

Listening Prayer & Reflection: Reading Your Story with God (Shape & Calling)

Sometimes we get "stuck" in ministry for reasons beyond our control. Sometimes God has intentionally allowed us to be in a season of waiting. Sometimes we are hindered by attack from the enemy. And sometimes we sabotage ourselves by simply not knowing how God has shaped us or to what he is calling us. In seasons of "stuckness" we may be tempted to give up the work, when really what we need to do is just cast our net on the other side of the boat (John 21:6). Sometimes we just need a fresh understanding of how God has formed us, and how he is currently forming us, in order to catch fresh vision for persevering in his calling. We encourage you to read the passage below, and then prayerfully consider the following questions for listening prayer and reflection.

All of God's children are called to grow in Christlikeness - to become more like who God created us to be in Christ; we might think of this as becoming the **best version** of who God created us to be; becoming Christlike doesn't mean that we all end up looking the same, rather that we are a billion unique expressions of Christ in a broken world.

If we know how God has formed us, and for what, we can walk in our calling with joy, in spite of hardship or difficult circumstances or contexts.

A big part of contentment, fulfillment, experiencing joy and abundance in our work **is about finding our fit** - discerning with the Lord how he's shaping us, and what that means for his ever-evolving call on our lives.

It's a common misconception that burnout is the result of overwork. **Burnout** doesn't happen from overwork, really - it's more about **working in a role that doesn't fit**, or working out of a place where you are not experiencing the abundance of God, even in hard places.

Building resilience in our lives happens in part by:

- recognizing God's work in our lives, in the good and hard things, and
- how he's used our experiences for our own growth into maturity
- that aspect of **growing self-awareness is huge to a worker's longevity** -
- **recognizing God in the pain and hardship** as much as in the victory and celebration is crucial to our long-term transformation into Christlikeness -
- and that is one of the things that is going to bring about the kingdom breakthroughs that we all want to see and experience and reproduce in the lives of others.

Take some time to consider God's shaping influence in each of the major seasons of your life. You might benefit from writing down the major things that God brings to mind. These could include:

- Circumstances of your birth or **family history** \ family of origin
- deep **loss** of someone or something
- difficult or **painful seasons** or events - trauma, depression, conflict, struggle, hardship, isolation, disappointment, pain, etc.
- formative **relationships** with others
- formative **work** experiences
- **breakthroughs** in life, vocation or ministry
- heart shaping or **character shaping experiences**
- formative **God moments** (renewal, brokenness, voice of God, God's guidance, challenges from God)
- revelations \ realizations of **gifting or talent**
- Revelations \ realizations about God's **calling** on your life, the thing(s) for which you are destined
- **Ministry insights** and realizations
- Realization about **how you work best** in a given context
- **Prophetic words**
- Major **paradigm shifts** \ lessons learned

As you consider the turning points and major encounters with God, the revelations and realizations you have had over the years, mark which ones have shaped you the most, and then pray through these questions:

- 1) Lord, why are these incidents are most **significant**?
- 2) Holy Spirit, how have these things **shaped** me?
- 3) Lord, what do these incidents or items say about the **purposes** You are leading me into in this next season, and in my life overall?
- 4) Lord, is there anything You want to speak to me about any of the **painful** or difficult items on my list?
- 5) Lord, is there anything else You want to say to me, or anything that I'm **missing** (or ignoring)?

- 6) Lord, what are the common threads in my story so far?
- 7) Lord, how have you shaped me through my life?
- 8) Lord, where are the recurring patterns in my life that might reveal something that has been hidden from me?
- 9) Lord, what do you want me to realize or recognize from this process?
- 10) Where are the "**toxic waste dumps**" in my story that I need to consider? How did those painful or negative things shape me, and what do you want to say to me about that?
- 11) Where are the "**gold mines**" in my story that I need to consider? What do you want to say to me about those things? How might I lean into those positive things to help bring more clarity to my current season of life and ministry?
- 12) Lord, as I look back over the various **paradigm shifts** and **revelations** of gifting in my story, how do those things reveal more of your purposes in my life? What am I missing? What connections exist between these things that might help me to see your formative work in my life more clearly?
- 13) Lord, help me think back to the **most satisfying roles** I've experienced in my story - why were those experiences so important \ powerful \ shaping \ life-giving? What might that say about my current and next season of life? How might consideration of these things shift how I live and work in this next season?
- 14) Lord, where are you speaking to me through my story about my **calling** and ultimate **contribution**? What do you want to say to me about these things?
- 15) Lord, in what ways do I need to cast my net on the other side of the boat? What do I need to shift in order to be walking more closely in sync with your calling on my life
- 16) Lord, how does all this align with your calling my life as a single \ spouse \ parent \ teammate?