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Introduction

The callings of God are irrevocable acts of God, which establish special relationship with responsibilities, privileges, and promises that provide hope for the future. Recognizing these callings of God in life enables us to rise to those callings and lead the next generation. In the series, *Rising to the Call*, Norm Wakefield will challenge and encourage men to seek God in how they can be faithful to the callings He has given them.

Chapter 1

Ears to Hear

Luke 8:4-21

Introduction

1. This lesson is foundational to understanding all of Jesus' parables. *Mark. 4:13.*
2. Let's put ourselves into the situation. *Luke 8:8* gives insight.
3. What is the main topic of Jesus' parable?
 - A. The main topic of this parable is listening. *Luke 8:4-8*
 - B. It's possible to see, but not see and hear. *Luke 8:9-10*

The seed is the word of God. *Luke 8:11*

1. It comes to us in many ways.
2. It always comes in seed form.

There are four kinds of listeners. *Luke 8:12-15*

1. The careless listener. *2 Cor. 4:3-4*
2. The overwhelmed listener. *Heb. 6:4-6*
3. The occupied listener. *Matt. 6:19-20*
4. The determined or careful listener. *1 Thess. 1:6-8*

How does one listen? *Luke 8:16*

1. Put the word in a prominent place in your heart.
2. Use it until it is applied to every area of your life.

A Warning and a Contrast - *Luke 8:17-18*

1. The main point of the parable: Take care how you listen.
2. The blessing of the determined listener contrasted with the deluded listeners.

Do you have ears to hear? *Luke 8:19-21*

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between the kind of listener one is to God and the kind of listener one is to those around him (ie. Spouse, children, parents).
2. How is it that the first three kinds of listeners are deluded about their relationship with God?
3. Read *James 1:21-25*. Where do you think James got this idea? What is its relationship to *Luke 8:1-21*?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 2

Rising to the Callings

Introduction

What is a “call”?

1. First, a “call” is an irrevocable act of God. *Rom. 11:29*
 - A. It is considered a call because God “calls it into being”. *Rom. 4:17; Gen. 1:3 Gen. 1:6*
 - B. After calling it into being, that action is usually followed by identification -- a naming which establishes its identity. *Gen. 1:5, 8; 2:19*
 - I. When was your first calling by God? You were “called” forth from your mother to be the son of your father into the physical realm. *Rom. 4:17; Is. 49:1*
 - II. It was an act of God.
 - III. What follows that “calling forth” by God?
 - C. If you are a son of God, you have experienced another calling of God. When you were called forth from the physical realm into the spiritual realm. *2 Tim. 1:9; 1 John 3:1*
2. Furthermore, a “calling” of God establishes a special relationship. It refers to a position or place in God’s order of the creation. This defines the individual to a greater degree. *Rom. 9:11; Gal. 4:7*
3. Not only is a call an irrevocable act of God that establishes a special relationship, but additionally, a calling has responsibilities, privileges, and promises. This further defines the individual. *Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:15*

With every calling by God there are responsibilities outlined in God’s Word that prepare the individual for the next calling.

As sons/daughters of our fathers and mothers, God's Word has clear directives as to our duties and responsibilities.
Eph. 6:1-2; Prov. 6:20-22; Prov. 23:26; Titus 2:4-8; Phil. 2:5-7

- A. With every calling by God there are privileges.
 - B. With every calling by God there are promises that provide hope.
4. Our faithfulness to that calling is vital preparation for all other callings in life. If we are not faithful or ignore our calling, we'll be unprepared for the next calling. If someone ignores the call of God, runs from the call, or isn't led to prepare for the next call, they will experience the consequences.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the "callings" to which we need to rise?
 - A. Son/daughter of our parents.
 - B. Son/daughter of God and bride of Christ.
 - C. Husband or wife to our spouse.
 - D. Parents to our children.
 - E. Grandparents to our grandchildren.
2. Why is this important?

If God established the relationships, then how we fulfill our responsibilities to them is a demonstration of our relationship with God. Also, our fulfilling our responsibilities in each calling prepares us to fulfill them in the next calling and receive the blessing God intended.
3. How do you rise to the call of God?
 - A. By fulfilling the responsibilities God has given us in His Word for each relationship.
 - B. By giving God thanks for each relationship.
4. What do you think you should do if you have ignored your callings in life?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 3

Rising to the Call of Holiness

Introduction

1. We've been called with a holy calling.
 - A. *Tim. 1:7; Lev. 20:26; Deut. 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:9*
 - B. Holiness means to be set apart, it indicates a special relationship. It sets something apart or alone from all the rest in that category.

2. Not only have we been called with a holy calling, but we've been called to holiness. We are to be holy, set apart to God for his purposes alone.
Heb. 12:14; Lev. 19:2; Lev. 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:16; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1
 - A. We are to treat God as holy and set apart. We treat his relationship with honor above all others. We separate ourselves from the rest of the people around us because of our holy calling as sons/daughters of God. *Lev. 10:3; Num. 20:12; Deut. 32:51*

3. Understanding our call to holiness impacts all our callings in life. We are to practice holiness in our calling as sons of our fathers in preparation for all our other callings.
 - A. We turn our hearts to our fathers. The direction of our hearts reveals what is holy to us. *Luke 1:17; Prov. 23:26*
 - B. We look to our father's example. We learn from his example how to handle our next callings in life -- how to relate to God, our wives, and our children.
 - C. *Prov. 4:1-6*
 - D. We honor our fathers by our words and actions. *Eph. 6:1*
 - E. We learn to listen to his Word, both spoken and the unspoken words of his heart. *Matt. 4:4; Prov. 4:20-23*

4. Have you risen to the call of holiness? Will you? Places of repentance need to be found where we have ignored this calling.
 - A. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you about holiness in your callings.
 - B. Apply what you have learned to your relationships and callings.
 - C. As you rise to the calls of God in your life, you'll experience His blessing and fatherhood.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how a teenager can treat his/her parents as holy.
2. Discuss how a husband can treat his wife as holy.
3. Discuss how a father can treat his children as holy.
4. How does practicing treating one's parents as holy help with the rest of the callings in life?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 4

Rising to the Call of Faith

Introduction

If we are to rise to the callings of God in life, we must be men of faith. To be men of faith, we first need to be able to distinguish between...

Two Kinds of Faith - From *John 2 and 3*

It is important that we have a firm grip on the line of reason in this passage.

1. The line of reason helps tremendously when it comes to interpreting scripture.
 - A. In *2:23-2:25* - The first kind of faith is described with Jesus' response.
 - B. In *3:1-2* - John introduced Nicodemus as an example of a man with the first kind of faith.
 - C. In *3:3-4* - John revealed how Jesus tested the nature of Nicodemus' faith to expose what kind of faith was working in him.
 - D. In *3:5-9* - John recorded Jesus' description of the second kind of faith and its origin.
 - E. In *3:10-15* - John recorded Jesus' teaching about the foundation for the second kind of faith.
 - F. In *3:16-21* - John explains what Jesus' teaching means to his Jewish readers.
2. Having laid out the line of reason, we're now ready to see that men may have one of two kinds of faith.

The First Kind of Faith

1. The foundation for this kind of faith is signs. (Read *John 2:23*)
 - A. This kind of faith almost always precedes the second kind of faith.
 - B. It's the kind of faith that a person, most often a child, expresses because he or she can't deny...
2. The "many" with this kind of faith are spoken of in the Sermon on the Mount. *Matt. 7:13; 21-23*
3. Jesus didn't entrust Himself to those who believed because of signs. (Read *John 2:24-25*)
4. So we see also that this kind of faith is natural and of the flesh.
5. This is the kind of faith exemplified in Nicodemus. (Read *John 3:1-2*)

The Second Kind of Faith

1. In *John 3:5-8*, Jesus revealed some of the characteristics of this second kind of faith. (*John 3:5*). The first characteristic is that it enables one to see and enter the kingdom of God.
2. The second characteristic of saving faith is that the Word of God is the means by which this kind of faith comes ("born of water"). *John 13:10-11; 15:3; 1 Pet. 1:23*
3. The third characteristic of saving faith is that it is a work of the Holy Spirit. *John 3:5-8*
4. The fourth characteristic of saving faith is that its foundation is the work of God in Christ. *John 3:10-15*

God's Redemptive Plan Revealed

1. John now provides a very important commentary on the encounter with Nicodemus. The wind of the Holy Spirit is going to blow into the world among the Gentiles. God has the same redemptive plan for the world that he does for Israel motivated by the same love. *John 3:16-17*.
2. Saving faith is birthed in a remnant, not everyone.
3. Faith born of the Spirit is the evidence of God's redeeming love and deliverance from God's judgment against sin. *John 3:18*
4. Saving faith wants all the glory to go to God for anything done that is good. *John 3:19-21*

Let us pray that God, to the praise of His glorious grace in Jesus Christ, might raise us up to the calling of faith in His Son.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the differences between the kind of faith that comes from seeing signs and the kind of faith that comes by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.
2. Read *John 14:16-17* and *John 17:9*. What does John mean by "world" in these verses in contrast to what he meant by "world" in *John 3:16*?
3. Read *1 John 2:1-2*. How do these verses relate to *John 3:16*? Who is John referring when he says "our" and who is he referring to when he says "the whole world"?
4. Offer thanksgiving to God for His sending His Spirit to give new birth and faith in Christ to you, who were not of the children of promise, but from the world of the Gentiles.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 5

Rising to the Call to Pray

Introduction

1. We should rise to the call to pray because prayer is simple.

Luke 11:2-4

2. We should rise to the call to pray because we are needy.

Luke 11:5-8

3. We should rise to the call to pray because of Jesus' promise.

Luke 11:9-13

Discussion Questions

1. How do we complicate prayer?
2. How does materialism in America hinder our prayer lives?
3. Read *Rom. 8:26-28*. How does the promise of the Holy Spirit encourage you in prayer?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 6

Rising to the Call of Purity

Introduction

We live in the midst of a perverse generation -- a generation of users. Holiness to our wives and purity are inseparable.

1. Let's talk some more about what it means to practice holiness in our calling as husbands. The Apostle Paul admonishes us in this regard. We see what we are not supposed to do and what we are supposed to do.

1 Thess. 4:3-5

- A. First, Paul gave the positive responsibility of our calling.

- I. We are to be holy to our wives.

- II. We are to treat our wives as holy.

- III. This holiness or purity is to be practiced before we are married. *1 Tim. 5:1-2*

- B. Second, the negative responsibility was given. We are to abstain from sexual immorality and not to live in lustful passion like those who do not know God and thus are ignorant of their callings and their responsibilities. *1 Thess. 4:6; 4:17-20*

- C. Third, the apostle tells us why we are to purpose that holiness governs our relationship with our wives. *1 Thess. 4:6-8*

2. Be transformed from using your wife to treating her holy.

- A. Be holy in your calling as a son of God.

- B. Be holy in your calling as a husband to your wife.

- I. Look to God to fulfill your needs through your wife.

- II. Put a guard on your eyes. Don't feed the wolf.
Ps. 101:2-3; 6
- III. Develop a protecting attitude toward your wife.
- IV. Clear your conscience with your wife and take back the ground given to sensuality, self-service, and perhaps bitterness in your relationship.

Be set apart for purity.

Discussion Questions

1. Read *1 Thess. 4:1-8*. Discuss the difference between how people today obtain a wife (vessel) from how the Gentiles obtained wives as mentioned in this passage.
2. If holiness were practiced in the preparation for marriage as recommended in *1 Thess. 4*, what impact would that have on marriages?
3. Compile a list of the destruction that occurs (God's avenging) when a man doesn't treat his wife as holy, but looks elsewhere to have his needs fulfilled?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 7

It's Yours to Lose and Recover

Introduction

The definition of a calling:

An irrevocable act of God whereby He establishes a special relationship with responsibilities, privileges, and promises that provide hope for the future.

1. The callings of God are:

Sons of our fathers
Sons of God
Husbands/Wives
Fathers/Mothers
Grandfather/Grandmothers
Glory!

2. Faithfulness in each calling prepares you to receive the blessings in future callings.

3. Although the callings of God are irrevocable...

They are yours to lose

1. Esau's example: *Heb. 12:14-17*

2. The birthright was his to lose.

3. There are two reasons given why people fall short of grace or to put it another way, two ways people lose their privileges and hope from their callings.

4. Men, it was yours to lose.

They are yours to recover

1. Notice in the passage in *Heb. 12:17* that Esau desperately wanted the blessing, but didn't recover it. He could have, I believe, had he found a place to repent.
2. We're told that Esau could find no place for repentance.
3. Because of our callings as sons of God, one of the privileges and promises that provide great hope for our future is that of forgiveness and repentance.
 - A. Jesus is called our Redeemer. He takes what has been defiled and squandered and redeems it.
 - B. As sons of God, we have the blessing of forgiveness if we will take up the responsibility of finding places of repentance. *1 John 1:9*
4. How shall we find those places of repentance?

It's yours to lose and it's yours to recover

1. Why should you do this? Because it is a responsibility of your calling.
2. There is also a promise implied in this verse. If we pursue peace with all men and holiness in our calling with God and others, we won't come short of the grace of God.
3. If we don't do this, there is no way we can rise to the callings of God in our lives.

Discussion Questions

1. How do we discover where we need to repent? Answer: Look at the places where we are coming short of grace.
2. What callings in life (with their responsibilities) did you ignore or reject for which you have suffered loss?
3. Pray and ask God what steps you can take to begin recovering what you have lost. Share what came to mind as you prayed.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 8

Seven Qualities of a Family Leader

Introduction

1. Let him boast in the Lord. *2 Cor. 10:17; Jer. 9:23-24*
2. Maintains simple and pure devotion to Christ. *2 Cor. 11:3*
3. Knows God's Word. *2 Cor. 11:6*
4. Intensely concerned with the spiritual state of his flock. *2 Cor. 11:28-29*
5. Relies on the grace of Jesus Christ while content in weakness. *2 Cor. 12:7*
6. Selflessly expends himself in service. *2 Cor. 12:15*
7. Does not underestimate the power of the life of Christ within him. *2 Cor. 13:4*

The test? *2 Cor. 13:5*

Is Jesus in you?

Discussion Questions

1. How are you encouraged by these qualities of a leader?
2. Often, men think they must be capable and gifted in order to lead. Has this notion hindered your leadership at home and church? If so, what has it kept you from doing?
3. Why is it important that a man know for sure that Jesus Christ is in him?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 9

A Relational Husband and Father

Introduction

The Problem/Need:

Wives and children need husbands and fathers who are relational, emotionally and practically involved, with hearts turned toward them more than their work, ministry, and recreation. And we men need to be that way in order to have a clear conscience.

Why is this a problem?

1. It's not typically the strength of a man.
2. I think this occurs because of a lack of training and equipping of men in their childhood and teen years.
3. Most men don't realize that we have a different idea of "love" than our wives.
4. We might not understand how the gospel relates to family relationships.

What do I mean by relational?

1. Caring for their hearts.
2. Sharing life.
3. Understanding their individual designs.
4. Applying the gospel to each relationship.

How can we become relational fathers and husbands?

1. Caring for their hearts.
2. Sharing life.
3. Understanding their individual designs.
4. Applying the gospel to each relationship.
5. Practice, practice, practice looking to God as your source of strength, wisdom, and love.

A relational husband and father must be a man who relates to God, the Father. *“Father, will you make me a relational husband and father? Please prepare the next generation through me.”*

Application and Discussion Questions

1. How do your sons define relational? How do they want you to relate to them?
2. Getting to know someone as the son of their father helps you understand the man. Share how your father related to you and his wife. How has this influenced you?
3. What relational qualities about Jesus Christ do you appreciate most?
4. How can/will you show those to your wives and children? Any ideas?
5. What is your favorite love language? Your wife's? Your sons? (Acts of service, words, quality time, gifts, touch)
6. In regard to sons, what is the hardest thing about relating or sharing your life (your thoughts, dreams, wishes, struggles) with your dad? What could he do to make that easier?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 10

Who Has the Hearts of Your Children?

Introduction

1. Tragedy in the church!
2. How can this be prevented? If you're going to prevent this or recover your child's heart, you'll need to learn to the point of application certain dynamics.

Learn the dynamics of the heart.

1. What is your understanding of the relationship between the heart and the will?

Error:

Truth:

2. There are some key scriptures that give insight into how the heart works.

Insight # 1: All the issues of life flow out of the condition of the heart. *Prov. 4:23*

Insight # 2: Whatever one treasures, the heart will be focused there. *Matt. 6:21*

Insight # 3: God has made the heart to hope and be full.
Prov. 13:12

Who has your child's heart?

The one who offers them the greatest hope.

Whoever offers them the hope of fullness.

Learn the dynamics of hope. *Col. 1:3-6*

1. Insight #1 regarding the dynamics of hope. It gives birth to faith and love and joy (*vs. 11, "joyously giving thanks to the father..."*).
2. Insight #2 regarding the dynamics of hope. Promises are the basis of hope.
3. Let me illustrate these dynamics with some Scriptures about hope.
1 Pet. 1:3-5; Rom. 8:24-25; Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:21-23; Eph. 1:18; Eph. 2:12; 1Tim. 4:10.
4. Examples of application.

Learn the importance of sealing your children

1. If we need sealing as sons of God, then our sons need sealing as our sons. *Eph. 1:13-14*
2. What do I mean by sealing your children?
 - A. To seal your child is to establish his/her identity as your child.
 - B. You seal your child by:
 - C. Sealing your child means:
 - D. Illustration with the bottle cap.
3. Why is this important?

Show your children the hope of the gospel and the hope of following God's ways and that's what it means to be YOUR CHILD. *Col. 1:26-27; Col. 2:2-3; Heb. 10:23; 1 John 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; John 6:37-40; John 6:47, 51*

In some way, constantly expose the hopelessness and emptiness of the world. *Col. 2:8*

Remember:

- A. The heart is made to hope.
- B. Always give the hope for why you are doing things.
- C. When faith, love, or joy are lacking, apply hope.

Here's Your Hope!

When you give your child the PROMISES of God's ways
You give them HOPE for the future
This hope SEALS them and FILLS them
Giving them FAITH that PROTECTS them

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to watch carefully what appetites you allow and encourage in your children's lives?
2. What appetites did you allow your children to develop that now you are sorry for allowing?
3. What did you treasure as a young person that led your heart away from your parents?
4. What hope does Jesus offer to you that keeps you faithful to Him?

Study Notes.....

Chapter 11

Dad – Scout in the Family Wagon Train

Introduction

1. Every successful organization has visionaries or scouts.
2. I would like for us all to raise our telescopes and get a good focus on...
 - A. The Vision: Where we're leading that wagon train. Let's get fixed in our minds the vision that we can use to help keep the pioneers focused and encouraged until the completion of the journey.
 - B. The Course: What course will best you and them to the desired destination.
 - C. The Source of Supplies: How you and they will be supplied for the journey.

The Vision: When our children reach adulthood, we want them to be men and women who are mighty in spirit, equipped to love and serve, and skilled for the glory of God.

1. *Prov. 29:18: Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained. But happy is he who keeps the law.*
2. Are your pioneers in need of focusing again on the vision?
3. We need a daily look at the vision. So does the child.

4. We want them to be mature men/women who are:
 - A. Mighty in Spirit: *Is. 11:2-5*
 - B. Equipped to love and serve: These are the two most important qualities necessary for marriage and parenting. If they don't develop these qualities at home, they'll not have them when they leave.
 - C. Skilled: Educated and trained to provide for their families or make their husbands successful.
 - D. All for the glory of God: If we lead our wagoneers in that direction, we can be assured of divine assistance, a sense of satisfaction, and eternal reward.

The Course: Stay on the path of God's Word, value the relationships at home, and be disciplined in the basics and develop natural abilities.

1. Stay on the path of God's Word - it is from the Spirit.
2. Value family relationships. They are God-given.
3. Be disciplined in the basics and in developing natural abilities.

The Source of Supply: Jesus Christ Alone

1. Some of your pioneers will look to the flesh for the power to perform and succeed. It is the weakest of power sources and results in emptiness and frustration.
2. Many of your children are looking to something or someone in the world as a source of power to help them cope, perform and succeed. It is stronger than the flesh.
3. There's really only one source that will supply the needs on a daily basis for our children and us. It's a source as abundant and vast as the ocean - a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

4. Only as one lives out of the fullness of the riches of a relationship with Jesus Christ, can one become mighty in Spirit, love and serve, and be skilled to the glory of God. Jesus incarnates this kind of life to cope and perform.

Discussion Questions

1. Read *Is. 11:2-5*. Discuss why the qualities described in these verses are important. How do they relate to being “mighty in spirit”?
2. Share how you have either benefited or have suffered from the course you followed when growing up in these three areas: knowing God’s Word, valuing family relationships, developing skills.
3. To what degree have you stressed being filled with the Holy Spirit and looking to Jesus as the source for life in your child rearing? Brainstorm together about how a family might grow in this area of training.

Study Notes.....

Chapter 12

Out of the Trenches, Men!

Introduction

Identify the Ideal Warrior

1. List some of the virtues of the ideal warrior in the comic strip series.

2. Look at the Special Forces' description of an ideal warrior.

"The Ideal Warrior"

They cited loyalty, patience, intensity, calmness, compassion, and will. They agreed that the true warrior knows himself and knows his limitations. Self-mastery according to the Special Forces men is a warrior's central motivation. He is always practicing, always seeking to hone his skills, so as to become the best possible instrument for accomplishing his mission. The warrior takes calculated risks and tests himself repeatedly. He believes in something greater than himself, a religion, a cause. He does not worship violence, but is at home with it. He may snivel (complain), but he is not a victim.

How does Jesus illustrate the qualities of an ideal warrior?

Contrasting Warriors: David and Uriah (2 Sam. 11:1)

What happened to the warrior spirit in men?

We're to be soldiers for Christ.

1. *2 Tim. 2:1-5; 1 Tim. 1:18; Eph. 6:10*

2. The church is to be united with the cause of Christ: The glory of God.

In spiritual warfare, the casualties are in the trenches. There are no casualties on the battlefield.

Two of the most dreaded enemies of a man should be...

1. _____

2. _____

Application and Discussion Questions

1. What ideas can you come up with that will display loyalty to someone or some cause greater than yourself as a husband, father, or son?
2. What skills are you working to hone to make you a better husband and father or son?
3. When have you taken a calculated risk and tested yourself and your leadership? Ask the Lord to bring to mind where He wants you to test His faithfulness in the area of which we've spoken.
4. What can men do to help the "shakers" in their church or family?
5. Are the men in your church united in mission or independent of each other? What suggestions would help overcome the independent spirit in yourself and other men?

Study Notes.....