

Paradigms of Calls and Discoveries of Gifts

from the Philadelphia Gifts Group

1. **The first paradigm is an unexpected call for which a person may feel inadequate or unprepared** (*Moses in Ex. 3*):

Yahweh speaks to Moses out of the burning bush and says to him, “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” (*Ex. 3:10*) Moses basically thinks this idea is crazy—he replies, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” (*Ex. 3:11*) He feels quite inadequate. Moses raises one objection after another; he says, “Oh My Lord, I am not eloquent, either heretofore or since thou hast spoken to thy servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” (*Ex. 4:13*) Finally Moses says, “Oh my Lord, send, I pray, some other person.” (*Ex. 4:13*)

As you know, Yahweh prevails in the end, and Moses does lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses is a paradigm/example for the sort of person who feels strongly called to do something which may seem crazy or impractical, or something for which she or he feels unprepared. The call seems to come from outside and may bear little relation to a person’s own self-concept. Here the challenge a person faces isn’t so much, “What am I going to do?” as “How in the world am *I* going to do *this*?”

2. **The second paradigm of calling is one in which the awareness of what one should do comes first from the depths of oneself**, as if it were an imprint on one’s being; “Calling” here means a strong interest, a special gift to do something particular.

Elizabeth O’Connor in *Eighth Day of Creation* tells the story of Michelangelo pushing a large block of stone along a street. A neighbor asks why in the world he is struggling so hard over a mere piece of rock. Michelangelo is said to reply, “Because there is an angel in that rock that wants to come out.” In the second paradigm of calling we are each rough rocks like that, each with an angel striving to take shape within us. Here, God’s will for us is experienced as already inside of us, printed into our very being. We don’t need to look outside. To know what we are to do, we need to ask, “Who *am* I, really?” This is like taking apart a motor or another piece of equipment to see what’s there. We know there’s something to discover.

3. A third paradigm involves finding our calling simply while doing it.

This is serendipitous. We do something and we realize that what we did came together just right. And we note that when we do this again, the same sense emerges. It came together, as Friends would say, in good order. Or we might notice that there is an ease or a comfort in our doing it. There is also the possibility that what we are doing has a positive impact on other people. This may be something we've always done, but seen from our perspective now, we can claim this *something* as a gift. We discover that gifts are embedded in our everyday lives.

4. Then there is the call which comes in the form of desire:

We strongly desire a certain gift (Paul: *Cor. 12:31; 14:1; 12: 39*). In addition, envy of another person may point to a gift in ourselves that we've neglected; it is crying out to be developed.

We become aware of our gifts in many ways. Have you had experiences like these?

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