty, staff and administration of Golden Gate work together through the Seminary's curriculum and co-curricular activities to shape leaders by encouraging and promoting personal, spiritual and professional growth in the following areas:

Leadership characteristics related to being FOCUSED on living out one's calling:

11. God's Call (F11)—A Christian leader understands the biblical, theological, historical, personal, and experiential foundations of joining God in His Kingdom purposes.
12. Focused Life (F12)—A Christian leader focuses his or her life to live out a calling in accordance with God's Kingdom purposes.
13. Obedience (F13)—A Christian leader responds with active commitment to God's call to join Him in His Kingdom purposes.
14. Passion (F14)—A Christian leader demonstrates passion through his or her life toward the pursuit of God's call. (GGBTS, 2014)

These characteristics are understood to be life goals that encompass more than the selective purview of a single academic program, yet GGBTS is committed to highlight and nurture them throughout the entire seminary experience. This is achieved through a first-semester *Foundations* course and a capstone *Integration* course that engages discussion within all 21 characteristics. Additionally, students are required to display interaction with the characteristics through the journaling portion of an *ePortfolio* that coincides with all required course work. And, each course proposal and syllabus is required to integrate these characteristics into course work and learning outcomes.

Experientially, the specific implementation of these 21 essential leadership characteristics varied from course to course as they continued to grow as a vital part of the academic

experience. Additionally, the language used to communicate the four characteristics that pertain to calling remains broad enough to allow for further exploration into the concept of calling. However, these four characteristics are predominately applied to a calling into specific ministry and career fields. The implications of the four points pertaining to calling from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary are consistent with God's kingdom purposes, but the essence of this research points to God's kingdom purpose (singular)—a purpose that is universal and inherent to the human condition. I had a sense throughout the experience that, concerning calling, there was more to be built upon the strong foundation GGBTS was establishing.

This sense is strengthened by a survey of recent books on calling published by Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, the publishing company directly related to the Southern Baptist Convention.

*The Power of the Call* by Blackaby, Brandt, and Skinner (1997) offers powerful insight into the efficacy of God's call as it applies to the role of pastor, as well as celebration and encouragement concerning the importance of such a role. This work offers great help within innumerable pastoral realities, but its purpose is narrow by design. It is written for those who are called to be pastors. Yet, it speaks of things that could benefit all of humanity, especially the section on maintaining a vital inner life. While I offer no criticism for its intended narrow focus, it does highlight a propensity within the Christian conversation on calling to talk about (and teach toward) specific career applications.

On the other hand, Addington and Graves (1998) in their book, *A Case for Calling: Fulfilling God's Purpose in your Life and Work*, make a compelling case that calling must be considered applicable to all work. The book is particularly helpful in integrating thoughts toward work with God's overarching purpose. Yet, even amidst a relatively broad perspective on calling,

they still offer a limited the application of calling to those who are able to work. What about those who are retired, incapacitated, imprisoned, or independently wealthy, etc? Again, it is unfair to criticize a purposed focus, but it does reveal a need to understand calling in a more universal application.

More recently, Broadman and Holman published a book written by the president of GGBTS, Jeff Iorg (2008) titled, *Is God Calling Me? Answering the Question Every Leader Asks*. This a concise and practical book. While this book too is purposely focused on helping Christian leaders, there is rich discussion within it pertaining to what Iorg calls “a universal call for all believers to Christian service” (p. 114). Equally helpful is Iorg’s encouragement to those who are called to ministry leadership outside the center-stage limelight. This work also stops short of a call that is applicable to all humanity. Encouragingly, Iorg ends this book with an invitation to continue the conversation—pushing toward “... some fresh mutual understandings.”

Earley and Gutiérrez (2010) attend to calling in one chapter from their book, *Ministry is: How to Serve Jesus with Passion and Confidence*. This section also offers practical insight into discerning and implementing God’s call—particularly in celebrating the different ways in which God calls: “For some the call is dramatic. But for many the call of God is more like a continual dripping” (p. 118). Again, the author’s intended audience is career ministers.

Most recently, David S. Dockery has brought together over 40 authors in two crucial works: *Christian Leadership Essentials: A Handbook for Managing Christian Organizations* (2011); and *Faith and Learning: A Handbook for Christian Higher Education* (2012). Several authors within both of these works speak directly to the concept of calling and offer indispensable insight and application to both churches and institutions of Christian higher education concerning calling. While some focus on a narrow application of calling to ministry,

and most hold to a two-fold understanding of general calling and specific calling, still some open the conversation up to a discussion of calling that pertains to human nature and a Godward focus.

The importance placed on calling in both Southern Baptist literature and Southern Baptist education constructs a sturdy foundation for understanding calling. It is this rich context that nurtures a personal desire to stipulate and demystify the concept of calling. It is also this context that propels me to want for more—specifically, an understanding of the original, foundational, and innate qualities of calling. There has grown within me a sense that, in addition to a general sense of calling to salvation and specific calling to ministry, there is a calling that transcends culture, gender, ministry, and career—a calling that is inherently human. And with this sense comes a desire to know if such an understanding could be fundamentally motivating.

In pursuing this study, I hope to further the efforts toward stipulating and demystifying the concept of calling—particularly pertaining to calling as motivation. A review of current and historical literature concerning Christian calling combined with the emerging studies on student motivation in the field of educational psychology—primarily Self-Determination Theory—promise a tangible and practical understanding of calling as motivation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Concerning the notion of calling, there appears to be a resurgence in the contemporary theological conversation that is essentially—and in some cases, directly—a return to rich historical contemplations, and both find their underpinning amidst robust scriptural attention to the matter (Conyers, 2009; Harvey 2012; Iorg, 2008; Piper, 2007; Smith, 2011; Veith, 2011; etc.). Simultaneously, within the emerging school of educational psychology, there is rich discussion concerning motivation and ways in which such motivations are understood and energized for effective learning environments (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002;

Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Legault, Green-Demers, and Pelletier, 2006; Levesque, Copeland, and Sutcliffe, 2008; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, and Deci, 2004; etc.). To eavesdrop on both conversations is to recognize that even amidst disparate language and, at times, juxtaposed foundational perspectives, they seem to be discussing the same realities.

The purpose of this research is to explore both conversations, searching for connections between the two that could lead to foundational concepts for engendering motivation.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the identified problem, this effort will examine the following research questions:

#### **First Research Question.**

How have Christians historically understood and applied the concept of calling as motivation?

#### **Second Research Question.**

Does Self-Determination Theory relate to the Christian concept of calling?

#### **Third Research Question.**

Does Self-Determination Theory offer insights into the Christian concept of calling's potential capacity to generate motivation?

### **Key Terms**

Calling—This term in the biblical sense refers to God wooing his people to his work and to himself. Iorg (2008) offers this practical explanation: “A call is a profound impression from God that establishes parameters for your life ...” (p. 8).

General Calling—This term is used in much of the Christian literature to speak of God’s invitation to salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such a call is also described by some as a primary or universal call.

Specific Calling—This term is used in much of the Christian literature to speak of a prompting from God toward a specific ministry or career. Such a call is also described by some as a secondary or particular calling.

Essential Calling—The term essential is understood as “the individual, real, or ultimate nature of a thing” (Merriam-Webster, 2003). In this study, the term is used to delineate the effort to understand a calling that is foundational and inherent to the human condition.

Amotivation—This term is used to describe actions that are carried out for unknown reasons or not carried out at all.

Motivation—This term simply means “to be moved to do something” (Ryan and Deci, 2000a).

Intrinsic Motivation—This term refers to motivation that originates within a person because the “something” one is moved to do is perceived as inherently interesting or enjoyable and closely related to the individual’s perception of self-value.

Extrinsic Motivation—This term refers to motivation that satisfies a demand originating and existing outside the individual. It speaks to motivation that originates somewhere other than the individual’s autonomy and sense of self.

Engender—This term means to cause to exist or to develop. For this study, the term communicates processes that produce intrinsic motivation amidst and by use of extrinsic stimuli.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)—is a comprehensive framework of motivation that approaches human motivation and personality from the perspective of innate psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000b). SDT articulates the

journey from amotivation to intrinsic motivation by distinguishing between differing realities within extrinsic motivation. Garn and Jolly (2014) offer this continuum of motivation recognized in Self-Determination Theory. Though the examples are arguably over-simplified, it assists in defining and understanding the four distinctions SDT identifies within extrinsic motivation:

**Table 1.** Continuum of Motivation in Self-Determination Theory.

Motivation	Description	Example
Intrinsic <sup>a</sup>	Action governed by internal rewards	I study because I enjoy it
Integrated <sup>b</sup>	Action governed by external reward internalized into self-systems	I study because I am a good student
Identified <sup>b</sup>	Action governed by external reward internalized as valuable	I study because I want to go to college
Introjected	Action governed by internal or external pressure	I study because my parents expect it
External	Action governed by external reward or punishment	I study to get my allowance
Amotivation	External reward or punishment does not inspire action	I am grounded because I did not study

<sup>a</sup> Highest level of self-determination

<sup>b</sup> Self-determination forms of extrinsic motivation; self-determination forms of motivation promote high levels of engagement and volitional behavior.

(Garn and Jolly, 2014, p. 8)

## Method

This study follows a historical research approach to determine past and current views on calling, as well as current research on motivation. This approach utilizes journals, articles, books, and other print and digital materials as the basis for conclusions, analysis, and recommendations in pursuit of answers to the stated research questions. In addition, this study uses a meta-narrative approach to explore the divine revelation within Christian scriptures pertaining to motivation and calling.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### Toward a Working Definition of Calling

The available definitions of calling are almost as many as the available writings on the subject. Schuurman (2004) suggests two, Iorg (2008) describes three, Smith (1999) argues for a different three, Placher (2005) highlights four, and Stevens (1999) defines five. Veith (2001) laments a secular high-jacking; Guinness (2003) suggests the survival of the simple and straightforward meaning; Perkins (1631) insisted on the efficient cause and proper end; Tiffin (1984) contrasts a traditional specific to a recent generic; and Schwehn and Bass (2006) simply concede lack of agreement among writers. Some push for philosophical ideals while others strive for practical application. Maybe it means too many things to mean anything at all, or perhaps the concept is too large to assess and describe from one vantage point. My suspicion is that the vast and varied efforts to define calling speak less of discord among those interested and more to its being inherent to the human experience. Here, I will borrow from a few of these efforts to help clarify and focus this research.

To navigate the literature, it is first necessary to recognize that the English words *calling* and *vocation* represent similar concepts in their respective original languages and that the literature treats them primarily as synonymous. Though both terms endure modern departures from their original intent (Iorg, 2008), the term vocation seems to have lost the most ground (Veith, 2001); thus, I will abandon it in this work for the simpler rendering of calling. However, recognizing some perceived distinction between the two, I will make effort to preserve each author's intended distinctions while utilizing the one term.

Tiffin's (1984) distinction between calling and career is initially helpful in establishing the direction of this research. While the two are not incompatible, the former speaks of the essence and immensity of calling while the latter speaks to the specifics of answering that call. Career has the potential, when motivated by calling, to be both the journey toward and the expression of calling, but at the heart of calling is a "... personal summons from God" (Tiffin, 1984, p. 5). It is to this summons that this study looks in search of an understanding of motivation.

Similar is Guinness's (2003) delineation of primary and secondary calling, which is almost identical to the Puritans' understanding of general and particular calling (Schuurman, 2004). The primary (or general) emphasis pertains to the person who is calling—God, while the secondary (or particular) speaks to the efficacy of such a call throughout every aspect of life. Again this research looks to the primary, as it is termed here, in search of an understanding of the innate aspects of calling and the potential to affect motivation.

Smith (1999) writes of three expressions of calling. His second and third distinctions—the specific call for the individual's direction of life and an immediate call for the activities of today—are intriguing in light of eventual application. However, it is his first distinction—what he terms a general call—that simultaneously points toward the direction of intended exploration and reveals the need to push further. He limits his discussion of a general call to the invitation to become a Christian, appropriately accentuating that Christians are a people called by God to be with God. Yet, the discussion stops short of addressing a call that is foundational to all humanity.

Interestingly, Iorg (2008) assigns a more pointed term to the idea of a general call. What is essentially Smith's general call is termed a "universal call" (p. 18). Though he similarly

applies this term to a call to become a Christian, the term itself hints at a deeper understanding of an intrinsically human characteristic within the reality of calling.

All of these aspects and distinctions seem to recognize, if not celebrate, a general sense of God's call that has specific implications throughout life. However, much of the modern literature attends to the latter at the neglect of the former (Conyers, 2009). The intent of this research is to attend to the former in search of foundational knowledge for engendering practical motivation within the latter. Calling, at its essential level, assumes a calling from God. Akin to the aforementioned familial whistle, such a call, if understood, could be distinctive, familiar, gentle, kind, and precisely motivating. Moreover, an effort to demystify, articulate, and harness this calling promises tangible application.

There is, therefore, need for vocabulary that can embrace and articulate what lies beneath what the literature terms universal, general, or primary. There is need for vocabulary that serves as both starting point and direction, while simultaneously pushing further back toward the reality of design that is foundational and inherent to the human experience. Perhaps there is an *essential call*, one in which *essential* means, "the individual, real, or ultimate nature of a thing" (Merriam-Webster, 2003), and further speaks of being indispensable, foundational, permanent, and even inherent. A search through Christian scholarship for this essential call could intersect with psychological theories, and lead to the discovery of requisite building blocks for engendering motivation.

### **Historical Concepts of Calling**

The conversation regarding calling, for Christians, originated between God and our first ancestors (c.f. Genesis 3:9-11). Today, over six thousand years later, the conversation continues to thrive. With a broad historical perspective, this rich conversation divides into six general

periods. The writer of Hebrews delineated the first two by emphasizing the change in God's primary mode of communication that took place at the coming of the Messiah (c.f. Hebrews 1:1-2). Additionally, Placher (2005) identifies "roughly four broad periods in Christian History when 'calling' has had different meanings" (p. 6).

### **Before Christ.**

The first mention of the historical concept of calling, in the Christian tradition, is in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve chose life on their own terms—the sin that caused a separation between them and God (cf. Isaiah 59:2). Genesis 3:9 records, "The Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" After that point, Adam knew both good and evil, as well as a separation from God in spirit and geography. Yet, he possessed within himself both a remembrance of the intimacy of God's call and an inescapable propensity to ignore it. The genealogies that follow in Scripture articulate the spread and separation of both realities—Cain's lineage traveled away from God (cf. Genesis 4:23-24) while Seth's lineage enjoyed beautiful moments of authentic interaction with God's call (cf. Genesis 4:26; 5:24). The two divergent ancestral paths would arrive at the watershed moment for creation nine generations later when God judged the entire earth for the wickedness of humanity, sparing only the family of Seth's descendant, Noah (cf. Genesis 6:1-8).

Noah's interaction with God amidst a depraved culture gives evidence of the possible motivational qualities within God's call. Within what must have been an extremely hostile work environment (cf. Genesis 6:5), and against any logical reasoning known to humanity at that time (cf. Genesis 2:5), Noah labored for 120 years (cf. Genesis 6:3) to build an enormous sea-worthy container ship, solely because God called him to do it (cf. Genesis 7:5).

Soon after the global flood, Noah proved the residual presence of that same imbedded struggle—either to listen for God’s call (cf. Genesis 8:20) or to ignore it (cf. Genesis 9:20-24). In time, humanity once again chose life on their own terms rather than life with God. This rebellion against God’s call and command (cf. Genesis 9:1, 7) culminated in a collective effort to centralize humanity’s self-reliant and self-centered purposes (cf. Genesis 11:1-4). Thwarting these efforts, God divided people by language at the Tower of Babel and subsequently dispersed them to the ends of the earth (cf. Genesis 11:9). In this dispersion, each culture carried with it the propensity to ignore God’s call.

From all these cultures, God chose one man, Abraham, through whom would come one nation, Israel, through whom God would eventually call all humanity (cf. Genesis 12:1-2, Jeremiah 3:17, and Acts 2:39). Much of the ensuing time between the calling of Abraham and the coming of the Messiah is chronicled through sweeping strokes of historical, geographical, physical, and national sagas. Lessons were learned as truth was revealed through generations of slavery, epic migrations, territorial narratives, and the rise and collapse of entire people groups. Throughout these accounts there is one foundational theme—God calling humanity to himself.

### **Anno Domini.**

Isaiah, the eighth-century BC prophet, foretold a day when God would make this call through his anointed one, the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 42:1-9 with Hebrews 1:1-2:4). Seven hundred years later, that prophecy came true when God became flesh at the birth of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Matthew 1:23 and Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus—uniquely God and man—came to close the gap between God and humans by paying the penalty of sin through his death, and by echoing the call for humanity to draw near to God through his life (cf. John 1:1-18).

Jesus lived his earthly life in pure and focused response to God's call (cf. Luke 2:49, John 14:31). He not only exemplified a life motivated by this call (cf. Matthew 26:42 and John 6:38), but called others to pursue such a life with him (cf. Matthew 4:18-22) to the extent that they, too, called others to the adventure of a called life (2Timothy 2:2 and John 1:43-46). So vital was this calling to the collective ethos of the growing number of Jesus' followers that the New Testament Church derived its name from the Greek term *ekklesia*, meaning "called out" (Conyers, 2009). Yet, from the beginning, the "called out" have struggled to understand and embrace the deep implications of such a name.

As the time of fulfillment for Jesus' ministry on earth approached, he spoke more frequently about the intrinsic and ultimate reality of this essential call that motivated his life and ministry (cf. John 14 and John 17). On one such occasion, his close follower, Thomas pleaded, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5). And, as Placher (2005) insists, this struggle has continued throughout the ages:

From the *klēsis* to a Christian life in the early church, to the vocation to a religious life in the Middle Ages, to Luther's *Beruf* and beyond—Christians in all times and places have struggled to figure out, 'Is there something God wants me to do with my life? What is it? How can I be sure? (p. 10)

Thomas led the way for Christians in the question that must be asked and in the person to whom the question is asked.

### **The Early Church.**

In the first few hundred years after Christ's ascension, this struggle to understand and respond to God's call was simplified due to the potential consequences that accompanied its illegal status under Roman law. The actual risk varied from time to time and leader to leader, but

as a minority, Christians faced consequences ranging from arrest to death. The main issue for Christians after responding in faith to God's salvation through Jesus Christ was simply to determine how public their response to God's call should be as they considered the likely consequences of that stance (Placher, 2005).

Ignatius of Antioch, one of the most conspicuous Christians immediately following the time of the original apostles, exemplified this simplicity as well as the accompanying devotion. Most likely arrested on charges of atheism and eventually martyred by the Roman government, Ignatius fought for the glory of God against the myriad of arising heresies in his day and welcomed the opportunity to follow the call of Jesus through impending martyrdom (Galli & Olsen, 2000). He pleaded with the Christians in Rome to withhold any influence they might have that could delay or prevent his martyrdom. His words reinforce the zeal that accompanied a life motivated by calling in the early years of the church:

For it is not my desire that ye should please men, but God, even as also ye do please Him. For neither shall I ever hereafter have such an opportunity of attaining to God; nor will ye, if ye shall now be silent, ever be entitled to the honour of a better work. For if ye are silent concerning me, I shall become God's; but if ye show your love to my flesh, I shall again have to run my race. Pray, then, do not seek to confer any greater favour upon me than that I be sacrificed to God, while the altar is still prepared; that, being gathered together in love, ye may sing praise to the Father, through Christ Jesus, that God has deemed me, the bishop of Syria, worthy to be sent for from the east unto the west, and to become a martyr in behalf of His own precious sufferings, so as to pass from the world to God, that I may rise again unto Him. (Ignatius, in Donaldson & Coxe, p. 74)

These earliest years of the church—whether through a Syrian Bishop, a Samaritan intellectual, a young North African daughter, or an Egyptian sophisticate—displayed a sincerity and focus and motivation that pushed far beyond any particular task or specific career. It was a motivation at the core of the individual that encompassed and consumed all of life and that was directly related to a personal sense of calling.

By the fourth century, the issue of calling had been complicated by Christianity's newfound prominence under Emperor Constantine. Constantine's personal declaration for Christianity offered renewed toleration and acceptance (Placher, 2005). As it grew easier to be publicly Christian, there was a growing sense of the need once again to embrace the sacrifice inherent in answering God's call. Christians not satisfied with the new social ease associated with Christianity looked to the desert for a more demanding expression of faith, which helped fuel the monastic movement. Noll (1997) asserts:

For over a millennium, in the centuries between the reign of Constantine and the Protestant Reformation, almost everything in the church that approached the highest, noblest, and truest ideals of the gospel was done either by those who had chosen the monastic way or by those who had been inspired in their Christian life by the monks. (p. 84)

In the desert, fervency found a home, and motivation was still evident, but with a direction more toward self than toward God who was calling.

Even amidst these more complex times, some still heard God's call to draw near, and some experienced the motivating drive of responding to that call. Additionally, the monastic thrust toward introspection served to illuminate a spiritual journey that takes place in the intimacy of the will, regardless of the physical circumstances surrounding the sojourner. In

*Confessions*, Augustine wrote about God's call into the heart and soul (breast) of the person: "O Lord, Lord, who hast bowed the heavens and come down, touched the mountains and they did smoke, by what means didst Thou convey Thyself into that breast?" (Augustine, p. 88). He also explained how God's call motivates toward a journey from the trappings of this world to the riches and joy of the Lord himself: "Now was my soul free from the gnawing cares of seeking and getting, and of wallowing and exciting the itch of lust. And I babbled unto Thee my brightness, my riches, and my health, the Lord my God" (Augustine, p. 102). This journey within the will is a journey back to the essential call of God to humanity.

### **The Middle Ages.**

For much of the Middle Ages, Christians lived in a time when most everyone considered themselves to be Christians (Placher, 2005). There was little effort required to become a Christian, and the motivation of life was primarily toward working to provide for the family and status, not for the glory of God. Responding to God's call usually focused upon the decision to stay with family or to enter into religious service. Placher (2005) insists that "Medieval people rarely talked about other kinds of 'callings.' To have a *vocatio* meant to be on the way to becoming a monk, nun, friar, or priest" (p. 112). Rampant illiteracy denied the vast majority of Christians access to God's Word, which served to reinforce this unfortunate and contrived dichotomy.

In the early Middle Ages there was a shift in monastic life from the ascetic emphasis of the Benedictine pattern to the more service-oriented Franciscan model in the later Middle Ages. Yet within both of these traditions, the echoes of God's call resounded. Benedict of Nursia's regulatory document—intended originally for local application, but later applied throughout Europe and eventually the world—instructs Christians to listen for God's call:

Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice. The labor of obedience will bring you back to him... Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that everyday calls. (Benedict, p. 43)

Later, Francis of Assisi, though fostering a different perspective on the purposes of monastic life, expressed the same devotion to hear God's call and displayed the same ardent motivation for life with God. Bonaventure's *The Life of St. Francis* describes an encounter God had with St. Francis:

"Lord, what would you have me do?" (Acts 9:6). And the Lord answered him: "Return to your own land (Gen. 32:9), because the vision which you have seen foretells a spiritual outcome which will be accomplished in you not by human but by divine planning." ... From that time on, he withdrew from the bustle of public business and devoutly begged God in his goodness to show him what he should do. The flame of heavenly desire was fanned in him by his frequent prayer, and his desire for his heavenly home led him to despise as nothing (Song of Sol. 8:7) all earthly things. (Bonaventure, p. 10)

Toward the end of the middle ages, a philosophical movement away from the dichotomy between clergy and laity began to emerge. With this came a refocusing on God as the end of humanity's pursuits rather than merely an ascetic life. Thomas À Kempis (1996) championed this perspective in *The Imitation of Christ*:

Today, he who is not a transgressor and who can bear patiently the duties which he has taken upon himself is considered great. How lukewarm and negligent we are! We lose our original fervor very quickly and we even become weary of life.... For all things

which seem to be for our peace and happiness are nothing when You are absent, and truly confer no happiness. (pp. 32, 228)

Thomas À Kempis recognized that ultimately a Christian calling is a calling from God and toward God.

### **Reformation.**

In the early sixteenth century, European ideas about calling changed significantly. With the Reformation, Protestants rescued the concept of calling from the confines of church and monastery, releasing it once again to the populace at large. Placher writes of a general sentiment during those times: “‘We are not Religious [i.e., not nuns or monks],’ one wrote, ‘but we mean to live in the world religiously’” (2005, p. 7). This shift moved quickly and effectively through Protestant Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and with it came the birth of the aforementioned general and particular concepts of calling. Protestant thinking divided calling into two categories: a call to Christianity and a call to a particular job or line of work.

Martin Luther and the Protestant movement led the way toward rethinking the concept of calling:

It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the “spiritual estate”; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the “temporal estate.” That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it and for this reason—namely, that all Christians are truly of the “spiritual estate,” and there is among them no difference at all but that of office. (Luther, 1909-14, p. 13)

John Calvin, among others, embraced the concept that to be Christian was to be called to life in and for God:

The great point, then, is, that we are consecrated and dedicated to God, and, therefore, should not henceforth think, speak, design, or act, without a view to his glory... We are God's: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's; therefore, let his wisdom and will preside over all our actions. We are God's; to him, then, as the only legitimate end, let every part of our life be directed. (Calvin, 1997, p. 695)

This refocus of calling was not, however, limited to the Protestant movement alone. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the influential Catholic order of Jesuits (Galli & Olsen, 2000), spoke of life as being motivated by direction:

In every good election, as far as depends on us, the eye of our intention ought to be simple, only looking at what we are created for... And so I ought to choose whatever I do, that it may help me for the end for which I am created, not ordering or bringing the end to the means, but the means to the end. (Ignatius, 1964, p. 82)

In this era, as with those that preceded it, the lives and writings of those who would have ears to hear give evidence to the enduring reality of God's call. Whether speaking about the general call or a particular calling, the origin, purpose, and end remained the same—God.

### **Post-Reformation.**

Since the Reformation, the way Christians have approached, understood, and applied the concept of calling has changed. Calling, once liberated by the Reformation out of religion into the workforce, now needed deliverance from the workforce as well. The Post-Reformation ideal that all work was associated with a calling from God began to lose favor with many Christians as the Industrial Revolution introduced inevitable and mechanized jobs (Sayers, 1942). This served to return the practical aspects of calling to an environment much like that of the first centuries of Christianity. As a result, Christians existed in a cultural environment much like the world that of

the first Christians, where responding to God's call could be the simple expression of choosing to live a public Christian life.

Still, the call of God remains today, as does the evidence of its effects, among those who would dare to look up from the grind of menial tasks, narcissistic pursuits, and meaningless diversions. Sayers (1942) recognized the "... fundamental difficulty ..." in redeeming the monotonous and endless nature of industrialized work as a calling rather than just employment. Still, she pushed toward an upward calling by insisting that, "Even in this fallen unsatisfactory life, man is still so near His divine pattern that he continually makes things, as God makes things, for the fun of it. He is *homo faber* – man the craftsman" (p. 90).

John Henry Newman (1900), insisting that this upward calling is all encompassing throughout all of life, said, "For in truth we are not called once only, but many times; all through our life Christ is calling us. He called us first in Baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, He graciously calls us still" (p. 233).

Throughout the history of the world, God has varied the communication of his call in strategic ways and humanity has responded in myriad applications, but through it all, there remains the underlying and inherent reality that God created humanity to draw near to him. And, to that end, he calls.

### **Contemporary Conversations on Calling**

The discussion pertaining to calling continues today. Yet, little attention is given directly to the idea of an essential call—a call that is inherent and foundational to the human condition. Still, much that requires and hints toward such a call can be mined from the contemporary conversations.

Veith (2001) hints at this essential call in several discussions. Concerning the implications of calling to common existence, he correlates an emaciated sense of purpose, direction, and identity to the deprivation of an awareness of calling. Following the idea of calling into the work place, he draws a sharp contrast between workers who view life as a call from God and those who remain lost in sin. He even goes so far as to suggest a possible perspective on sin as, “a violation of one’s calling” (p. 135). Though few other authors are willing to go that far, in context this contrast implies a practical advantage for the worker who hears and embraces a call. Beyond that, the discussion suggests the universality of calling as part of the human experience rather than limited to Christianity alone—a requisite perspective for pursuing an understanding of an essential call. Perhaps most helpful is Veith’s summary of Martin Luther’s insistence that calling is less about God’s law—the ought’s and should’s along with their consequent failings—and more about God’s own work of calling us into a “... realm in which we can experience God’s love and grace” (p. 23). To speak of a realm to which we are called suggests a motivating purpose outside the individual’s life and hints of a more foundational understanding of calling. Overall, Veith allows for the discussion of calling to move away both from the exclusive application to religious or pious endeavors and from a view of calling used to merely bolster a positive religious outlook on an otherwise mundane life experience. Calling, as Veith suggests, is essentially about God and his call, plan, purpose, and design for all persons.

Conyers (2009) approaches calling from a cultural perspective that leads the discussion toward the implications of calling for community. This perspective also highlights calling as inherent to the human experience. This seems to suggest the commonality of calling as a “... gravitational center ...” (p. xii) outside the individual self and beyond the skewed importance placed on an individual’s right to choose a course for life. Conyers believes calling

communicates a life drawn by and toward a purpose greater than the individual, and believes this calling to be the hope for restoring the lack of essential humanity to the modern western world. Far beyond merely offering guidance for work and religious careers, calling summons us away from a general aimlessness toward a personal, yet unified, destiny of purpose. He insists, concerning the attention we ascribe to the multiple facets of life, that, “Direction counts for everything” (p. 120). Yet, he perceives cultural loss not only as a loss of the right direction, but also of direction itself. According to Conyers, calling defines the very essence of humanity—not merely in the generic or sterile sense of simply being called to some purpose greater than the individual, but in the relational sense that to be human is to be drawn to someone who “already lays claim to one’s very existence” (p. 7). If this is true and if this is, indeed, essential to the human experience, then it stands to reason that an essential call originates at a single point and beckons all of humanity to the journey.

Setran’s (2011) discussion of the “deep-seated compartmentalization” (p. 346) inherent in a post-Christian world also allows for an essential understanding of calling. Identifying general consequences of compartmentalization, he exposes not only the need for discernment but also hints at the direction that discernment must lead. In the most general sense, compartmentalization fosters the delusion that there is an essential distinction between public and private spheres. Under such a misunderstanding, work and politics, secular ideals and bureaucracy, facts and tasks have little to do with home and church, sacred ideals and personal values, intimacy and leisure. Similar to Conyers and Veith, Setran asserts the necessity of a Christian narrative woven throughout all human life. More narrowly focused, this compartmentalization affects the Christian experience by constructing a façade between clergy and laity. Setran points out a potential weakening of motivation in that Christians in non-

religious jobs could view their work as second-tier or part-time in God's Kingdom. This not only diminishes motivation within activities seen as religious, but also devalues the work that is not directly religious.

Guinness's (2003) understanding of calling is majestic and practical—overwhelmingly transcendent yet pointedly grassroots. He champions a panoramic view of history when he describes calling as that which "... beggar[s] the imagination and thrill[s] the heart and soul of all but the most deaf and unresponsive" (p. 233). Yet within that grandeur, he sees the personal and essential effects of a calling that offers the "... most comprehensive reorientation and most profound motivation in human experience—the ultimate why for living" (p. 7). He defines this "why" as the devotion, power, purpose, and direction of life motivated by that which is solely capable of grounding and fulfilling the truest desires of humanity—calling. He then links this motivating call directly between Creator God as the "Someone who calls" (p. 37), and the human experience as it is "lived out as a response to his summons" (p. 29).

Perhaps the closest this modern conversation comes to bridging the specific implications of calling throughout life and the universal sense of an essential call inherent to the human experience is in Smith's (2011) discussion concerning the character of vocational integrity—congruence. Though the discussion stops short of stipulating and demystifying the idea of an essential call and returns quickly to understanding and implementing calling within the context of community, Smith suggests a long and careful look toward the foundational purpose and motivational power of calling. He describes calling as "... a thread, an underlying purpose ... our fundamental identity ... from God ..." (p. 50), "... our reason for being" (p. 51). He writes of knowing ourselves and being true to ourselves, but is quick to ground such endeavors in the realization that who we are is who God has created us to be. Living life congruent with who we

are will always mean living “congruent with the character and will of God” (p. 52). According to Smith, calling is fundamentally rooted in who God has made us to be and motivates humanity toward the purpose for which God has created us. He argues that calling is neither something we chose for ourselves nor something we receive from someone else. Calling comes from God, thus thriving in this world requires faithfulness to how God has made us and to what God has called us.

### **Summary**

God calls his own to himself. History reveals manifold scope and conveyance of such a call, as well as varied individual response. Yet, the literature consistently reveals a general awareness of and longing for an ultimate, foundational calling inherent to the human condition. Adam’s shame and Noah’s endurance, Moses’ ascent and Jesus’ longing point to something innate and universal. In Ignatius’ race attaining to God, Augustine’s mountain within, Benedict’s attentive ears, and Calvin’s only legitimate end, a gracious and unrelenting call beckons from without yet consumes within. Veith speaks of an experiential realm of God’s grace. Conyers insists that direction counts for everything. Setran writes of a common narrative woven throughout all humanity. Guinness dares to claim the ultimate why for living. Smith describes calling as humanity’s fundamental identity from God. Throughout the distinctions between calling and career; primary and secondary; particular, specific, and immediate, there echoes an essential call that is universal to the human experience.

If this calling is universal to the human experience and foundational in respect to humanity’s origins, then the study of mind and behavior relating to motivation should offer insight into how God has designed humanity, and ultimately serve to inform the faith required to

thrive. Therefore, this research turns to educational psychology's investigations into motivation for further understanding of the efficacy of calling.

## Chapter 3

### Review of Literature (Motivation)

#### Toward a Working Definition of Motivation

Deci and Ryan (2000a) define motivation as “... to be moved to do something” (p. 54). Defining motivation in this general sense is relatively simple. The difficulty comes in trying to understand how to engender motivation. Webster (1828) defines motivation as “That which determines the choice, or moves the will.” It is at this point of determination and will that educational psychology searches deeper into the concept of motivation, recognizing the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation—both of which are important to this study.

Ryan and Deci (2000b) offer a taxonomy of human motivation (figure 1) that arranges the types of motivation along a continuum of self-determination from amotivation through extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation, detailing in particular the divergent regulations within extrinsic motivation. This taxonomy of regulatory styles serves to outline the following review of pertinent literature (Ryan and Deci, 2000b, p. 72).

**Table 2.** The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation With Their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality, an Corresponding Processes

Behavior	Nonself-Determined					Self-Determined
Motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
Regulatory Styles	Non-Regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation
Perceived Locus of Causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat External	Somewhat Internal	Internal	Internal
Relevant Regulatory Processes	Nonintentional, Nonvaluing, Incompetance, Lack of Control	Compliance, External, Rewards and Punishments	Self-Control, Ego-Involved, Internal Rewards & Punishments	Personal, Importance, Conscious Valuing	Congruence Awareness, Synthesis With Self	Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction

## **Amotivation**

Amotivation refers to an individual's lack of intentionality and sense of personal causation (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). It describes those actions that are carried out for unknown reasons or simply not carried out at all, as a result of a disconnect between behavior and outcomes due largely to deficiency in beliefs concerning ability and effort, as well as a lack of perceived value ascribed to the action (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006). In the absence of self-determination, amotivation is associated with disengagement from and termination of the activity at hand (Levesque, Copeland, & Sutcliffe, 2008).

Though there is rich discussion concerning the social environments and learning contexts that perpetuate amotivation versus those that facilitate motivation, Ryan and Deci (2000a) focus much of their approach on the psychological needs requisite to move beyond amotivation. Learning context and social environment, while certainly important, cannot explain why or how motivation occurs. A focus on psychological needs addresses the question of why and how, pertaining to amotivation, and further addresses the issue of the energization of behavior (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991), or in other words, engendering motivation.

This focus on psychological needs recognizes that beyond contextual conditions, movement beyond amotivation can, "... to some extent, come from the individuals' abiding inner resources" (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 58). This approach is helpful in that "... it gives content to human nature ... it addresses whether there are motivational universals in human beings" (Deci, et al., 1991, p. 327).

## **Self-Determination Theory**

The psychological needs that Ryan and Deci (1985) identify as motivational universals are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. They assert that, "Competence involves

understanding how to attain various external and internal outcomes and being efficacious in performing the requisite actions; relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one's social milieu; and autonomy refers to being self-initiating and self-regulating of one's own actions" (Deci, et al., 1991, p. 327). Together these constitute the essentials of a personal sense of well-being. *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT) postulates that satisfaction of these innate needs engenders motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

SDT theorizes that human motivation, continued development, and psychological wellness are sustained through the pursuit of the innate human need to feel competent, autonomous, and related to others (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The now decades of research flowing toward and from SDT have shown sufficient evidence to propose these three psychological needs as universal to the human condition, regardless of social status, age, or culture (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Deci & Ryan, 2008). When applied to education, SDT is concerned not only with learning environment, but also with fostering within the individual an interest in and a sense of value toward learning and developing, along with increased confidence in personal attributes and capabilities (Deci, et al., 1991).

SDT pushes beyond the mere absence of amotivation to distinguish between autonomous and controlled motivation. Both motivate, but with significantly different results. Controlled motivation is regulated by external and internal possibilities of reward or punishment, while autonomous motivation flows from an integrated responsibility of volition. Controlled motivation tends toward a loss of initiative and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), increased anxiety (Ryan & Connell, 1989), and depletion of energy and vitality. Autonomous motivation promises increased energy, greater psychological health, and perpetuity of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It is important to note that ubiquitous to SDT research, autonomous motivation

exists in concert with psychological well-being—a sense of wholeness and authenticity of self, both to the individual and to an organization or culture (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006). This then seems to indicate that to study the essentials for motivation is to study the essentials of what it means to exist and flourish as human.

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation—being moved to act because the activity is inherently interesting or enjoyable (Ryan & Deci 2000a)—is preferred and is shown to engender sustained motivation, whereas extrinsic controls and incentives have shown to undermine motivation, regardless of perceived interest and value inherent to the activity (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Garn and Jolly (2014) point out that “Intrinsic motivation represents the highest form of self-determination in SDT and results in consistent and volitional learning behaviors” (p .9). Intrinsic motivation also speaks to present realities of joy, creativity, discovery, and performance in contrast to future rewards or punishments (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In addition, according to Ryan, et. al. (2006), “Intrinsic motivation is an attribute with which humans are liberally endowed and which plays an extremely important role in psychological development” (p. 808). Pertaining to long-term life goals, intrinsic orientation (viz., personal development, health, wellness, affiliation, etc.) versus extrinsic orientation (viz., money, image, reputation, etc) is also shown to foster more learning and better performance along with increased overall psychological well-being (Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004).

Intrinsic motivation is not, however, limited to those actions that merely seem fun or to those that the individual simply wants to accomplish. It can also include difficult tasks that the individual wills to accomplish because of perceived value and congruence with self (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Whether from emotional reaction or purpose of will, intrinsic motivation originates

within the individual and thrives where it is sustained by the present pleasure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Levesque, et. al., 2008 ) of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

### **Extrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is powerful and important. However, it would not suffice for individuals to motivate toward those tasks that spring from intrinsic motivation alone. Most of the activities in which individuals participate are extrinsic by nature. Additionally, others have suggested that to sustain motivation, activities must be progressively challenging, thus increasing requisite personal competence (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The challenge of engendering motivation then is to foster intrinsic motivation amidst extrinsic contexts that prove increasingly challenging and stimulating.

Ryan and Deci (2000a) define extrinsic motivation as “A construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome” (p. 60). The purpose, parameters, control, and evaluation of the task originate outside of and beyond the perceived ownership of the individual. Ryan and Deci (2000a) point out that, “In classic literature, extrinsic motivation has typically been characterized as a pale and impoverished (even if powerful) form of motivation” (p. 55). As the taxonomy on page 28 indicates, SDT recognizes variation within extrinsic motivation, and thus distinguishes between regulations on one end of the continuum (external and introjected regulation) that stifle motivation, and regulations at the other end of the continuum (identified and integrated regulation) that engender motivation.

*External regulation* satisfies a demand or a reward/punishment contingency that originates and exists outside the individual (Levesque, et. al., 2008). While motivating in the short term—and sometimes, quite powerfully—such behaviors actually work against the innate human need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Thus, they serve to frustrate rather than

foster continued motivation. One can conclude that this is the typical human reaction to controlled versus autonomous regulations which further supports the hypothesis that these three needs are essential to the human experience.

Continuing to follow Ryan and Deci's taxonomy, *introjected regulations* of motivation are somewhat more complex in that they are internally driven by external stimuli. Ryan and Deci (2000b) insist that, "Introjected behaviors still have an external perceived locus of causality and are not really experienced as part of the self" (2000b). This type of regulation is based on pride, ego, and guilt. Individuals are motivated because they have internalized external perceptions of value and success. This is particularly damaging to sustained motivation because of the temptation to substitute external indicators of worth for genuine need satisfaction—the pursuit of one supplanting the other (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

Continuing toward self-determined stimuli, *identified regulation* refers to the value and importance assigned to a particular behavior or activity by the individual. Buy-in or ownership is realized, but there remains distinction between what one values and who one is. As Csikszentmihalyi (1990) recognizes, motivation has to start with "goals they themselves had chosen to pursue" (p. 40). But, he also insists that happiness "... depends on inner harmony" (p. 9) and that problems arise "... when people are so fixated on what they want to achieve that they cease to derive pleasure from the present ... forfeit[ing] their chance of contentment" (p. 10). Thus, there remains the need to nurture the integration of regulations within extrinsic motivation.

*Integrated regulation*—which is, according to Ryan and Deci (2000b), "... the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation ..." (p. 72)—occurs when external regulations are completely unified with one's sense of self. This occurs when the "... behavior performed is integrated with other aspects of self" (Levesque, et. al., 2008). While not initially originating

from the innate pleasure and satisfaction characteristic of intrinsic motivation, it does lead to a re-shaping of self as the new external regulations reach congruence with the individual values and needs. Ryan and Deci (2000a) state that, “The more one internalizes the reasons for an action and assimilates them into the self, the more one’s extrinsically motivated actions become self-determined” (p. 62). It could then be argued that self—especially where self is identified with one’s will and autonomy—is most engaged within integrated regulation, even over intrinsic motivation. At the point of integration, a person is willing and working to understand and reshape personal identity, and thus proactively influencing one’s own sense of internal interests and joy.

The importance of this integrated connection between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation cannot be overstated. Humans live in an external world. To survive in such a world, one must adopt certain external regulations for motivation. Yet, the research shows that for motivation to exist and perpetuate itself, intrinsic motivation must be the driving force. Integration provides the vehicle to internalize extrinsic stimuli so that a person can affect change/growth in self, and ultimately to engender intrinsic motivation.

## **Summary**

SDT identifies three psychological needs that are both inherent to the human condition and requisite motivational universals. To study the essentials for motivation is to study the essentials of what it means to exist and flourish as human. Through addressing the innate need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, motivation coincides with the authenticity to self and sense of wholeness that constitutes psychological well-being. SDT further maps the path from the extrinsic to the intrinsic by way of an integrated locus of causality. Through integration,

a person can internalize identified values and assimilate them to a maturing sense of self, thus engendering continued motivation.

## Chapter 4

### Integration of Concepts through Biblical Meta-narrative

Returning once again, as a child, to the musical cadence of my father’s call—so powerful in motivation and so fulfilling to my sense of wholeness and authenticity of self—I am filled with curiosity. Why did it work? Why was I so motivated and fulfilled? What does it reveal about who I am and how I am put together as a human being? What does it reveal about the one who put me together? The would-be educational psychologist in me longs to understand the requisite needs within, and how to fulfill them and excite them toward integrated and intrinsic motivation. The would-be theologian in me longs to understand who made me this way and for what purpose.

As I stated earlier, to eavesdrop simultaneously on the Christian conversation concerning calling and on educational psychology’s conversation concerning motivation is to recognize that even amidst disparate language and, at times, juxtaposed foundational perspectives, they seem to be discussing the same realities. Both speak of foundational verities inherent to the human condition.

Historical and contemporary literature pertaining to calling suggests that calling is universal to the human experience and essential in respect to humanity’s origins. As Smith (2011) maintains, calling is the “... underlying purpose ... our fundamental identity ... from God ...” (p. 50), “... our reason for being” (p. 51). At the same time, educational psychology posits the existence of innate emotional conditions necessary for engendering motivation. SDT asserts that human motivation, continued development, and psychological wellness are sustained through the pursuit of the innate human need to feel competent, autonomous, and related to others, and further insists that these needs are universal to the human condition, regardless of

social status, age, or culture (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Deci & Ryan, 2008). The exploration into motivation and the pursuit of an essential call are both studies in the essentials of what it means to exist and flourish as human.

Harvey (2012) celebrates the motivational efficacy of calling and contends that, “If we’re truly to understand the importance of calling in ministry, we need to grasp that the impetus for it originates with a wise, loving, and sovereign God. And before he calls us to ministry, he calls us to himself” (p. 35). This chapter then explores the Biblical meta-narrative pertinent to a foundational perspective, seeking to integrate Christian calling and psychological motivation in a unified pursuit of what Ignatius (1964) called, “... the end for which I am created ...” (p. 82).

Throughout the historical review of calling in Chapter Two, there is a unified hint of something that is foundational, rudimental, essential. Guinness said it beggars the imagination and thrills the soul. Benedict of Nursia listened for a voice from heaven. Tiffin speaks of a summons from God. Smith calls it an invitation. Ignatius saw it as rising unto God. Thomas À Kempis saw nothing less than abiding in a place that hosted the presence of God. For Conyers it is the gravitational center. John Calvin believed it to be the only legitimate end. Setran insisted on the universal human need for a Christian narrative woven throughout all of life. Similarly, though perhaps not as willing to trace it back to a created origin, SDT confidently asserts the existence of requisite needs to the human experience that are universal and foundational. Ryan, et. al. (2006) even go so far as to write that, “Intrinsic motivation is an attribute with which humans are liberally endowed ...” (p. 808). Here again, we see the integration of concepts. Many educational psychologists recognize endowed foundational human attributes and the Christian conversation on calling points back to the source and the beginning of those attributes. Therefore, the attempt to stipulate and demystify the concept of calling—particularly pertaining

to calling as motivation—returns to the beginning. Who did God create us to be? What did God create us to do?

## **The Beginning**

In much of the Christian life—and certainly the human life apart from Christ—we run the risk of settling for less than the ultimate. For Christians, it is possible to view what Christ did on the cross as the ultimate by which all of life is understood. However, there was a plan and a purpose before sin entered the world. SDT allows for such a purpose when it posits autonomy, competence, and relatedness as endowed foundational realities in human nature. Christian calling points back to the one who created. These two conversations intersect at the revelation of the original nature endowed to humans. To understand who humans were created to be and what they were created to do, an examination is needed of the short history before sin marred both humanity and the world.

Genesis 1:25-27 reveals that God designed the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, livestock according to their kinds, everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind, but humanity, he created in the image of himself. To follow the rhythm of the passage is to recognize contextually that God is revealing human nature as originally created according to God's kind, and provides within the context the initial understanding of that kind. Verse 26 records, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness.'" (1:26). The three following parallel statements illustrate the consistency between a Christian understanding of the God who created in his image and educational psychology's recognition of requisite human needs. (1) Deci, et.al. (1991) define autonomy as, "being self-initiating and self-regulating of one's own actions" (p. 327). The phrase, "Then God said ..." fits with this definition, revealing that God is autonomous in nature. (2) Deci, et. al. (1991) define competence as, "understanding

how to attain various external and internal outcomes and being efficacious in performing the requisite actions ...” (p. 327). The phrase, “Let us make man ...” fits with this definition, revealing that God is competent in nature. (3) Deci, et al. (1991) define relatedness as, “developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one’s social milieu ...” (p. 327). The phrase, “... in our image after our likeness” fits with this definition in two ways: First, the grammar in the passage communicates a singular supreme God referring to himself in the first person plural. Relying on the whole of Scripture it can be seen that God fulfils the tenets of relatedness within himself—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit (c.f. Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 3:16-17; John 16:13-15; Ephesians 2:18). Second, God is creating humanity in his image and after his likeness to be in relationship with him and with each other. Together these reveal that God is relational in nature. So, the nature of God is revealed as autonomous, competent, and relational.

Human nature at its essential level means to be created in the image of God—autonomous, competent, and relational. God created Adam in his image as a relational being, a reality demonstrated in his fellowship with God as well as his perception of the need for Eve (c.f. Genesis 2:20 and 3:8). God created Adam in his image as a competent being, a reality demonstrated through the delegation of work and responsibility (c.f. Genesis 2:15 and 19). God created Adam in his image as an autonomous being, a reality that would lead, all too soon, to a disastrous decision (c.f. Genesis 3:6 and Romans 5:12). It makes sense then that Deci & Ryan (1985) in studying human nature identify competency, autonomy and relatedness as the three motivational universals to the human experience. And, decades of research have indicated that these three universals transcend the lines of demarcation used within humanity (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Deci & Ryan, 2008). Further connecting created human nature to the Creator, Calvin

(1997) reminds us that "... we are God's; let us, therefore, live and die to him (Rom. 14:8). We are God's; therefore, let his wisdom and will preside over all our actions. We are God's; to him, then, as the only legitimate end, let every part of our life be directed" (p. 695).

It is also helpful to see what the biblical account of the beginning reveals about the purpose for which humanity was designed. Recorded in Genesis 1:28, God discloses that humans, over and above the other creatures, were designed to fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it. Piper (2007) offers an explanation of this purposed design: "God created me—and you—to live a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life" (p. 31). In relationships, work, hobbies, or recreation, the essential call does not change. Beyond the distinctions of calling and career, general calling and particular calling, or secular application and religious application, all humans are created to glorify God in every aspect of life. God even goes so far as to say that the heavens will declare his glory (c.f. Psalm 19:1), but the earth is humanity's responsibility (c.f. Psalm 115: 1, 16).

God demonstrated the nature of humanity's purpose in the way he began his work of creation. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." If one is not careful at this point, the imagination will picture a green and blue sphere surrounded by a starry sky. But, Genesis 1:2 says, "The earth was without form and void ...". In that moment recorded in Genesis 1:1, God created all the elements of the universe. Then, with those elements before him, he began his great and glorious work of forming the earth and stretching out the heavens (c.f. Genesis 1:3-31). God provided this two-step process to reveal to Adam the nature of humanity's task. God created humans to subdue and exercise dominion over every element within their charge to glorify him (c.f. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:31). This also connects with

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) recognition that motivation speaks to present realities of creativity, discovery, and performance. Recognizing this inherently human purpose, Placher (2005) observes that, "Christians in all times and places have struggled to figure out, 'Is there something God wants me to do with my life? What is it? How can I be sure?'" (p. 10).

There is something God wants humans to do with their lives. He created humanity in his own nature. Through autonomy, relatedness, and competence, God calls every person to draw near to him, be satisfied in him, and to glorify him in every aspect of life.

### **The Fall**

The autonomous nature of God was such a desired and essential component in his creation of humanity according to his image that he risked entrusting humans with the responsibility of true volitional will. It stands to reason, then, that studies from the field of educational psychology have observed that controlled motivation tends toward a loss of initiative and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), increased anxiety (Ryan & Connell, 1989), and depletion of energy and vitality, while autonomous motivation promises increased energy, greater psychological health, and perpetuity of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It is human nature to exercise the autonomy of volitional will. Adam and Eve exercised that will to choose to believe in a lie that being like God was better than being with God (c.f. Genesis 3:5-7). Adam and Eve's misuse of their autonomy fractured the congruence of self, resulting in damage to their relatedness and resulting in decreased competency (Genesis 3:6, 8, 16-19). Interestingly, Ryan and Deci (2000a) insist that intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being are maintained and enhanced only when all the requisite psychological needs—autonomy, relatedness, and competence—are addressed.

With this misuse of autonomy, sin entered the world (c.f. Romans 5:12). Though it is common to focus on the manifold expressions of sin, here the passage speaks to the core aspect of sin: namely, a violation of human nature—who humans were created to be and what humans were created to do. At this foundational level, Veith’s (2001) suggestion that sin is, “... a violation of one’s calling ...” fits. Equally fitting is Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier’s (2006) description of amotivation as actions that are not carried out, as a result of a disconnect between behavior and outcomes. Sin is certainly an inexcusable assault against the nature of God (c.f. Psalm 51), but it is also a violation against original human nature created in the image of God.

This sin caused a real and impassable separation between the Creator and his created (c.f. Isaiah 69:1-2), resulting in universal brokenness to self (c.f. Romans 3:10-19) and a global curse upon the earth (c.f. Genesis 3:17-19). Human nature has not changed—certainly not in a foundational understanding, but it has been tragically marred by sin. The tenets of human nature—autonomy, competence, relatedness—are still relevant, but sin has left them fractured.

Effort, then, must be made to repair the disintegration within the individual self, or to at least attempt to adjust incessantly for the brokenness. Perhaps much of what is understood in amotivation is indicative of this brokenness. Further still, perhaps the stifling efforts seen in external and introjected regulations are attempts to work around a broken sense of self—whether in motivating students or in motivating church members. Thus, through theories like SDT and teachings on calling, psychologists and theologians alike search for ways to engender movement along the motivational continuum from amotivation to sustained intrinsic motivation.

Regrettably, the lie that Adam and Eve believed—the same lie humanity continues to believe—promised freedom but resulted only in slavery (c.f. John 8:34). This bondage is within the self (c.f. Romans 7:14). Sin originates from what is presumptuously termed self-

centeredness, yet results in the fracturing and ultimate destruction of self (c.f. Matthew 16:25). Self, at its fundamental level, depends on congruence between autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls this “...inner harmony...” (p. 10), which is similar to Smith’s (2011) description of lives that are “... lived congruent with the character and will of God” (p. 52). To exercise one requisite need at the expense of the others fractures this internal harmony and diminishes overall psychological well-being. The need for relatedness starts with the innate human need to be rightly related to God and then extends to a need to be rightly related to others (c.f. Luke 10:27). Both of these expressions of relatedness suffer if autonomy is used to choose a diminished sense of self over God. Such a choice then leads to bondage, which in turn decreases autonomy, which then severely limits competency. They are inseparable.

Similarly, the purpose for which humans were created was not changed by sin, yet like human nature, it suffered immeasurable damage from sin. Sayers (1942) writes,

Adam was put in the garden of Eden ‘to dress and till it,’ and for intellectual occupation he had the surely very enjoyable task of naming all the animals. What, then, in the writer’s mind, was the really operative part of the curse? The work was to be more difficult, certainly—there were to be thorns and thistles—but there was to be something else as well. Work was to be conditioned by economic necessity—that was the new and ominous thing. (p. 91)

Work that was originally a glorious part of God’s perfect plan for humanity was now, in the brokenness of sin, at risk of becoming merely the means of physical and economic survival.

In Romans chapter eight, the apostle Paul speaks in depth about this brokenness in the self and in the workplace. Amidst a context of the sinner’s personal slavery to sin, Paul reveals that creation was subjected to futility because of sin. As a result, every element within creation

breaks beneath bondage and corruption. Yet, responsibility to the task to use those elements to glorify God is not abated. That is why Paul writes that all of creation is waiting to be freed by the children of God. Therefore, the task that remains humanity's responsibility is profoundly more difficult and, as such, challenges competence, strains relatedness, and threatens autonomy. It makes sense then that Thomas À Kempis (1996), who, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, bemoaned the strained environment in which humanity works, would also lament that, "We lose our original fervor very quickly and we even become weary of life ... For all things which seem to be for our peace and happiness are nothing when You are absent, and truly confer no happiness" (p. 228). This is similar to the cry echoed centuries later by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), when he wrote that happiness "depends on inner harmony" (p. 9) and that problems arise, "... when people are so fixated on what they want to achieve that they cease to derive pleasure from the present ... forfeit[ing] their chance of contentment" (p. 10). In addition, Veith (2001) points toward the importance of understanding an essential calling amidst such brokenness when he correlates an emaciated sense of purpose, direction, and identity to the deprivation of an awareness of calling.

### **The Redemption**

Returning to the meta-narrative, the need for redemption can now be seen. It was at the moment of original sin that calling became necessary. God called to Adam (c.f. Genesis 3:9) and God still continues to call all of humanity back to himself (c.f. Romans 8:30). Conyers' (2009) understanding of calling being the "... gravitational center ..." (p. xii), is appropriately grounded in this early account of creation and fall. Calling, at a foundational level, calls humanity back to the nature and purpose of original design. But humanity is incapable of answering that call because sin has caused real separation from God. Thus, Christ came to pay the penalty of sin (c.f. 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:2), and to reconcile humanity to God (c.f. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5). This is a monumental

achievement that the Lord Jesus Christ alone was qualified to endure and accomplish (c.f. Hebrews 4:15; John 14:6). Thus, a humble personal surrender (c.f. James 4:6) to the saving power of Christ's work on the cross (c.f. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:18) is the only appropriate response and the only hope any human has for returning to God and repairing the brokenness of self (Acts 4:12; John 10:10). Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier's (2006) note such brokenness in amotivation: "Amotivated individuals ... may feel disintegrated or detached from their action and will thus invest little effort or energy in its effectuation" (p. 568).

However, this calling to salvation is not the ultimate call. It is not what Guinness (2003) describes as the "... most comprehensive reorientation and most profound motivation in human experience—the ultimate why for living" (p. 7). Rather, salvation in Christ is the means to a much greater end—granted, it is the only means to that end, but it is not, in and of itself, the ultimate why for living. This is why Newman (1900), insisted that, "... we are not called once only, but many times; all through our life Christ is calling us. He called us first in Baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, He graciously calls us still" (p. 233). Christ's death closed the gap of separation between Creator and created. Through faith in Christ, humanity once again has access to God (c.f. Romans 5:2). That access returns humanity to the original design and purpose (c.f. Ephesians 4:24), where human nature is once again whole in God and where human activity resumes the given task—to glorify God with every element available and throughout every aspect of life.

Paul writes of this in his letter to the church at Ephesus. Notice that this passage celebrates the immensity of Christ's work on the cross, yet pushes back to a purpose and plan that commenced prior to sin.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ... according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:3-10)

This speaks to the plan that was laid before the foundation of the world and is now made possible through the blessing of Christ. This speaks to the mystery of God's will and purpose and plan for the fullness of all time. This speaks of God's most essential call to humanity—that all things in heaven and earth would be united to him.

Jesus revealed this purpose, plan, and desire for creation when he spoke to the Father just before his crucifixion and much-awaited ascension.

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed ... I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one ... I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one

even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17)

God’s ultimate purpose for humanity is evident through this earnest expression of the divine heart—God the Son crying out to God the Father. His desire is that together with him, humanity might once again live in its true original nature and find the joy of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in the work for which humanity was ultimately designed. Disintegrations within self that perpetuates amotivation is directly linked to disintegration between self and God.

## **Conclusion**

According to Conyers (2009), calling defines the very essence of humanity—not merely in the generic or sterile sense of simply being called to some purpose greater than the individual, but in the relational sense that to be human is to be drawn to someone who “already lays claim to one’s very existence” (p. 7). Discussions and applications of calling find their foundation in an understanding of that claim. Whether a general call or a particular call, a career or a vocation, all must lead toward and find fulfillment in God’s essential call to humanity. As Conyers (2009) contends, “Direction counts for everything” (p. 120). Additionally, an original understanding of human nature and God’s purpose for humanity within creation offers an explanation for the innate human need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness—characteristics affirmed in

much of the psychological literature. Understanding the genesis and purpose of this nature better equips one for the task of engendering motivation from within what Ryan and Deci (2000a) describe as “the individuals’ abiding inner nature” (p. 58).

We must not settle for less than the ultimate. God calls us to so much more. In work, in rest, in relationships, dreams, aspirations, goals, we must strive to be whole as originally intended. God designed humanity to dwell with him in perfect relatedness, to thrive with him in celebrated competence, and to know him in the autonomy of self. As these needs are fulfilled in the authentic relationship and empowered purpose of creation, self is whole and motivated to thrive. God calls us to this.

## Chapter 5

### Implications, Applications, and Recommendations for Future Research

#### Implications

Christianity recognizes that human beings are designed and created by God, and thus, human nature is associated with God's original design and intended purpose. Educational psychology studies human nature and how to work within observed needs to engender motivation. Both are discussing comparable realities. This study has felt like walking between two large tables at a coffee shop, listening to two very different conversations about very similar subjects. One may trust in the biblical revelation of the Creator and the other may trust in the tenets of evolution, but they are essentially discussing the same topic. Though perspective and presuppositions can influence study, each conversation could learn from the other. There is bridgework to be constructed between the worlds of Biblical theology and science. Perhaps with cooler heads and warmer hearts, a celebration of autonomy and a commitment to relatedness could increase competence in both fields of study.

From a Christian perspective, if SDT studies the essentials of human nature and how to influence requisite human needs to engender intrinsic motivation, then Christian education can learn from these studies regardless of seemingly disparate language and juxtaposed perspectives. We are all human. We are all created in the image of God for the purpose of his will. Though Christians rejoice, rightfully so, in the personal efficacy of Christ's atonement, we are also called to bring others to God through Christ. Paul wrote, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself ..." (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:18). But he followed it with, "... and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2<sup>nd</sup>

Corinthians 5:19). This cannot be accomplished within the walls of church and seminary alone. Marsden (1997) encourages Christian scholars to "... be models of what it means to love and respect those with whom one differs, even as they may debate their differences", and insists that "Ideally, then, Christian scholarship should provide a refreshing alternative to the sorts of partisanship that mark the outlooks of many communities" (p. 54). Liftin (2004) also holds that Christian educators "... must develop within their citizens the habits of civility and the skills to listen respectfully, evaluate critically, and respond usefully" (p. 273). The connection between SDT and Christian calling beckons us to cross the aisle and, with both humility and excellence, enter into new and exciting conversations.

From an educational-psychology perspective, if the requisite needs delineated in SDT can be linked to the implications of the Biblical revelation, then educational psychology may want to consider a creation motif for humanity. The recognition of a Creator and the purpose of his creation may enhance the understanding of how we are designed and what motivates us. Conyers (2009) pushes back against Enlightenment's emphasis on autonomy over relatedness when he writes,

Over against this is the understanding of life that has always struck human beings as belonging to the province of common sense. We came into a world that existed before us. We leave this world long before things resolve themselves in a way that gives moral or intellectual clarity to the situation in which we find ourselves. So, in order to live here with any semblance of wisdom, purpose, and order, we need "guidance of another." (p. 18)

In this province of common sense, do we sacrifice academic integrity to, at least, listen to a theory of motivation that originates with an essential calling from God? Marsden (1997) holds

that we would not, and further contends that "... while it is important to guard against religious extremists gaining power over the pluralistic public domain, the threat is not essentially different from that of secular or political extremists taking over. No entire set of outlooks should be excluded because of some extremes it includes" (p. 34). Reaction against the extremes can polarize the conversation and diminish overall learning. On the other hand, scholarship can be strengthened through mutual respect and a willingness to converse. Historically speaking, the incongruence viewed between science and faith is a relatively recent perspective (Marsden, 1997). This perspective may be unnecessary if conversation rather than power is practiced within the pluralistic public domain. Connections found in this research between Christian calling and self-determination theory imply the possibility of connections between other fields of study and Christian faith that often have been viewed as mutually exclusive.

## **Applications**

My desire to research calling and motivation originated from personal experience in church and seminary, and now I return to these settings to explore possible applications of an understanding of an essential call. Church and seminary are entwined in many ways and much that is applied in seminary will eventually lead to application in and through the church as well. Still, there are opportunities for applications specific to the church setting that will be covered before exploring seminary application in detail.

### **Application to Church**

An essential call has application directly to the ministry of the church. It can be applied to mobilizing God's people to God's work through the church and out into the marketplace. An essential call is universal to the human experience and is not hampered or abated by individual choice of job and career. In those jobs and careers, humans are called to draw near to God, to be

satisfied in him, and to glorify him. As this research indicates, such a perspective perpetuates the integrity of self—autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Additionally, an application of this theory of an essential call into church polity as well as church health could abate the temptation to shortcut psychological well-being for the sake of accomplishing tasks. As already stated, Ryan and Deci (2000a) insist that intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being are maintained and enhanced only when all the requisite psychological needs—autonomy, relatedness, and competence—are addressed. If God created humans to be autonomous, then church-generated legalism is counterproductive. If God created humans for relatedness, then selfish expectations must be surrendered. Furthermore, if God created humans to be competent, then reliance on his strengths, gifts, and purpose must be encouraged. Some pastors lament their struggle to motivate the people they serve. Adjusting the primary objective in ministry to include caring for and promoting growth within, it is more likely that innate human needs may result in sustained intrinsic motivation.

### **Application to Seminary**

Seminaries that place a high value on calling can benefit systemically from adding the understanding of an essential call to what they already understand about a general and specific call. Specifically, there are four broad areas that could be initially impacted by an understanding of essential call: The central archetypal metaphor for education; the theology that is taught; the curriculum that organizes course work; and the andragogical methods that are used for teaching adults.

### ***Archetypal Metaphor***

Aristotle (1920) said, “The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor” (Ch. 22, 2). Humans often think in metaphor. Identifying a shared metaphor can help set a foundational

context for learning and life. Boe (2005) explains that “Theorists of metaphor have long described a kind of metaphor that corresponds to the archetype ... it becomes a collective metaphor, an archetypal way of thinking...” (p. 75). An understanding of God’s essential call on humanity offers this kind of archetypal metaphor based in Biblical revelation.

Throughout scripture God’s call is often associated with a mountain ascent (e.g. Moriah, Sinai, Horeb, Zion, etc.). Moses drew near to God while “The Lord called to him out of the mountain...” (Exodus 29:3). David wrote “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” (Psalm 24:3). Jesus “... went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him” (Mark 3:13-14). Throughout scripture, God’s holy mountain is referenced more than 400 times. Therefore, the word ascent becomes an additional way of understanding an essential call.

The use of a mountain ascent as a metaphor for God’s essential calling could serve to orient all learning and application toward God’s ultimate purpose for humanity. As stated above, “Direction counts for everything” (Conyers, 2009. p. 120). Without such an orientation, there is danger that the ideas of general and specific calling will not be connected. However, the ascent metaphor for essential calling holds the power to integrate all aspects of calling: God ultimately calls humanity to ascend his holy hill; access to that hill is gained by answering the general call to salvation in Christ; and, God calls individual humans to ascend along specific trails (e.g. jobs, career, ministries, relationships, etc.).

Seminary education holds significant potential to provide a shared experience of ascent where teachers and students are tethered together. Instead of a hierarchical learning environment where teachers are seen as dispensers of knowledge and students as mere receptacles. Each person’s life experience, prior knowledge, understanding, and skills can be developed and

utilized for the success of the adventure. Even some aspects of education that may seem rudimentary and mundane or perhaps too generalized, could be revitalized in the understanding of their importance related to a successful climb. For a climber, physical training, dietary disciplines, and acclimation exercises, could hold little value in themselves. But, when these disciplines are viewed as requisite to a lifetime of successful ascents, their value is appreciated and the adventure is enhanced. For a church-planter, missionary, or Christian entrepreneur, the mastery of language, exegesis, hermeneutics, and church history may seem a distraction to one's specific calling. However, when an archetypal metaphor for learning fosters the idea of a lifetime—and eternity—of ascent toward God, all aspects of seminary education can be appreciated as valuable. And, the adventure of answering God's specific callings is greatly enhanced.

### *Theology*

This archetypal metaphor of ascent and the essential calling it depicts helps to enrich—and in some cases, correct—the theology taught in seminary education. When an essential call is understood as both innate and ultimate, it continually recalibrates interpretation and application to God's overarching purpose: "... to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:10). As an example, in the fourth chapter of John's gospel, Jesus' students come upon a curious scene. They approached Jesus at Jacob's well just as a young Samaritan woman, to whom he had been speaking, dropped her water jar and ran back to town proclaiming what had happened to her. Perplexed by the account being played out in front of them they simply prepared to eat. Jesus seized the opportunity to challenge their views of theology: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." Understanding God's

essential call on humanity guides interpretation so as to see “his work” as “drawing all things to him.”

Now that he had gained their attention, he motioned for them to look down and around at the physical realm to notice that it was still four months till harvest. Then he said, “Look, I tell you [I see him here pulling his hands to his own chest], lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” Often, this quote is ripped from its context and taught as though these white fields are analogous to the lost world. Not only do I struggle to reconcile such a misinterpretation with the whole of scripture and the historical experience of evangelism, John himself encases this initial teaching in a context that disallows such proof-texting. The woman, to whom Christ offered living water, did not fill her jar and run into town to peddle her wares (c.f. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:17). Rather, she dropped her jar and ran into town to see if there was anyone who might come with her to draw from this well of living water. Those who came, came to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They didn’t believe because of her testimony, but because she brought them to Jesus to taste of the harvest themselves. The harvest is the Kingdom of God (Zacharias, 2000). Though the harvest of this physical world is relegated to seasons and temporality, Christ offers the way to a spiritual harvest now and forever.

Later when Jesus sent out his disciples into the towns he was soon to visit, he instructed them to spread the word that, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10). His disciples were not to go harvest fields of lost souls and pray for more missionaries to join them. They were to go out before Christ proclaiming that the fields are white for harvest—“the kingdom of God has come near”—and see if anyone would come work the harvest of God’s plentiful Kingdom with them. Just like the women Jesus spoke to at the well, they were to go and bring others to God through Christ. Direction is everything in evangelism as well. We do not

take salvation to a lost world; rather we go to bring a lost world to the Savior who grants them access to the white harvest fields of God's Kingdom. As stated earlier, to believe and operate as if our primary kingdom work is to harvest lost souls is an error. Our primary task is to harvest the bounty of the Kingdom, or to mix metaphors, to ascend God's holy hill. Thus, the general call to salvation is the means to the greater end of the essential call to draw near to God in every aspect of life.

This is just one example of how embracing the concept of an essential call can enrich the theology taught through seminary education. Student and teacher alike continually return to the ultimate purpose to which God calls humanity. This focus on the essential purpose encourages all theology to be understood in the broader context of Biblical meta-narrative

### *Curriculum*

This analysis of curriculum is based on a key component from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary as an example of how essential calling could influence seminary education. The mission of GGBTS to shape Christian leaders is pursued through curriculum and co-curricular activities by cultivating 21 essential leadership characteristics. Of these 21 characteristics, four are specifically related to calling:

Leadership characteristics related to being FOCUSED on living out one's calling:

11. God's Call (F11)—A Christian leader understands the biblical, theological, historical, personal, and experiential foundations of joining God in His Kingdom purposes.
12. Focused Life (F12)—A Christian leader focuses his or her life to live out a calling in accordance with God's Kingdom purposes.

13. Obedience (F13)—A Christian leader responds with active commitment to God’s call to join Him in His Kingdom purposes.

14. Passion (F14)—A Christian leader demonstrates passion through his or her life toward the pursuit of God’s call. (GGBTS, 2014)

In addition, one of the six MDIV degree objectives is to “Affirm God’s calling and explore areas of spiritual formation and self-awareness appropriate for ministry leadership” (GGBTS, 2014).

All GGBTS curriculum is constructed around these 21 leadership characteristics.

Understanding an essential call could influence each of the 21 characteristics to varying degrees, but here I will propose how the inclusion of essential calling could reshape the four characteristics specifically related to living out one’s calling.

*God’s Call (F11)—A Christian leader understands the biblical, theological, historical, personal, and experiential foundations of joining God in His Kingdom purposes.*

GGBTS rightly places high value on understanding the foundations of God’s call. But an understanding that only seeks to grasp the idea of a general call to salvation and particular calls to tasks, careers, and ministries falls short of this goal. To join God in his Kingdom purpose, an understanding of God’s essential purpose is necessary. This essential purpose orients education and ministry toward the foundational reality of God and his creation. Thus Christian leaders are shaped that not only lead well, but that also lead in the right direction. Greenslade (1984) insists that “Revelation is vital to leadership. God’s view of things and not man’s has been the starting point for all great movements. We need to know who God is and where He wants to take His people” (p. 41). It is the essential call that takes humanity back to God’s original intended purpose of drawing near to him and glorifying him throughout every aspect of life. In this original purpose, humanity can begin to understand who God is, who he created humans to be,

and where he wants to take his people. Greenslade (1984) further explains that “When God’s chosen instrument (the leader) has seen God’s plan and purpose he can stir and motivate the people of God, keeping them on course when the going gets rough—as it usually does” (p. 41). As important as it is to understand the biblical, theological, historical, personal, and experiential foundations of joining God in His Kingdom purposes, such an understanding is not complete until we embrace God’s essential call. For it is the essential call that returns us to God’s original, foundational, and overarching purpose for all of time and for all of creation.

*Focused Life (F12)—A Christian leader focuses his or her life to live out a calling in accordance with God’s Kingdom purposes.*

Calling is a distinguishing principle in Christian higher education. Thornbury (2012) celebrates this, but also pushes Christian education to look deeper for that focused life.

One of the central convictions that distinguish Christian higher education from its secular counterparts is the concept of *vocatio*—that the Creator of the universe gives to each one of his children a special role in helping develop His kingdom. The notion that God Himself not only has given individuals special giftings but also seeks for them to direct these talents toward a clear focus and direction in life stands in stark contrast to the secular view that if God exists at all, He is not involved in our personal lives or futures. But knowing that God has a plan is only the first step of recognition. The real work for the Christian university is to work with students to help them understand both the what and the how of vocation. (p. 504)

Seminary education, with its focused commitment to shape Christian leaders for professional roles that carry great responsibility and opportunity, is uniquely positioned to tap into this clear focus and direction in life because generally speaking, students engage in. To help students focus

their lives on living out God's calling in accordance with his Kingdom purposes, seminary curriculum needs to address the essential purposes of God's call and how to focus on that purpose throughout myriad applications.

Additionally, many church leaders struggle to balance a focus on their ministry with a focus on God's plan for their ministry (Gyertson, 2011). Seminary curriculum that aims to shape these leaders needs to place high value on assignments and classroom activities that foster the disciplines that promote listening for and waiting upon God. This could also open the seminary doors to a wider range of students and a wider range of ministry application. All Christians are called to focus their lives to live out a calling in accordance with God's Kingdom purposes. Seminaries may be seen to only offer value to specific callings that focus on traditional church roles. Fostering an understanding of an essential call throughout seminary curriculum could encourage Christians from all careers to make use of seminary education.

*Obedience (F13)—A Christian leader responds with active commitment to God's call to join Him in His Kingdom purposes.*

The idea of obedience is too easily relegated to an external perceived locus of causality (i.e. extrinsic motivation as identified in the taxonomy on p. 29). SDT holds that this is counterproductive to active commitment and motivation. Calling has the power to transform work from just a job to a fulfilled personal calling (Lean, 2012). But there are some tasks or jobs—and even some ministries—that are hard to reconcile with a specific calling. What about the specific jobs that are economic necessities and can seem mundane and monotonous (Sayers, 1942)? Even though these may seem routine, they still hold the power to provide a context to respond to God's essential call. Some specific callings can be compared to the undeniably divine call of Moses at the burning bush (c.f. Exodus 3), but others resemble the circumstantially

necessary call of Jacob to 14 years of service (c.f. Genesis 29). To maintain an active commitment throughout all of life—regardless of the nature of a specific task or job—a calling must be understood at an innately human level. God’s essential call speaks to who we are as human not just to who we are as a worker and minister. Thus, it has the potential to prepare and intrinsically motivate students to join God in his Kingdom purposes in every aspect of life and in every task that must be engaged.

*Passion (F14)—A Christian leader demonstrates passion through his or her life toward the pursuit of God’s call.*

Embracing the essential nature of God’s call on humanity takes calling back to an understanding of how and why God created humanity. This understanding intersects with the recognition within Self Determination Theory of innate psychological needs—autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Together these conversations promise an understanding of how to engender the passion that arises from intrinsic motivation. Most leaders operate from a sense of drivenness, but to maintain a genuine passion leaders must operate from a sense of calling (Dockery, 2011). The above characteristic—a Christian leader demonstrates passion through his or her life toward the pursuit of God’s call—has little application to a sense of general call to salvation. Even when applied to a sense of particular calling, passion will eventually wane if those particular calls are not grounded in God’s essential purpose. Eventually, particular callings to leadership will change, decay, or even end (Gyertson, 2011). Only a sense of an essential call holds the promise of a passion that can stand through all of life.

### **Andragogy: The ways in which adults learn best**

The implied bridge between theology and educational psychology opens the door to applications in the seminary classroom and specifically to adult learning. There is much help to

be found in the field of educational psychology. Specific to this study, Self-Determination Theory offers not just an understanding of requisite human needs, but insight into applying that understanding into proactive learning environments. Much of this application is found in the discipline of teacher education and adult learning theory, which are pointedly applicable to seminary education. Generally speaking, seminary education—due to the discipleship that is inherent to the Christian experience—can be an education that naturally reproduces itself. For Christians, a mark of maturity is the ability to teach others. Thus, to increase the teaching competency of a seminary professor is to teach a teacher who will be teaching teachers how to teach teachers to be teachers (c.f. Hebrews 5:12). Educational psychology's theories and disciplines could find rich application in the seminary classroom. Specifically, seminary education recognizes the need to train leaders who will be able to teach others and continue to be lifelong learners themselves, well after seminary (Wickett, 2005). Adult learning theories offer insight into how to set up a classroom that will engage students in self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformative learning. Programs that attend to these are more likely to be successful (Wickett, 2005). Recognizing the connections between Christian conversations on calling and educational psychology's studies into motivation opens the door for Seminaries to employ andragogical methods to classroom and curriculum.

Additionally, the understanding of an essential call could affect perspective and motivation in seminary students as well. Several semesters into my seminary education, on the long ride home after two days away at seminary, a prayerful conversation went something like this: "Tim, if you died on the way home today, were the last two days worth it?" The reality was that those days were not worth it, certainly not because a lack of quality in the education my seminary offered, but rather because of a skewed perspective on my part. I knew I had been

called to salvation (general call) and called to be a pastor (a specific call). And, I knew that I was dutifully attending to the attainment of necessary credentials to answer that call, but what did it mean for today? I did not understand the sense of an essential call that held sway over my entire being, not just my salvation or career. I did not understand a calling that originated from and encapsulated every aspect of my nature. I was missing out on that intrinsic motivation that is empowered by present realities of joy, creativity, discovery, and performance in contrast to future rewards or punishments (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); what Guinness (2003) described as the "... most comprehensive reorientation and most profound motivation in human experience—the ultimate why for living" (p. 7).

I prayerfully pleaded with the Lord that if he would give me another week to answer the question, I would never answer it that way again. This began a disciplined journey committed to experience the value of the task at hand in the present moment, a journey that would eventually lead to this study. Potentially, every aspect of classroom management, curriculum, and student perspective could be enhanced by the application of this understanding of an essential call.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research is to explore the specifics of how the concept of an essential call combined with the educational psychology and adult learning theories can lead to classroom and teaching dynamics that engender perpetual motivation. The concept of an innate human nature and a universal purpose could transcend all specific vocational callings or aspirations. Additionally, it could help individuals resist the temptation to measure value based solely on a future application and thus ground learning in the motivational efficacy of present joy.

The second recommendation is to explore how an understanding of essential calling could serve to expand and push the rich conversation pertaining to Christian calling further back toward the one who calls. Much of the literature available today on calling pertains to the practical aspects of recognizing and applying specific calls—particularly pastoral vocations. A focus on essential call may reach a more universal audience and may offer broader vocational application.

The third recommendation is to explore how the concept of an essential call could be applied in the discipline of educational psychology. Could an understanding of an essential call help students transition from integrated motivation to intrinsic motivation? On the motivational continuum described by SDT, the transition between integrated motivation and intrinsic motivation seems to be the most crucial step. Can an understanding of essential calling help individuals use integrated extrinsic stimuli to shape and mature self, resulting in intrinsic motivation?

The fourth recommendation is to explore how the concept of an essential call could be applied in the Christian community to enhance personal well-being and the subsequent health of churches? Exploration into personal spiritual growth (autonomy, relatedness, and competency) as well as motivation to serve in and through the church could be fruitful.

The final recommendation is to explore how the theory of an essential call could directly benefit missionaries in the field. Typically, missionaries work in strained and difficult circumstances that have a greater risk of a deficiency in relatedness, autonomy, and competence. Additionally, the nature of a specific calling to missions enhances the risk of settling for less than the ultimate. Success is often measured on the basis of evangelism and conversions rather than

the innate human nature and designed purpose. Could essential calling help promote personal well-being, maturation, and perseverance on the mission field?

These recommendations point to a continuing need for research where Christian calling and psychological motivation intersect. Such research promises enrichment within each of the individual conversations as well as reciprocal benefits across the borders. All of this could result in foundational understandings that generate practical applications within the classroom, church, and mission field.

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