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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PERCEPTION OF DIVINE CALLING
WITH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PURPOSE
IN CHRISTIAN ADOLESCENTS

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PERCEPTION OF DIVINE CALLING
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To Betty, my wife, who has supported me so diligently in this work;
to our sons, Wes and Jonathan, who are exemplars of the called;
to Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee,
the congregation who made my doctoral studies possible;
and most of all, to Him who is Faithful and True,
who has called me to Himself,
the greatest honor I
could ever know.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CVAS	Christian Vocational Assessment Scale (Feenstra 2009)
EIPQ	Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger 1995)
EOMEIS-II	Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-II (Adams 1999)
NSYR	National Study of Youth and Religion (Smith 2005)
PIL	Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1969)
SBCV	Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia
SEBTS	Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
SWBTS	Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
VCS	Vectors of Calling Survey

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PREFACE

It has been a great joy to pursue research about a topic that has been deeply intertwined with my life and ministry for many years. At the same time, I have had to face some of the greatest challenges of my life in physical health and work. With several delays and starts and stops in this process, I feel like the one who is last to cross the finish line. I am grateful, however, that God's persistent call has been the key driving force for me to complete this project.

The man who was one of the first to encourage this step in my life, Danny Sinquefield, has been the most loving and supportive pastor I have ever known. The church family of Faith Baptist in Bartlett, Tennessee, provided me with the financial support and time away from my ministry to pursue something that otherwise would have been beyond my means. Many dear friends were like cheerleaders along the way and were proud to follow along with my progress. I cannot thank them enough.

Brian Richardson, as my first reader, has been a wise, supportive counselor in spite of his own intense schedule with school and family. I am grateful for his insights and patience as I have struggled to finish the course. Hal Pettegrew, as second reader, has also been both helpful and kind. I have appreciated his easy-going, friendly manner that has often ratcheted down the stress that comes with the pursuit of an advanced degree.

Until this project, I had not really appreciated how much a style reader must do to help a candidate prepare a defense-worthy edition of his work. I join many others in

owing Marsha Omanson a great debt of gratitude for her commitment to excellence and tireless proofing of unrefined writing.

The person who has believed in me the most and put up with my worst is my wife, Betty. She has been persistent in keeping my eyes upon the goal and working through the difficulties that threatened me to settle for ABD (all but dissertation). Her faithful love had already been proven many times, but throughout this period when I faced cancer in the midst of serving in youth ministry, raising teenagers, and pursuing a degree, Betty has continued to be my best friend and the greatest encourager.

Others will have to judge this work, but the approval I rejoice in the most will be that of my Father in heaven. The starting and stopping and stumbling that have been so characteristic of my life will one day be transformed into unrelenting speed as I not only hear the call of my God but see His face as well and run into His arms.

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Richmond, Virginia

December 2010

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In seeking to summarize the mountain of evidence they found regarding the deteriorating mental and behavioral health of American children and adolescents, an expert panel of thirty-three pediatricians, research scientists, and mental health and youth service professionals simply said, “Our waiting lists are too long” (Commission on Children at Risk 2003, 8). The National Research Council made the alarming prediction that “at least 25% of adolescents in the United States are at serious risk of not achieving ‘productive adulthood’” (National Research Council 2002, 2). While some are tempted to label the rising generations as merely “spoiled” or lazy, and others accept the bad news as typical of adolescent storm and stress, the truth is that the plight of young people reveals the fault lines of culture (Dean 2004, 11). A hurried and busy society has robbed children of childhood and rushed them into adult roles and expectations (Elkind 1988). The narcissistic and materialistic American culture is bent on sexualizing and marketing to their every move (Pipher 2001, 26). Perhaps most telling of all, many of those adults who could and should offer the most support and guidance to youth have virtually abandoned them to face the significance issues of maturity and development on their own (Clark 2004, 50).

The church to some extent must share this indictment as well. Surprisingly, the culture of abandonment has penetrated the local congregation, where parents have largely

relinquished the spiritual training of their children to the church leaders and programs (Barna 2003, 81). Youth ministries perpetuate this neglect to the degree that they have relied on mass marketing efforts and big events rather than personal relationships to communicate spiritual truth. As George Barna has said about the seeming success of youth ministry, “We have mastered the art of drawing a crowd, but at the expense of drilling deep into the lives of teenagers with spiritual truths” (Barna 2001, 155). In an era of growing disconnect between teenagers and the church, many youth leaders have felt that the increasing demands and stresses of youth ministry are not being matched by the initiative of their congregations (Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001, 41). The results from a recent research project on youth spirituality, the NSYR, constitute almost a mandate for religious communities to recognize the value of investing more of their resources in youth—religiously-based relationships, activities, programs, opportunities, and challenges available to teenagers—so they will in turn see this new generation invest in their religious faith (Smith and Denton 2005, 261-62).

Introduction to the Research Problem

That there are large-scale social forces with a potential negative impact on adolescents is beyond question. The struggle of the adolescent in contemporary society to develop a healthy identity was the genesis of this project, with the aim to understand how to recognize and facilitate one of the greatest self-shaping resources available to Christians, namely, divine calling. Calling has deep roots in biblical material, historical practice, and in both religious and secular settings. A comprehensive view of calling must consider it as a reality for all believers and not just the few with leadership or vocational roles in the church. With adolescents, the experience of divine call appears to have great

impact on the process and quality of their identity formation. Calling can also have major implications for an individual's self-concept in that it involves a person's giftedness, sense of purpose, and experience with God. Recent research in the assessment of vocation suggests that it should be understood in ways that go beyond occupational pursuits (Feenstra and Brouwer 2009, 19). The fundamental assumption of this project is that the church's greatest hope for new generations is in relationships that nurture, one by one, fully developed disciples who have discovered their identity in the call of God rather than constructed it according to their own whims and expectations.

Questions arise with such an investigation into calling. Can one identify and measure the concept and experience of biblical calling in persons in a reliable way? Is it true that adolescents who have a strong sense of a divine call also have a higher level of identity achievement and purpose in life than those with less awareness of a calling? These issues and others were addressed in this project, but first there was a significant hurdle to consider.

It may appear pretentious to think that the experience of divine calling can be ascertained, measured, or encouraged by anyone other than God Himself. This study affirms the fact that no instrument can predict either the validity or the outcome of a call, for such would eliminate the need for faith and obedience (Johnson 2002, 52). There is warrant in Scripture, however, to consider the discernment and facilitation of calling. In Acts 6, for instance, the church in Jerusalem mediated the calling of the first deacons by choosing seven godly men to lead in the task of distributing food among the needy (Schuurman 2004, 37). Paul prayed for the Ephesians to become aware of and enlightened by their calling and to discover how they each fit into God's plans to redeem

the world (Caudill 1979, 61). Paul also underscored the reality of a calling upon each believer's life by urging each to live a life worthy of what had already been received—to express visibly that which was already a spiritual reality (Wiersbe 1979, 94). To the Philippians Paul gave the challenge to exert the intense effort of an athlete to pursue and fulfill the call of God (Wiersbe 1974, 110).

It is an era when the church is unafraid to use modern tools of research to evaluate its practices and its understanding of human nature in the light of Scripture. A conceptualization of the discernment of divine calling beyond subjective experience and private interpretation is merited, especially if some of the current practices and understandings regarding calling are in question. Erickson's psychosocial stages and particularly his notion of the adolescent challenge of identity development have been fundamental building blocks for most any investigation into adolescent development (Pullman 2001, 64). James Marcia helped to expand Erikson's concepts of identity formation into four major statuses: achievement (commitment following a period of exploration), moratorium (exploration without commitment), foreclosure (commitment with little or no exploration), and diffusion (commitment and exploration absent) (Marcia 1966, 551). Considering the numerous stresses and struggles of modern culture and their influence on adolescents, the work of personal integration has become even more complex and difficult than ever before (Dean 2004, 11-13). The path to an optimal identity therefore continues to be one of the most significant and highly researched of psychoanalytic concerns (Kroger 2000, 145).

From the Christian perspective, it is important to acknowledge that Erikson has provided a valuable framework for exploring the youthful quest and struggle for personal

identity (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 213), but this study recognizes first the need for a strong foundation in Scripture. While the social sciences generally assume that personal identity is primarily a matter of self-construction, the biblical view recognizes identity as ultimately a gift bestowed, received from God, and mediated in a particular social context (Guinness 1998, 23). The biblical view of life also asserts that the dignity and worth of persons is guaranteed and does not come from a status based on abilities or a more evolved place in nature but from God Himself in a special act of creation (Colson and Pearcey 1999, 125). Christian tradition has preserved the biblical principle that individual human lives count for something because God has a direction in mind for them (Placher 2005, 3).

Another area of psychological study germane to this inquiry into calling and closely related to identity development is purpose in life. Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl observed first-hand the significance of purpose to the individual and concluded that it is not only valuable but also essential to existence (Frankl 1992, 76). James Crumbaugh and Leonard Maholick followed Frankl's lead and developed the Purpose in Life Test to measure the level of existential vacuum, or lack of purpose, that Frankl postulated was in every person (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964). Other research, such as that of William Damon, has confirmed the positive influence of purpose in adolescents in areas such as pro-social behavior, moral commitment, achievement, and high self-esteem (Damon, Menon, and Bronk 2003, 120).

One of the prevalent misunderstandings of divine calling equates and confines it to a "call to the ministry," meaning that some believers are chosen by God to embrace professional ministry roles or to fulfill some specific task for the kingdom of God while

the rest are left to pursue worldly occupations on their own (Guinness 1997, 32). This perception of calling draws a line between the sacred and secular and narrows calling to the clergy and the spiritually elite. Seemingly less appreciated and taught today is an understanding that divine calling applies to every believer and requires first and foremost for persons to be followers of Christ and secondly to think, speak, do and live entirely for Him (Guinness 1997, 31). This concept of calling makes possible a wider application of biblical material for individual identity development. It also opens the door to consider calling in adolescent development as an aid to resolving issues of identity by providing a solid integrative center for all of life (Shuurman 2004, 66). While the understanding of calling expressed in this study does not promise specific blueprints for each person, it does include inspiration, direction, boundaries, and accountability for life, all which are key qualities in identity development.

The widespread use of the word “calling” in secular contexts, especially in vocational studies and career guidance, has also made essential the distinction and emphasis in this study on a biblical view of calling. There is a modern prejudice that has eliminated the Caller from calling and substituted self-mastery (Conyers 2006, 19). Others have chosen to confine the divine in calling to a latent form of the Imago Dei in man (Buford 1995, 141) or a vague sense of transcendence in a spiritual quest that focuses primarily on self-definition and self-understanding (Dalton 2001, 23).

The psychological concepts related to adolescent identity development are still evolving and the biblical doctrine of calling begs further application. A better understanding of both and their relationship to each other may well lead to ways to help

Christian adolescents embrace a stronger and more positive sense of identity against the backdrop of the challenges and momentous opportunities in today's world.

Research Purpose

The goal of this study was to develop and utilize a biblically based measure of a sense of divine calling, the Vectors of Calling Survey, and to use this measure with older adolescents to discover the extent of their encounter with divine calling and whether a significant relationship exists between it and their identity development and purpose in life.

Research Questions

The following questions were explored through the use of the VCS, the Purpose in Life Test, and the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire:

1. To what extent do older Christian adolescents perceive and respond to a sense of divine calling?
2. To what extent, if any, is there a distinction between belief and behavior in older adolescents in discerning a sense of divine calling?
3. What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents' sense of a divine call and their identity development?
4. What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents' sense of a divine call and their purpose in life?

Research Hypotheses

Through the use of the above survey instruments, this study sought to test these hypotheses:

1. A majority of older Christian adolescents are unlikely to report a strong sense of divine calling.

2. Behaviors that correspond and relate to the experience of divine calling are a greater predictor of a sense of calling than the presence of beliefs associated with calling.
3. Older Christian adolescents who report a strong sense of divine calling are more likely to have an achieved identity status as compared to those with a lesser sense of calling.
4. Older Christian adolescents who report a strong sense of divine calling are more likely to have greater purpose in life as compared to those with a lesser sense of calling.

Delimitations of the Study

One purpose of this study was to conceptualize the perception and experience of divine calling in a way that could be measured for the sake of evaluating its relationship with identity development and purpose in life in adolescents. A further purpose was to provide a test that could facilitate the recognition and benefit of calling for older Christian adolescents and perhaps lead to further research regarding the facilitation of calling through the church's ministry. Because of these goals, the research was delimited in several ways.

First, the measure of a sense of calling was dependent upon the construction, validity, and reliability of a new instrument, the Vectors of Calling Survey. This tool is a self-assessment using Likert scale items to measure multiple dimensions of personal discernment and response to divine calling.

Second, the study involved freshman students from three Christian universities in the United States: one in the South, one in the Southwest and the other in the Midwest. The choice of Christian university settings provided a way to access older adolescents who were likely to be believers and to have had at least some awareness in and instruction in biblical concepts of divine calling.

Third, the study was restricted to those students in the sample who confessed to have a personal relationship with Christ. Data was also collected from students regarding their church membership, but not as an excluding factor in their participation. A confession of faith in Christ represented a minimum requirement for a student to have had a personal understanding and experience of the call of God as defined in this study. It also underscored the assumption in this study that there is a significant variance in the experience of calling among Christian adolescents. To have solicited and included the responses of those who did not affirm faith in Christ could have introduced unreliable variation and divergence in the results of the study and confusion in the relationship between divine calling, identity, and purpose in life.

Fourth, the study was delimited to underclassmen who were between eighteen and twenty years of age. This limited age group of older adolescents was the focus because of several characteristics: (1) their growing ability to process questions related to identity, (2) their proximity to spiritual experiences as younger adolescents in the church, and (3) the likelihood that they had yet to develop identity achievement across multiple domains or to experience high degrees of purpose in life. Data from this age group were considered more likely to facilitate possible insights that could apply downward to younger adolescents and upward to young adults.

A significant delimitation of this study derived from the use of the internet and email to solicit the participation of freshman students from the three universities. The total number of participants did not equal a population or a true random sample for any one university and must be recognized as a convenience sample. The study most likely involved students who were more pre-disposed than others to email communication and

internet access. It also should be noted that the topic of the study (research regarding calling) as communicated in the requests to participate may have appealed to some more than others.

In terms of application and generalization, since this research was based on a biblical and historical Christian view of calling, it cannot be applied to other religious or non-religious viewpoints and worldviews. In addition, because of differences of opinion about calling that exist among Christian denominations and many churches even within the Baptist tradition, the comprehensive nature and practical application of calling as expressed in this material may limit its acceptance in these circles as well.

This research relied upon the self-report of older adolescents in churches and in Christian university settings. There is the possibility that respondents sought to provide answers they perceived as desirable or expected in such settings. This researcher sought to minimize experimenter effects in the presentation and administration of materials, but may not have been able to counter the effects of Christian enculturation.

Finally, the sample of Christian students in this study represented a small slice of adolescents in general and certainly limits generalization in situations where adolescents do not attend college, may not be part of a church, or have any real understanding of divine calling at all.

Terminology

A number of terms require definition to facilitate an understanding of this research purpose, its methodology, and its findings.

Adolescence and *youth*. A great variety of understandings exists about the nature and extent of adolescence. There is something of a consensus in the idea that

adolescence begins with puberty (Kaplan 1984, 281), but the end or completion of adolescence is at best ambiguous and confusing (Clark 2004, 27). To complicate matters more, certain aspects of adolescence now commence earlier than ever in history, while multiple influences have conspired to extend adolescence well into the twenties (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 168). The often-quoted description, “adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture” (Conger and Petersen 1984, 92), continues to be an adequate description of this period in life. This study refers to the terms “adolescents” and “youth” as synonymous and embraces John Santrock’s definition of adolescence as the period of life between childhood and adulthood, beginning anywhere from ages 10 to 13 and lasting until 18 to 22 years of age (Santrock 2001, 28-29). This study acknowledges, however, that there is a growing trend of extended adolescence that blurs the traditional markers of age and directly affects issues of identity and maturity (Clark 2001, 47). The research portion of this study focused on students ranging from eighteen to twenty years of age, the upper range of adolescence but still harboring significant potential for variation in test scores of identity development and purpose in life.

Divine calling. In contemporary society, calling has become a watered-down concept that merely indicates a passion for an activity, such as “his calling is to go fishing on the weekends.” Calling is often equated with career or paid work, but Scripture and the Christian tradition give a far greater depth to the idea. The word “vocation,” for example, derives from the Latin *voco*, meaning to call, summon, name, or invite. In the context of the Christian faith, the emphasis of calling is not on following a course but responding to a voice (Robbins 2005, 27). This study embraces the rich definition as formulated by Os Guinness: “Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so

decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service” (Guinness 1998, 29). As such, God’s call is for every believer (Blackaby and Skinner 2002, 1), requires interaction with God (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 30), and stands against against the modern virtue of self-determination (Conyers 2006, 17).

Discernment. Since one of the goals of this study was to develop a measure related to divine calling, it was important to differentiate between God’s call itself and the individual’s perception or embrace of that call. “Discernment” is a tradition rich and biblically related term that can facilitate this distinction. In its most basic meaning, discernment is the process of determining what is from God and what is not (Johnson 2002, ix). In a deeper sense, discernment is a sifting of experiences, both interior and exterior to the self, to sort out the source, direction, content, and requirements of a matter (Farnham et al. 1991, 23). The discernment of calling is no simple task since it calls for efforts related to listening (Palmer 2000, 4) struggling (Johnson 2002, 25), and pilgrimage (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 91). For this study, discernment is considered equivalent to the individual’s experience of and engagement with divine calling and serves as the context for measurement related to calling.

Identity. Erik Erikson began to develop the modern understanding of identity when he recognized that in adolescence there is a need to define oneself and seek wholeness (Erikson 1968, 87). He defined optimal identity as a sense of psychosocial well-being that is accompanied by acceptance of self, confidence in one’s future, and a sense of confirmation about self from others (Erikson 1968, 165). This study draws from the tradition of Erikson when it recognizes that personal choice and responsibility are

important aspects of identity formation (Adams 1992, 2), but denies the concept of an empty self in need of filling (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 19). For this study, the most critical insight into identity comes from Christian theology. In the words of Kenda Creasy Dean, “True identity is ours by redemption, not by development,” and is a gift of God, obscured by sin but restored by Christ (Dean 2004, 84).

Purpose. In the context of this study, “purpose” is a psychological construct that is an important part of identity development. Victor Frankl recognized that man’s search for meaning, or will to meaning, is a primary motivator in life (Frankl 1984, 105). The PIL refers to a popular psychometric measure created by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964; Crumbaugh 1968) to test for the level of existential vacuum, or lack of purpose, that Frankl postulated was in every person. To distinguish purpose from the more general concept of meaning, this study embraces William Damon’s definition of purpose as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something both meaningful to self and of consequence to the world beyond self” (Damon 2003, 9).

Religiousness and spirituality. Until recently, most researchers have considered these two terms synonymous. There is currently a growing understanding that while religiousness and spirituality significantly overlap each other, they also exist as distinctive constructs (Hill et al. 2000, 60). Spirituality tends to describe the individual’s experience with the transcendent and sacred while religiousness equates more with belief, practices, the community of faith, and institutional aspects of a faith tradition (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 266-67). For the purpose of this study, both spirituality and religion are seen as significant to an understanding of calling. There is a trend in Western society to elevate spirituality at the expense of religiousness, associating the first with

freer expression and meaning, while the latter is perceived as rigid and restricting (Hill et al. 2000, 60-61). This study chooses to agree with Bensen that there is no need for polarization if one embraces the richness of both terms and defines spirituality as the broad, multi-dimensional concept that includes in its canopy religion and religious practices (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 209).

Transcendence. In psychology, theology, and diverse spiritual traditions, transcendence has a wide range of connotations and meanings. Fundamentally, it is the idea of moving beyond self to become connected with things more than self (Furrow and Wagener 2003, 116). Transcendence is important to an exploration of calling since it is “a subjective experience of the sacred that affects one’s self-perception, feelings, goals, and ability to transcend difficulties” (Seidlitz et al. 2002, 441). This understanding is helpful, but for the purposes of this study, transcendence must clearly involve experience with God or it will fall short of undergirding the divine connection of calling.

Research Assumptions

It is necessary to recognize several critical viewpoints and disclaimers inherent in this project before considering this research in detail.

First, this study assumed that the effort to identify and conceptualize divine calling is possible and merited in consideration of modern settings for adolescent spiritual development and identity formation. There are fundamental limitations to equating any construct or number of constructs with spiritual realities, especially the notion of calling as defined in this project. There is no inerrant way to quantify the work and presence of the Holy Spirit, whose part in calling is acknowledged in this study as essential for calling to have any real validity in a person’s life. This research and its findings,

therefore, are limited to the individual's perceptions, understandings, and responses toward calling that can be described and measured by the constructs and scales used in this project. The researcher acknowledges that divine calling is a very subjective and sacred experience, but also insists that it is not beyond the scope of research to discern its presence and effect. It is the opinion of this researcher that the study and facilitation of divine calling should no more be ignored than the subjects of conversion and spiritual formation.

Secondly, it was assumed in this study that a general understanding and appreciation of divine calling and its relevance to believers is present in typical evangelical church congregations and their leadership. However, it was also believed that there are many adolescents in such churches who may not understand or recognize God's personal and comprehensive call upon their lives and therefore miss its impact on their spiritual and identity development.

A matter of concern in the arena of adolescent religiosity prompted a third important assumption in this study. In Christian Smith's review and analysis of the results from the National Study of Youth in Religion, he recognized that most teenagers' religion functions as a taken-for-granted presence that acts only in the background of their lives (Smith and Denton 2005, 129). Furthermore, Smith described many of the youth interviewed in the study as largely unable to articulate the actual teachings of their faith tradition and therefore mostly unintentional in its practice (Smith and Denton 2005, 134). In this study, it was assumed that proper belief about divine calling should be a necessary component of appropriate discernment and response. Some of the items in the VCS, therefore, served to assess a belief component.

In stating this, however, the researcher understands and appropriates a fourth assumption: that belief is not necessarily a guarantee of behavior. In a further examination of the NSYR, Rick Morton found that Southern Baptist youth generally fared well in affirming orthodox beliefs about the nature of God and His work in the lives of people, but gave other responses that suggest they ignore the work of God in their own daily affairs (Morton 2005, 36-37). The presence of this “intellectual commitment” but “functional disregard” toward God at least among some Southern Baptist teenagers (Morton 2005, 37) pointed to the critical need in this research to assess behavior as well as belief. This study, therefore, sought to develop survey items that explored specific behavioral responses and lifestyle changes appropriate to the experience of divine calling.

A final and key assumption was that older adolescents would be able to complete the survey administered and honestly express their perceptions of divine calling, personal identity, and purpose in life. This assumption is bolstered by the previous successful uses of similar tests with adolescents by other researchers (Feenstra and Brouwer 2008, 86; Robbins and Francis 2005, 76; Klaassen and McDonald 2002, 191-92; Fulton 1997, 5).

Procedural Overview

This study first involved the construction and validation of a test, the VCS, a self-assessment using Likert scale items to measure the multiple dimensions of an experience of divine calling. The test included items generated from the precedent literature on calling, rated and revised by an expert panel, and initially reviewed by a small group of older Christian adolescents. All items were grouped into three subscales representing the vectors, or components, of calling as addressed in the literature review.

The test was internally validated with older Christian high students through a second version and subsequently administered to two groups of seminary students for external validation. The scores of the seminarians on the VCS were compared with their results on another recent measure of calling, the Christian Vocational Assessment Scale (Feenstra 2009). The seminarian's scores were also compared to those of the freshmen students in the main study to determine if they represented distinct populations in regards to calling.

Second, the study made use of the finalized VCS scale along with the PIL and the EIPQ in testing students from the freshmen classes of three Christian colleges: Huntington University in Huntington, Indiana; Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas; and North Greenville University in Tigerville, South Carolina. The results of this testing were compiled and analyzed to determine the correlation between the experience of divine calling, identity status, and purpose in life.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study included the following materials combined into one survey as administered:

1. A short demographic survey to establish the individual's age, sex, grade/class level, church membership, and current church involvement;
2. The VCS, a scale with 27 items designed to measure the individual's perceived sense of divine calling through three subscales of calling;
3. Part A of the PIL (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964), composed of 20 items which assesses the degree to which individuals experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives;
4. The EIPQ (Balistreri et al. 1995), a 32 item survey that uses separate scores for identity exploration and commitment to assign Marcia's identity statuses (Marcia 1966) to participants.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

There is much to celebrate about youth ministry in the North American church today. Resource materials to help youth leaders to evangelize, disciple, teach, counsel, and commission teenagers in the ministries of the church or parachurch are overwhelmingly abundant. Exciting opportunities have proliferated to enable Christian adolescents to be inspired by the best speakers and musicians, thrilled by creative adventures, challenged in nation-wide abstinence campaigns, and stretched by cross-cultural experiences in global missions. Thanks to the Internet and multi-media technologies, no church has to be left behind from the latest in youth ministry training, youth culture watch information, and the swap-shop of ideas for ministry. In short, the American church is more equipped than ever before to reach out and touch a generation for Christ.

Unfortunately, some of the nation's voices in youth ministry see little to celebrate. Mike Yaconelli, one of the original architects in resourcing modern youth ministry with imaginative ideas and programs, began to see something of a fallacy in all the bells and whistles. In a reversal of his previous role as a cheerleader for the advancement of the church's ministry to adolescents, he conceded that, "The success of youth ministry in this country is an illusion" (Yaconelli 2003, failure.php). Yaconelli pointed to two discouraging trends discovered by researchers: (1) a serious and

unmistakable drop-off in church attendance as adolescents increase in age (Barna 2001, 113), and (2) the little or no difference in moral behavior and understanding of truth between Christian teenagers than that of youth in general (McDowell 1994, 7). For a brief period before his death, Yaconelli continued to raise questions about the ability of contemporary youth ministry strategies to effectively disciple teenagers and integrate them into the life of the whole church. His arguments have emerged alongside the concerns of others.

Christian Smith's landmark study of youth and religion has noted that church and religion must compete against the likes of school, media, sports, and work so that they often come out the losers in time and influence (Smith and Denton 2005, 28). While it confirmed that many teenagers are religious, the NSYR also concluded that generally their spiritual understanding and concern is very weak (Smith and Denton 2005, 260-62). Josh McDowell has predicted the scenario of "the last Christian generation" in America if the current level of distortion in Christian teenagers' beliefs and the lack of spiritual transformation in their lives go unchanged (McDowell 2006, 15-19). Mike King has written of "dysfunctional evangelical youth ministry" that has emphasized decisionism to the neglect of Christian formation (King 2006, 38). There is a growing belief that the modern fascination with "bigger, better, faster" in church youth ministry is not effectively addressing the deepest needs of postmodern adolescents (Clark 2004, 187; Barna 2001, 155-56).

One of the things at stake among post-modern adolescents is a sense of transcendence—the need to know that there is more to life than the boundaries of self (Dean 2004, 113-15), yet there is surprising little study about divine calling and its

potential impact on adolescents choices and development (Feenstra and Brouwer 2008, 83) (Neufield 2004, 194). Since recent research in psychology has been surprisingly busy in affirming the value of religiosity in adolescence (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 211), the way is paved for Christian researchers to investigate specific spiritual and developmental propositions regarding calling. This literature review, therefore, begins with an examination of the critical issues regarding the spiritual health and well-being of adolescents in the context of post-modern American culture. It proceeds to a discussion of adolescent identity development and the refreshing turn of psychological research toward positive development, including the crucial role of religion and spirituality in adolescent thriving. This sets the stage for a theological exploration of divine calling and how the personal experience of calling may address some of the needs and challenges adolescents face in identity development.

The religious experience of divine calling in the Christian context can serve as a vital aspect of adolescent identity development and spiritual well-being (King 2003, 197; Dalton 2001, 19-20). With the intent to test this claim, this review explores the conceptualization of calling as an intersection of three vectors and the possibility of measuring a person's perception and response to calling.

Critical Issues in Post-Modern Adolescent Development

Since the time that adolescence was first described in developmental terms by G. Stanley Hall (1904) as a period of storm and stress, its negative issues have been studied more than its virtues (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2004, 167). This study explores the relationship that calling may have on the positive spiritual development of

adolescents; nonetheless, there is first a need to examine some of the serious issues and obstacles that today's youth must face and overcome on their way to maturity.

The Ambiguity of Adolescence

The concept of adolescence arose primarily as a recent social invention, emerging in the first half of the twentieth century and truly coming into focus with the post World War II creation of the American “teenager” (Hines 1999, 4). Prior to the modern era, children were likely to gain their identity and adulthood simultaneously, largely through an economic role in the community (Dean 2004, 82). Robert Epstein credits the rise of adolescence to the heavy industrialization that emerged in the last century accompanied by social reforms that redefined the roles and expectations of childhood (Epstein 2007, 23). In American society especially, adults began to view the period of older childhood as in need of protection, established age limits to certain activities, such as drinking liquor, smoking cigarettes, and gambling, and unfortunately made bad habits as part of the mark of adulthood (Hines 1999, 45). With the advance of technology, growth of social freedoms, and expansion of vocational opportunities, Erik Erikson recognized that adolescence had become a more marked and conscious period—a way of life between childhood and adulthood—and could be linked with the process of identity formation. He advocated a time of moratorium for youth to have the opportunity to explore and make commitments (Erikson 1968, 128). Thanks to Erikson and others, adolescence came to be understood and interpreted mostly by the field of psychology (Clark 2001, 45).

This study accepts the reality of adolescence, loosely defined as beginning in biology and ending in culture (Conger and Petersen 1984, 92), and referring mostly to the

period of life between childhood and adulthood, beginning anywhere from ages 10 to 13 and lasting until 18 to 22 years of age (Santrock 2001, 28-29). From a developmental perspective, adolescence is identified as a specific life stage involving significant physical, mental, and psychosocial changes (Rahn 2001, 220-22). Recent research in neurology, for instance, has brought to light the fact that the adolescent brain is “not a finished work, but a work in progress,” with an astounding amount of growth underway (Walsh 2004, 17). Key developmental processes in the brain that were once considered complete by puberty are now understood to continue through much of adolescence, resulting in relatively brief windows of opportunity to impact teenagers’ development in areas such as impulse control, relationship building, and communication skills (Walsh 2004, 37).

Regardless of this and other efforts to define and mark adolescence, a fog of ambiguity has now obscured the typical young person’s road to maturity. The benchmarks in the process of leaving childhood and attaining adulthood have become blurred and confusing (Rahn 2001, 222; Hines 1999, 44), and successful completion of individuation, or becoming one’s own person, has become merely a subjective experience in postmodern society (Clark 2001, 51). A growing chorus of voices now argue that this ambiguity is part of the reason why adolescence is an unnecessary, unproductive bridge from childhood to adulthood and responsible in itself for most of the turmoil related to its class of individuals (Epstein 2007, 17-19). The following examines the sources of this diffusion and dissolution.

The extended duration of adolescence is a significant factor. It is now common to regard adolescence as beginning as early as age nine or ten and extending into the mid-

twenties or longer, when young people typically transition into adult roles such as marriage and career employment (Balswick, King, and Reamer 2005, 169). While girls typically enter puberty earlier than previous generations, ironically their precocious physical development conspires with social and emotional factors to slow down their formation of deeper structures of meaning and self-discovery and keep them in adolescence longer (Pipher 1994, 53-54). The prolongation of adolescence has led researchers to distinguish “midadolescence” from early and late adolescence to describe those of high school age who are endowed with many of the freedoms of adulthood but still a long way from becoming fully functioning adults in society (Clark 2004, 35-36). Such specificity of terminology does nothing to clarify the threshold of adulthood. The typical cultural indicators of marriage, occupation, and family are distorted by many exceptions and complications arising from a longer life span, the effects of dysfunctional families, and the increased difficulty of entering into the work of a postindustrial, technological culture (Parks 2000, 4).

The tasks of adolescence have become more complicated and confusing. Postmodern youth are far removed from the previous era’s limited number of pathways into adulthood and now face a bewildering variety of educational, employment, and spousal/relationship options (Balswick, King, and Reamer 2005, 168). Teenagers must find ways to develop a healthy sense of self in the midst of abundant contradictions, such as living in a junk food culture saturated with unrealistic images of body health, fitness, and beauty (Hines 1999, 43). The spread of a worldwide materialistic youth culture linked with cultural disenfranchisement have left many without traditional systems of support and meaning (Verma and Maria 2006, 125). New generations are taking their

place in the world as moral illiterates, in thrall to popular culture thanks to a decades-long approach to education that emphasizes the process of thinking but without serious content in which to base their ideas (Kilpatrick 1992, 115-18).

Adolescence as an avenue to maturity has also become ambiguous. Frank Furedi has observed that the gradual erosion of the line between childhood and adulthood is accompanied by the powerful message that growing up is a troublesome and unpleasant activity (Furedi 2003, index.php/site/article/2775). He also notes that adolescence is becoming more of an alternative than a pathway to adulthood:

The sense of despair that surrounds adult identity helps explain why contemporary culture finds it difficult to draw a line between adulthood and childhood. Childishness is idealized (sic) for the simple reason that we despair at the thought of living the alternative. The depreciation of adulthood is a result of the difficulty that our culture has in asserting the ideals usually associated with this stage in people's lives. Maturity, responsibility and commitment are only feebly affirmed by contemporary culture. Such ideals contradict the sense of impermanence that prevails over daily life. It is the gradual emptying out of adult identity that discourages young men and women from embracing the next stage of their lives. (Furedi 2003, index.php/site/article/2775)

Maturity is no longer necessarily an ultimate goal since adolescence is now acceptable as an enduring lifestyle as much as it has been a life stage. Adolescence is “an equally viable choice for fourteen- and forty-year-olds” that leaves teenagers confused in their search for identity (Dean 2004, 61). Adding both difficulty and opportunity to this dilemma is the fluidity of postmodern times where choice is rich, change is sudden, and commitments are temporary, allowing young people the ability to become anything at any time in any place (Marty 1999, 31-32).

In summary, it is no surprise that Erikson's idea of a protected and extended “time-out” for youth has come under fire. Many see it as irrelevant and no longer useful in an era when teenagers exercise adult powers and protected developmental space is out

of reach (Hines 1999, 8-9). Among these may be Christians who reject the concept of adolescence entirely because it lacks a biblical basis and serves as a poor foundation for understanding the behavior, abilities, and responsibilities of teenagers (Black 1998, 22; Reid 2004, 58-59). Whether contemporary adolescents face harder times growing up today than other generations is always open to debate; what is beyond dispute is that they live in a society of continuous and rapid change that has little stability and certainty (Head 1997, 5-6). In this climate of ambiguity, Erikson yet remains something of a prophet worth heeding: “Without some such *ideological commitment*, however implicit in a ‘way of life,’ youth suffers *confusion of values* which can be specifically dangerous to some but which on a large scale is surely dangerous to the fabric of society” (Erikson 1968, 188). Whatever the current social construction of adolescence, the church must not sit back and allow it to dictate or create a *de facto* theology of adolescent development (Clark 2001, 60). The experience of divine calling may have rich application as the means by which God leads the way through the muddle.

Abandonment by Adults

Adolescents today are perhaps the richest, most populous, best educated, and healthiest generation in history, and yet researchers describe them as the “disconnected generation” because of the strong sense of alienation, uncertainty, and emotional distance from parents and other adults that many of them feel (McDowell 2000, xi; Levine 2006, 6). From a study of church youth in the 1970s, Merton Strommen coined the term “psychological orphans” to label one of the five cries of youth he encountered and to describe the painful lack of parental support and love experienced they experienced (Strommen 1979, 34). Less than a generation ago, David Elkind gave an unflattering

analysis of American parenting by describing the heedless rush to competence and maturity that so characterized “the hurried child” (Elkind 1988, 3). In more recent years Wayne Rice noted that a culture of adult abandonment has allowed peer group influence among teenagers to supersede that of parents only by default (Rice 1998, 68).

Chap Clark has been an outspoken critic of abandonment. After spending nearly a year conducting a qualitative study in a Los Angeles high school setting, he surmised that many of the adolescents he observed had suffered the loss of safe relationships and intimate settings with adults that served as their primary nurturing community (Clark 2004, 50). He concluded that adults in general have selfishly distanced themselves by pushing their children and adolescents into a kind of early independence and autonomy and even argues that many parents have fooled themselves into thinking that they are truly committed to their young:

We have evolved to the point where we believe driving [our teenagers] is support, being active is love, and providing any and every kind of opportunity is selfless nurture. We are a culture that has forgotten how to *be* together. We have lost the ability to spend unstructured down time. Rather than being with children in creative activities at home or setting them free to enjoy semi-supervised activities such as ‘play’, we as a culture have looked to outside organizations and structured agendas to fill their time and dictate their lives. (Clark 2004, 46)

Clark’s findings may have limited generalization, but other researchers have also sounded the alarm about a culture of neglect. The Commission on Children at Risk found that the largest factor leading to the deterioration of mental and behavioral health in children was the lack of connectedness—the close connections of people who are committed to one another over time and the deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning (Commission on Children at Risk 2003, 5). One study found that the average American teenager spends approximately three and a half hours alone each day, which is

more than the time they spend with family and friends (Schneider and Stevenson 1999, 192). Another study of nearly five thousand eighth-graders and their parents found that children who were home alone for eleven or more hours a week were three times more likely than other children to abuse alcohol, tobacco or marijuana (Hothschild 2001, 224).

Institutions play a large role in the adult abandonment of teenagers. Hine observes that youth spend much of their time in the care of people who do not know them as individuals and under the control of large and impersonal institutions that strive to deal with people uniformly (Hine 1999, 17). Elkind assails the bigness of schools for their bureaucratization, reduced contact between faculty and students, and weak bonds of community. He compares today's large schools to towns, which appeal to adults who may like the anonymity of a large city for its sense of privacy, but not to adolescents,

who are in the process of constructing a sense of self, the control exercised by living in a place where you are known to everyone is an important contributor to a solidly established sense of internal control and a well-grounded sense of identity. (Elkind 1998, 172)

Abandonment is pervasive even in the Christian community. Barna discovered that more than two thirds of Christian parents admit they have abdicated to the church the responsibility for their children's moral and spiritual development (Barna 2003, 77-78). He also noted that less than ten percent of church families read the Bible, pray, or participate in an act of service together in a given week, and in a typical month only five percent worship together as a family outside of church (Barna 2003, 78). Clark indicts church youth ministries for their greater efforts to generate "numerical growth, superficial and instant response, and active attendance" rather than investing the time, energy, and commitment to reach adolescents as individuals (Clark 2004, 186-87).

The current reality is that American teenagers desperately need significant relational ties to adults who know them, care about them, and are available in times of trouble and crisis (Smith and Denton 2005, 269). Indeed, it may surprise adults to learn that adolescents have a strong desire for their parents to pay attention to them and participate in the choices they are making (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 176; Hines 1999, 25). The NSYR debunked popular misconceptions when it found that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents was their parents (Smith and Denton 2005, 261). Unfortunately, parents and potential mentors seemed to have joined “the cultural shift from a nurturing focus on individuals to a focus on the group, the crowd, the statistics, the record, the program, the institution” which neglects the personal, intentional, and authentic applications of concern and nurture (Clark 2004, 170-71). It is this adult absenteeism that has created the loss of an authoritative and reliable source of truth among teenagers (Glidewell 2005, 57).

Abandonment has led adolescents to form their own sub-culture to insulate themselves from the pain they feel toward adults and society in general (Clark 2004, 59-60), but there is a door between youth and adults that is still open for reconnection. Parents can be encouraged that their teenager craves their listening ear and typically will follow their spiritual example (Barna 2001, 146-47). Teenagers “hunger to be known well, understood intimately, and enjoyed for who they really are” and the church has the opportunity to become the most welcoming and safest place in town for them (Lawrence 2006, 121). Adults can be inspired and challenged by the fact that their role as a youth sponsor or guarantor in faith will likely be the most important factor in a young person’s decision to claim faith as his or her own (Dean 2004, 243).

Considering the valuable role of adult mediators in the discernment and facilitation of calling, Ginny Ward Holderness has cast the vision of a church that offers itself as “a caring group where teenagers can explore issues, shape and reshape dreams, and discover their passions with adults who take them seriously and who will listen” (Holderness and Palmer 2001, 8). The kind of connection youth need from adults requires a real commitment of time, a significant level of transparency, and a depth of caring that translates into a commitment to “be there” even in the dark times (Barna 2001, 153). To redress the issue of abandonment will not be complex, but it will be costly in that it will not conform to modern notions of mass production and efficiency.

Excessive Choice

“We are what we choose,” says Dan Allender, a professor of counseling and a therapist who believes that a single choice has the power to set a person’s course for life (Allender 2005, 58). Choice in contemporary society appears to be both a blessing and a curse. This section explores how adolescents have inherited the seemingly limitless possibilities that go with the freedom of choice but also the affliction of tyranny that comes with the overload of choices.

Choice can be a good thing. In a consumer culture, choice grants to the individual the powerful and positive senses of autonomy, control, and liberation and can lead to a high quality of life (Schwarz 2004, 2-3). The unprecedented freedom of choice in today’s society means that a person can not only choose their occupation but also craft their identity and even transcend aspects of their ancestry such as race, ethnicity, nationality, social and economic class (Schwarz 2004, 41). “Life has become a

smorgasbord with an endless array of dishes,” says Guinness, but he also notes that along the way there is a price to be paid (Guinness 1998, 175).

Abundant choice is the proverbial “too much of a good thing.” Decades ago, Erikson recognized that the growing number of alternatives in occupation had become adolescents’ greatest source of anxiety and their biggest struggle in identity development (Erikson 1968, 132). There is a point when the multitude of options becomes a slave-master, no longer contributing to a person’s well-being, but stealing away his ability to make good decisions and causing anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction (Schwarz 2004, 2-3). Put another way, the more choices and degrees of freedom individuals have available, the more indecisive and unsure they become (Berzonsky 2003, 140). A sense of helplessness sets in because the person finds it impossible to make a seemingly endless series of informed and wise decisions (Schwarz 2004, 104). Rather than turn away from choice and change, people claim them by rights and are heedless to the resulting decrease in commitment and continuity in life; because there is so much of everything, everything is optional and nothing is obligatory (Guinness 1998, 175).

Excessive choice has emerged simultaneously with a growing confusion over what is right. Religion for most people has become an option and with it the processes of religious education and spiritual formation (Queen 1996, 491). Christians certainly value the theological necessity of religious freedom, but the combination of choice and pluralism has marginalized churches and religious traditions and cast doubt on the likelihood that individuals can still construct a religious identity that it is strong, deeply felt, and well understood” (Queen 1996, 491). The multitude of alternatives and options in life has also become problematic due to the absence of a meaningful frame of

reference by which one can discern what is best or preferable (Berzonsky 2003, 140).

Society's great offer of the maximum opportunity for choice is made hollow by this stunning fact:

Out of more than a score of great civilizations in human history, modern Western civilization is the very first to have no agreed-on answer to the question of the purpose of life. Thus more ignorance, confusion—and longing—surround this topic now than at almost any time in history. The trouble is that, as modern people, we have too much to live with and too little to live for. (Guinness 2001, 15-16)

It is in this setting that adolescents must explore ideologies, test truths, find worthy causes, and “sort out the sacred from the profane, the gods from the idols” (Dean 2004, 109). In the effort, youth may be surprised to learn that modern freedom is something of a myth, concealing the fact there are many crucial aspects of their existence that are beyond the realm of choice and are givens that limit or prescribe their direction in life (Schuurman 2004, 120). These givens point to the need for individuals to recognize that their lives have many aspects that are beyond their control but thankfully in the loving hands of a provident God (Schuurman 2004, 119). The mixed blessing of abundant choice thus begs for a perspective of divine calling such as what James White offers: that calling is not a matter of finding one's own way but following where God leads (White 2004, 125).

Superficial Spirituality

In his recent study of American teenagers and religion, Christian Smith found that the vast majority of youth defy the description of irreligious or rebellious, but rather look “exceedingly conventional in their religious identity and practices” (Smith and Denton 2005, 120). While this may seem comforting to the religious establishment, in truth, the status quo is not a healthy trajectory. “Superficiality is the curse of our age,”

wrote Richard Foster (Foster 1978, 1) years before the current generation of teenagers were born, and an inquiry into adolescent faith continues to reveal a spiritual shallowness and lack of engagement that is alarming.

Smith has coined the term “moralistic therapeutic deism” to describe a sweeping and dominant de facto faith among youth that appears to have colonized many established religious traditions. In essence, this view adheres to a belief in God but severely marginalizes His activity, influence, and demands in the world. Religion is primarily about having a good and happy life and being the kind of person other people will like (Smith and Denton 2005, 162-65). Religious teenagers today may have an intellectual grasp of a traditional faith, but the rise of consumerism, the power to choose, and rampant marketing has led to a sense of entitlement and self-determination that encourages them to make choices inconsistent with professed beliefs (Morton 2005, 38-39). The bottom line of teenage spirituality in America is that regardless of their engagement in religious upbringing and institutions, young people typically are not transformed by religious experience enough for it to affect significantly their daily lives (Lawrence 2006, 19; McDowell and Bellis 2006, 19).

This lack of spiritual transformation becomes alarming when paired with a closer examination of evangelical youth and the status and basis of their salvation. In 2003, Barna found that 93% of young people by age thirteen considered themselves to be Christian, but only 35% claimed to be “absolutely committed to the Christian faith” (Barna 2003, 33). A Gallup Poll found a similar disparity in adults: of 44% who claimed to be born-again or evangelical, only half of these fit the description based on their alignment with core doctrine (Winseman 2005, default.aspx). Barna contends that the

majority of self-professed Christians are neither evangelical nor born again, but rather “notional Christians” who have very little discernible commitment (Barna 2003, 33-34). Smith has also concluded that “a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually only tenuously Christian in any sense that it is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition” (Smith and Denton 2005, 171).

Thom Rainer researched some of the beliefs of the adolescent millennial generation and found them to be very religious but not particular, resistant to the idea that Christ is the only way to salvation, and extremely committed to religious tolerance and inclusivism (Rainer 1997, 149). In seeking to understand the origin of these attitudes, Rainer pointed to the environment created by the previous generation that propagated moral and religious relativism and failed to lay down clear boundaries and absolutes of the Christian faith (Rainer 1997, 161).

In spite of the failure of the church to pass down an orthodox faith, there is still evidence that the hunger of a new generation is not for an easier Christianity, but a deeper and more authentic one. Human needs are important to Millennials and with increasing numbers they are serving in communities, school and church leadership programs, and in mission trips (Holderness and Palmer 2001, 7). Showing great hope that adolescents can yet be engaged, Kenda Creasy Dean has challenged the church, especially the mainline denominations, to rediscover what adolescents find as their very lifeblood—passion (Dean 2004, 7). Absent what a compelling and truly transcendent Christian theology can provide, adolescents have little choice but to settle for something far less:

In contemporary culture’s preoccupation with self-fulfillment, young people risk losing the sense that life is a noble mission on behalf of a greater good. Gone is the sense that they have a part to play in a cosmic battle between light and dark; that faith is about life and death; that something is at stake—and that society is duty-

bound not only to acknowledge adolescent passion, but to cultivate it by stoking the fires of a grand sense of purpose. (Dean 2004, 113)

In summary of this section, there are serious issues surrounding adolescence that beg for review and response, especially in the context of youth ministry in the church. There are strong hints that many of the problems associated with the new generations are linked to the loss of social connectedness, the weakening of families, and the absence of authoritative community (Commission on Children at Risk 2003, 43). The juggernaut of choice, while opening exciting new vistas for adolescents and their future, is another factor that often leaves them bewildered, insecure, and perhaps even paralyzed in its wake. The church is also unwittingly involved in the spread of ambiguity and adult abandonment that currently plague adolescents. To escape the inevitable spiritual superficiality, adolescents will need the church to adopt an approach that offers them intimacy, meaning, and guidance, things that clearly relate to divine calling.

Identity Development: A Primary Task of Adolescence

Identity, although a rich concept that warrants extensive definition, is basically a matter of personal continuity and consistency that provides stability in relationships, motivations, and decision-making (Baumeister 1991, 93-94). The aforementioned issues of extended adolescence, abundant choice, and the bewildering possibilities in lifestyle, vocation, and religion have complicated the work of identity formation in adolescents. Personal integration eludes many young people in contemporary culture because the press of the moment leaves little encouragement for them to process anything more than a momentary commitment of the self and certainly no room to construct a creative identity (Dean 2004, 13). While the term “identity crisis” appears passé, there is a clear recognition that problematic identity issues are becoming increasingly pervasive and the

concept of adulthood has lost much of its meaning for many people (Coté 2006, 5). The following discussion of identity development provides a necessary framework for addressing some of the critical challenges facing contemporary adolescents. The context of this study also begs for a biblical perspective of identity from which to evaluate psychosocial theory and appropriate that which would truly facilitate optimal adolescent development.

The Process of Identity Development

The greatest contribution of Erikson to the study of adolescents was to articulate the concept of identity development as the critical issue and challenge for youth (Waterman 1985, 5). In his model of psychosocial development, Erikson outlined “eight stages of man” that each correspond to a period in the life cycle and require the resolution of a crisis involving opposing or contrasting attitudes (Erikson 1963, 250). The choices required in each stage lead the person in either a positive or a negative direction in life (Shields and Bredfedlt, 2001, 213). Particular to adolescence is the stage of “identity versus role confusion,” where the challenge for the young person is to form a lasting identity in which there is a sense of order and orientation (Erikson 1963, 254). Erikson later defined optimal identity as “a sense of psychosocial well-being” that is marked by “a feeling of being at home in one’s body, a sense of ‘knowing where one is going,’ and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count” (Erikson 1968, 165). Erikson also introduced the concept of moratorium as a crucial period of delay—a protected time when young people have the chance to explore possibilities before making the commitments of adulthood (Erikson 1968, 157).

While Erikson introduced identity development to the world of psychological study, James Marcia created the conceptual framework for identity that made it accessible as a subject of scientific inquiry. His identity status paradigm included four categories of identity development—diffused, moratorium, foreclosed, and achieved—based on the two conditions of exploration and commitment (Marcia 1980, 163). The status of identity achievement, a sort of culmination in development, is the result of progressing through an identity crisis that has led a person to explore options and make a commitment to an ideological and interpersonal self (Klaczynski, Fauth, and Swanger 1998, 185). The status of identity diffusion, conversely, indicates little exploration and commitment resulting in low levels of autonomy, self-esteem, and personal integration (Kroger 2003, 213-14). The other two statuses are moratorium, an exploration of possibilities without commitment, and foreclosure, a commitment without sufficient exploration (Marcia 1980, 163).

Marcia's framework, which has launched hundreds of studies, is based on the understanding that identity formation requires an active process of searching and self-selecting psychic elements culminating into self-chosen commitments (Adams 1992, 2). Researchers have concluded, however, that the identity construct is far too complex to be reduced to a single operationalization, even as valuable as Marcia's is (Archer 1994, 3-4). In evaluating the identity status paradigm thirty-five years after its genesis, Berzonsky and Adams affirmed it as useful to represent a significant amount of Erikson's concept of identity, but insufficient to understand identity development from the standpoint of social context and environmental influence (Berzonsky and Adams 1999, 584). Further research has confirmed that Marcia's statuses are valid descriptions, but denied his paradigm as an

adequate model of progressive development, in that: 1) individuals can regress, 2) foreclosure can be as much of an endpoint as achievement, and 3) statuses are not limited to older adolescents as Marcia originally expected (Meeus et al. 1999, 422).

A review of Marcia's work led Berzonsky to add identity-processing style as a dimension to describe how individuals approach or avoid the tasks of identity development (Berzonsky 1989, 268). Alan Waterman also saw the need to measure identity development not only in terms of exploration and commitment but also as a matter of personal expressiveness and motivation (Waterman 1992, 58). Most significant for this study, Waterman found a qualitative difference between identity achievers who had simply found something to do and those who had truly found someone to be (Waterman 2004, 210). Ultimately, and for the purposes of this study, the identity status paradigm has been moderated and modified, but not abandoned (Meeus et al. 1999, 432).

A critical aspect of adolescent identity development is the ego-virtue of fidelity, what Erikson noted as the strength and center of youth's most passionate striving (Erikson 1968, 233). The presence of fidelity, defined as an abiding commitment or loyalty to others, ideologies, and roles, strengthens the sense of meaning and purpose in youth who have reached identity achievement (Furrow, King, and White 2004, 18). Fidelity stands in direct contrast with the current slouch of society toward personal ambiguity and diffusiveness. Dean contends that postmodern adolescents are preoccupied with their need for fidelity and ask, "Will you be there for me?" because they have experienced too little of faithfulness in their relationships to acquire it for themselves (Dean 2004, 77). Fidelity expressed as personal commitment is necessary for a sense of direction in life and to provide a basis to monitor and evaluate one's behavior. It also is

positively related to the vigilant decision making and problem-focused coping that are important to well-being (Berzonsky 2003, 132-33).

Positive Identity Development

As complex as identity studies have become since Erikson's time, his description of an optimal sense of identity, namely, "a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of 'knowing where one is going,' and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson 1968, 165) still undergirds the idea of positive youth development. It is noteworthy that the field of psychology in recent years has begun to shift more of its focus to the causes and consequences of positive functioning and lessen its obsession with human dysfunction and suffering (Ryff 1989, 1069). The path to a healthy identity has now become one of the most significant and highly researched psychoanalytic subjects (Coté 2006, 3).

William Damon, one of the leading advocates for the new vision of positive youth development, describes this approach as seeing young people as resources rather than as problems for society and emphasizing their potentialities over their supposed incapacities (Damon 2004, 15). He contrasts this view with the old problem-centered models of adolescent research and practice:

While the positive youth development approach recognizes the existence of adversities and developmental challenges that may affect children in various ways, it resists conceiving of the developmental process mainly as an effort to overcome deficits and risk. Instead, it begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world. The positive youth development approach aims at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than correcting, curing, or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities. (Damon 2004, 15)

One government-sponsored group specified as many as fifteen specific objectives that programs can adopt to contribute to positive youth development. Far from being politically correct, the Positive Youth Development Evaluation project encouraged the promotion of outcomes such as moral competence, spirituality, belief in the future, resilience, and prosocial involvement (Catalano et al. 2004, 101-02).

The word “thriving” has now become a key term in the description of positive development in adolescents. The central qualities of thriving are the presence of healthy, positive relations between the person and the community and a trajectory in life that will include culturally valued contributions to self, others, and institutions (Lerner, Dowling, and Anderson 2003, 173). Simply put, “thriving youth not only stay out of trouble, but they give back to their community” (Furrow, King, and White 2004, 25). Other descriptions of adolescent thriving include a strong sense of meaning and purpose, an appropriate sense of self, and a positive and hopeful sense of one’s future (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 182).

In the context of this study, psychology’s focus on thriving and positive youth development has opened the door for research to explore any experiences, conditions, and/or relationships that lead to flourishing. Already, strong connections have been discovered between positive identity development and purpose in life, self-transcendence, and religious development.

Identity and Purpose

Emerging as one of the survivors from the horrors of the Holocaust, Viktor Frankl reentered life as a man charged with meaning and purpose, as one who had been through a furnace and purged of all that was false and futile. Frankl had discovered that

true purpose and meaning in life trump suffering and even death. Regarding those in the death camps who had maintained integrity and unselfishness even when their life was at stake, he said, “the best of us did not survive” (Frankl 1992, 19). Others died for a radically opposite reason: they gave up any hope in the future and lost their purpose (Frankl 1992, 82). Frankl came to understand that purpose in life is essential to existence and is even able to bring meaning to suffering (Frankl 1992, 76). Frankl’s belief that people can take personal responsibility for themselves and find meaning in even the worst of times provided a much-needed corrective to the dark, pessimistic view of psychoanalysis and the mechanistic, dehumanizing approach of behavioralism (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 219-20).

Few may actually face terrible experiences like those of the Holocaust, but the question, “How do I find and fulfill the central purpose of my life?” still confronts each person (Guinness 1998, 1). Purpose and meaning are undeniably essential to mental and spiritual well-being (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 246). Frankl recognized the necessity of a search for meaning, but he changed the paradigm from a personal quest to a transcendent accounting:

Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is *he* who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by *answering for* his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. (Frankl 1984, 113-14)

While Frankl used the words “will to meaning” in his practice of logotherapy (Frankl 1984, 105), others have distinguished purpose from meaning as a distinct concept. Roy Baumeister suggested that meaning is the larger concept and consists of four needs—purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth—while purpose is the pursuit of goals and the interpretation of one’s current activities in relation to future or possible

states (Baumeister 1991, 32-33). Chickering and Reisser identified purpose as one of seven key developmental vectors in college students and recognized that the kind of purpose that can overcome obstacles requires a vision of the future combined with significant levels of intentionality (Chickering and Reisser 1993, 50). Others have captured some of the transcendent nature of purpose by describing it as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (Damon, Menon, and Bronk 2003, 121). Damon has also introduced the concept of “noble purpose” to acknowledge that purpose can have a qualitative moral and social component with consequences for others in the world (Damon 2003, 12).

Purpose came into its own as a psychological construct when James Crumbach developed a Purpose in Life Test to measure the level of existential vacuum, or lack of purpose, that Frankl postulated was in every person (Crumbach and Maholick 1964). Purpose has been firmly established as a variable in predicting key individual differences (Robbins and Francis 2005, 73). A recent review of published research about the PIL further confirmed that a sense of purpose in life clearly contributes to establishing positive characteristics, strong values, and healthy mental attitudes (Molasso 2006, 2).

Outside of the furnace of affliction, it is in the years of adolescence and young adulthood that purpose becomes a critical issue in life. Erikson recognized that healthy adolescence requires that youth be able to see a progressive continuity between the past and their anticipated future (Erikson 1968, 87). Numerous studies have shown that purpose is a robust component particularly of youth psychology (Damon, Menon, and Bronk 2003, 126). Adolescence is a journey that must address vital questions such as

“Who am I?” “What is the meaning of my life?” and “Where am I going in life?”
(Pullman 2001, 66; Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 203).

Purpose has been closely associated with adolescent thriving (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 182) and positively correlated in adolescents with prosocial behavior, moral commitment, academic achievement, and high levels of self-esteem (Damon, Menon, and Bronk 2003, 120). Conversely, Erikson and his followers’ clinical observations revealed that when adolescents had nothing to which to commit themselves while growing up, it was difficult for them to develop a motivational belief system in later life (Damon, Menon, and Bronk 2003, 120).

Achieving purpose is not an easy task for youth and young adults. In a world where meaningful options and opportunities proliferate, the choice of direction often means taking one path while rejecting nine others (Chickering and Reisser 1993, 225). The search for purpose is complicated by a stunning fact: modern Western civilization is the first in the history of the world to have no consensus of an answer to the question of purpose (Guinness 2001, 15-16). Young people not only must negotiate their way to a stable sense of purpose with no help from society in general but also with a loss of significant adult support (Clark 2003, 51). The impact of these authority figures and guarantors is worthy of further consideration in gaining a deeper understanding of positive identity development.

Identity and Transcendence

Closely related to identity development and adolescent thriving is the notion of self-transcendence. Frankl recognized that the individual’s search for meaning is not merely an effort to satisfy self but to transcend self. He was convinced that if life does not

point to something or someone beyond itself then it is meaningless (Frankl 2000, 134). Take away ideological commitment from a young person, says Erikson, and what results is a confusion of values that can become dangerous to society (Erikson 1968, 188). Ideologies function as divine authorities in persons, making the adolescent search for a transcendent ideology “both developmentally necessary and spiritually essential” (Dean 2004, 110). One study has made the bold claim that youth are “hard-wired,” or neurologically designed, to connect to moral meaning and the transcendent (Commission on Children at Risk 2003, 33).

The need for transcendence has been described as an ‘internal press’ which fuels the search for meaning and purpose, pursuit of the sacred, and embedding of one’s identity within a tradition, community, or way of thinking (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 208). It is a universal condition among people to long for a reason to their existence and to look beyond themselves especially when death, disaster, or suffering strikes (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 246). Sharon Parks portrays a person’s conscious or unconscious development of a comprehensive and transcendent fabric of meaning as “weaving a canopy of significance” (Parks 2000, 24-25). The durability of this canopy is tested by life’s challenges and tough questions, which Parks likens to shipwreck. Ultimately, young adults need a worthy dream that adequately answers the questions of shipwreck and envisions the ideal for their life (Parks 2000, 146-49).

Transcendence is not only a matter of the mind but of the heart, especially for adolescents. As much as youth are popularly characterized as selfish and inwardly focused, in reality they demonstrate a remarkable awareness of others and society and bring an exuberant transcendence in their contribution to friends, family, community and

world” (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 181). Damon’s concept of noble purpose affirms that young people find great satisfaction in devoting themselves to causes and activities that capture their imagination and do good in the world (Damon 2003, 67-69). Dean points to society’s preoccupation with self-fulfillment as the reason why the real nature of transcendence is dulled and obscured:

Young people risk losing the sense that life is a noble mission on behalf of a greater good. Gone is the sense that they have a part to play in a cosmic battle between light and dark; that faith is about life and death; that *something is at stake*—and that society is duty-bound not only to acknowledge adolescent passion, but to cultivate it by stoking the fires of a grand sense of purpose. (Dean 2004, 113)

The need for self-transcendence provides a strong link between identity development and spirituality. Spirituality can be understood as a universal capacity or quality of a person’s character or personality that enables him or her to be aware of something or someone beyond the self and greater than the self, whether God, absolute truth, other persons, or creation (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 266). Spiritual development grows or increases the capacity for self-transcendence, caring for others, and devotion to God (Benson, Rochlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 205-06; Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 279). Where purpose is expressed as a dedication to causes greater than self, there is usually a higher degree of religiosity, a consolidated identity, and deeper senses of meaning (Damon, Menon, and Bronk 2003, 126). Templeton and Eccles have proposed that the search for transcendence is integral in the development of a personal spiritual identity (Templeton and Eccles 2006, 255). Others recognize that purpose is encouraged in the context of religious involvement (Marlstrom-Adams 1999, 218).

The exploration of transcendence has become a portal between modern psychology and the study of religious and spiritual development. When psychology’s

early connections with religion gave way to Freud's psychoanalysis and Watson's behaviorism, the scientific approach of considering only that which is observable seemed to preclude religion and ignored the fact that psychology of religion is about human behavior and not theology (Donelson 1999, 188-89). In reality, there is warrant for a collaboration of science and religion, especially with a goal of understanding the role of religion in adolescent development, mental health, and coping (Donelson 1999, 199). Furthermore, the Christian view insists that choices and commitments can have a transcendent quality related to a God-given destiny (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 1).

Identity and Religious Development

In his study of Martin Luther, Erikson acknowledged the role of religion as a significant source for ideology in identity development (Erikson 1962, 21-22). He later emphasized the importance of institutional religion in how it provides youth with a basis for a sense of trust and a "tangible formula" for a coherent understanding of the world (Erikson 1968, 106). Religion supports development by offering a transcendent orientation to life, an ideology for principles and norms for behavior, and examples of these in actual historical events (Youniss and Yates 1999, 250).

Despite these observations, until recently religion has largely been ignored in developmental studies as either a helpful or hindering source of identity formation, even with the knowledge that its worldviews, relationships, social norms, and experiences that can influence the formation of a young person's self-concept (King 2003, 197). This disregard is worsened by the fact that adolescence constitutes an age of intense ideological hunger, a striving for meaning and purpose, and a desire for connectedness

that can turn toward religious and civic involvement or embrace gangs, hate groups, and other antisocial behavior (King and Boyatzis 2004, 2).

It is important to differentiate terminology here. Religiousness and spirituality may seem to be synonymous when, upon further review, they are distinct but overlapping constructs. Generally speaking, spirituality is the more specific term and often describes the personal or experiential aspects of faith and transcendence, while religion is considered to include this as well as the broader spectrum of institutional beliefs and practices and a specific community of believers (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 266). It is encouraging from a Christian perspective to see researchers insist that “spiritual” must involve a consideration of the sacred, meaning a person, object, principle, or concept that transcends the self, and not merely serve as a substitute for words like “fulfilling,” “moving,” and “worthwhile” (Hill et al. 2000, 64). The intertwining of sacred and transcendent becomes more apparent in these additional descriptions:

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols designed (a) to facilitate closeness to the sacred or transcendent (God, higher power or ultimate truth/reality) and (b) to foster an understanding of one's relationship and responsibility to others living together in a community. Spirituality is the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formation of community. (Koenig, McCullough, and Larson, 2001, 18)

Templeton and Eccles have proposed that the search for transcendence, whether this involves purpose, meaning, connection, and/or community, results in the development of a spiritual identity (Templeton and Eccles 2006, 255).

Researchers have begun to acknowledge the important role of spirituality in adolescent development (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 205). In an examination of how colleges shape students' identity, Buford decried their efforts to be

“rationale, objective, and value-free” and insisted that they recognize the need for a moral vision of some sort in a person’s practical life (Buford 1995, 33). Spirituality is significant in helping a young person develop a healthy, positive sense of self and enabling personal identity to outline the pursuit of a life path leading to idealized adulthood (Lerner, Alberts, and Dowling 2006, 61). Spiritual development is understood as a process that grows a person’s capacity for self-transcendence and therefore an “engine that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution” (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 205-06).

Clearly, religion and spirituality have further ramifications for the study of human development. Religious identity and involvement have been associated with personal meaning and prosocial concern that is expressed in a sense of commitment to caring for others beyond self (Furrow, King, and White 2004, 25). Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude cataloged a number of studies that linked religiosity to many positive outcomes with adolescents, such as overall well-being, positive life attitudes and hope for the future, altruism and service, resiliency and coping, school success, physical health, and positive identity formation. They also noted studies that portrayed a negative association between religiosity and health-compromising behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug use, crime and delinquency, depression, and early sexual activity (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 211).

Religion and identity each have insights that illumine the other. The struggle to achieve a personal sense of identity and purpose has long been related to the development of religious belief. The Bible provides numerous examples of characters who resolved identity crises and emerged as responsible adults and leaders as a result of their

experience with God (Parker 1985, 43). The study of religious development has linked adolescent perceptions of their relationship to a Supreme Being to their own feelings of self-worth (Markstrom 1999, 205). In researching the conversion process, Parker found that “gradual converts”—those who have spent a long time considering their religious choices—were more likely to have higher levels of identity achievement (Parker 1985, 50). Religion and identity share commonalities in commitment and purpose, leading King to suggest that identity achievement is consistent with intrinsic religious commitment (King 2003, 198). Both identity development and religious community value relationships: “It is in relationship with another that we more fully encounter not only the other but ourselves” (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 34). Religious congregations can be rich environments for identity formation through the intentional and coherent worldview they provide (King 2003, 201). Dean finds that adolescent identity is passionate to find a center that holds—“to construct a self in relationship to a reliable ‘other’” (Dean 2004, 55). While ultimately this “other” refers to the Divine Self as revealed in Christ, it also includes the kind of relationships in Christian community that can reliably and lovingly mirror back who one is and the kind of person one is becoming (Dean 2004, 55-56).

Despite these connections, it is important to understand that spirituality is multidimensional in human development and cannot be constrained into any particular arena of social science (Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude 2003, 208). Loder proposed that spiritual development unfolds along a different axis than other aspects of psychological development (Loder 1998, 72). Piedmont’s development of the Spiritual Transcendence Scale gave evidence that spirituality may be an independent component of

personality (Piedmont 2001, 10). At the same time, spirituality is known to develop in parallel with psychological developmental processes and is relevant and integral to social, cognitive, emotional, and personality phenomena (Hill et al. 2000, 53-54). The significance of this “separate but related” aspect of spirituality and identity development supports the idea that spirituality not only can inform identity but also enrich it. Rachel Kessler gives this rationale for reintroducing spirituality into the public classroom:

Many of today's teenagers suffer from a sense of emptiness inside, a sense of meaninglessness that comes when social and religious traditions no longer provide a sense of meaning, continuity, and participation in a larger whole. Just as the adolescent develops socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically, he or she develops spiritually as well. The void of spiritual guidance and opportunity in the lives of so many teenagers at this time is one more factor contributing to high-risk behaviors, which can be both a search for connection, transcendence, meaning and initiation, as well as an escape from the pain of not having a genuine source of spiritual fulfillment. (Kessler 2002, kessler1.htm)

Kessler encourages teachers to honor the quest of each student to find what gives a life meaning and integrity and to discover what is sacred and most precious (Kessler 1999, 52). Religious ideology can provide answers to the big questions that arise from identity conflict and can offer a channel for adolescent passion that combines freedom and discipline, adventure and tradition (Parker 1985, 45).

Biblical Perspectives of Psychosocial Theory

While Christian education has gradually come to accept developmentalism as a theoretical base for academic study (Ward 1995, 7), it bears repeating that the mainstream social sciences have only in recent years emerged from a legacy of ignoring or disdainful spirituality, religion, and spiritual development, especially in regards to developmental psychology (Roehlkepartain et al. 2006, 3). The developmental perspective, which includes the identity construct, has significant points of connection

with biblical truth and invites serious reflection by Christian educators and researchers. Unfortunately, it also brings some assumptions and declarations about human nature that fail to harmonize with Christian theology (Wilhoit and Dettoni 1995, 27).

A Christian affirmation of the scientific study of human development is offered by Ward:

A developmental perspective invites the educator to see each human life as a unique person emerging through common aspects that can be observed, measured, and evaluated, yet in essence a human soul, a soul with spiritual reality at core, alive through God's redemptive grace or else spiritually dead in sin, unregenerate. (Ward 1995, 16)

Scripture agrees with developmentalism that persons are capable of growth and maturity, wonderfully complex and dynamic in their actions, individually unique in their integration of multiple areas of development, and most truly known by their motivations (Wilhoit and Dettoni 1995, 27-30). A superlative example of this is given in the brief description by Luke of Jesus' growth in wisdom, stature, and social favor (Luke 2:52).

The biblical record also supports the idea that real and final identity requires active participation and struggle, as seen in the many accounts where individuals "do not simply sit back and wait for God to impart wisdom to them" but engage in working through change and crisis and emerge as responsible adults and leaders through their experiences with God (Mitchell 1985, 43-45). Again, a preeminent example of this is found in the life of Moses, who made clear and difficult choices to engage in God's mission for his life and to identify with the people of God (Heb 11:24-27).

Another point of congruity between Scripture and Erikson's perspective is his denial that the search for identity is a turning inward in a sort of self-referent action but rather a turning outward to find one's place within society and embrace a greater sense of

the world of ideas, traditions, events, and groups of people who have already given life its core meanings (Youniss and Yates 1999, 250). Gideon was challenged by God's angel to see himself not as the weakest in his clan and family but as a mighty warrior who God could use to save Israel (Judg 6:12-16). Jesus' invitation to Peter, Andrew, James, and John bade them to cast aside their roles as fishermen of a small Galilean lake to become fishers of men across the world (Matt 4:18-22).

A commitment to Christian truth, however, recognizes that some of the basic premises of identity development run contrary to revelation. With the concept of the "empty self" in need of filling, modern psychology has replaced the Creator with the created and encouraged a consumer approach toward self-fulfillment and self-realization (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 18-19). The idea of a self-constructed identity ignores the theological reality that true humanity is a gift of God and a differentiated ego the result of God-given conviction, not ego achievement (Dean 2004, 84). A man may plan his course, admonishes the proverb, but God determines his steps (Prov 16:9). A biblical understanding of personhood must also include the concept of stewardship: "We have nothing that was not given us. Our gifts are ultimately God's, and we are only 'stewards'—responsible for the prudent management of property that is not our own" (Guinness 1998, 47). Paul even speaks of the body as not one's own, but bought with a price and serving as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Some identity researchers have recognized that "discovery" is a far better metaphor than "construction," understanding that there are potentials already present in the individual that need to be manifested and acted upon in order for the person to live a fulfilled life (Waterman 1992, 59). A chorus of passages in the New Testament, such as

1 Cor 12:1-11, Rom 12:6-8 and 1 Pet 4:10-11, speak of particular abilities as gifts that God bestows uniquely upon each individual. Despite this, much of the research in identity development exalts personal choice as a crucial element. Christian theology does not eliminate choice, but it does put it in proper perspective:

...the myth of modern freedom can conceal the fact that many crucial aspects of our lives do not depend on our own choices, but are “given” to us in ways that limit our actual and potential choices. Some are obvious, but still not given the weight they merit. Not one of us has chosen our DNA structure, our parents, or the communities of our early nurture. (Schuurman 2004, 120)

Christian tradition argues that a vision of life as a sea of infinite choices with every choice open and none wrong is really a picture of slavery to meaninglessness rather than true freedom (Placher 2005, 10). Directly from Christ comes the admonition, “You did not choose Me but I chose you” (John 15:16 NASB). Far from demeaning the individual, this perspective recognizes that there are profound implications for identity when a person comes to understand he or she is beloved or chosen by God (King 2003, 200). Schwarz acknowledges that the modern infatuation with individual autonomy and control has worked against the factors that guard against depression: deep commitment and a sense of belonging. The tension between asserting the self and significant social involvement leads to the choice to either subordinate self or sacrifice connections to others (Schwarz 2004, 212). Dean astutely has observed that the so-called normal developmental pattern of imitating a self-object and making it a part of oneself is inverted in identifying with Christ. The imitation of Christ does not make Jesus a part of self; self becomes part of Him (Dean 2004, 63). Paul declared as his goal “that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him” and desired to “know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil 3:8-10 NASB).

The personal and willing subjugation of self to Christ is paramount: “Jesus’ primary consideration is my absolute annihilation of my right to myself and my identification with Him” (Chambers 1995, 9/28).

Psychology typically has addressed the normative and the pathological, but has struggled to make claims about ideal development because it has not focused on any teleological issues (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 28). When limited to the realm of science, especially logical positivism, psychology cannot address what ought to be, the true nature of morality, or the meaning of life (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 92). The Christian researcher and educator has the advantage in being able to tap into the resources of theology to understand humans as *imago Dei* and most fully their unique selves when in healthy relationship with God (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 36). The psalmist marvels that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14 NASB). Human life, divinely crafted and infinitely precious, is more than some product of evolution and individuals should never be regarded as mere utilitarian units whose value can be arbitrarily determined by society (Colson and Pearcey 1999, 125).

Similarly, psychology has also failed to come to grips with the existence of sin and the challenges of living in a fallen world. A Christian worldview requires the acknowledgement that something more is terribly wrong than the usual culprits of poor self-image, relational estrangement, or cultural upheaval (Johnson 2001, 256). As a necessary prelude to the message of redemption, Paul recites in Romans 3:10-18 a gritty list of the flaws and failures of humanity and caps it with the assertion “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23 NASB). A widespread assumption is that mental health requires one to feel good about oneself and to avoid discomfort,

sacrifice, and pain, but Christian doctrine teaches that sin and brokenness are part of human nature and must be recognized as such by a person as a prerequisite to healing and inner peace (McMinn 1996, 18-19). In addressing identity development, Christians must affirm the necessity of the redemptive work of Christ with whom adolescents need a personal relationship in order to begin the journey into true freedom (Johnson 2001, 264).

The Facilitation of Identity Development

The thrust of this entire discussion of issues related to adolescent identity development is to begin to address the question, “Is identity development advanced through the resources of spirituality, particularly the sense of divine calling?” A review may be helpful to consider the necessity and manner of intervention. First, the richness of the identity construct and its relationship to other areas of development does not confine it to any simple descriptions or a single operationalization such as Marcia’s identity status paradigm (Archer 1994, 3). There is no “silver bullet” to resolve all questions of identity. Adolescent identity formation is not a single, all-encompassing enterprise but rather a series of particular but also interrelated tasks (Waterman 1985, 22). It follows that any single intervention strategy may address only a part of the identity development process.

The case for facilitation must also recognize the importance of identity development itself. Researchers chose the term, “identity achievement,” to describe a positive identity status to reflect the understanding that the development of identity is a worthy and healthy accomplishment (Josselson 1994, 19). Identity is foundational to adult life and society has a large stake in encouraging that it arises as optimally as possible (Josselson 1994, 12-13). Since adolescence and young adulthood are critical times for exploration and development in identity, there is a limited window for influence

(Templeton and Eccles 2006, 262). The question of intervention may be something of a moot point since identity does not develop in a vacuum. The real issue is in what kind of intentional influence and support will be provided:

Social intervention necessitates an analysis of the role of the external world in supporting or hindering the process of identity formation. The adolescent does not do it alone. The process, in its essence, requires dialogue. Thus there must be people there for the adolescent to explore with and against. Someone must be making limits so the adolescent can find boundaries. Someone must provide support so the adolescent can go on when the way becomes frightening. Someone must be there to exemplify and take an interest so that the adolescent can measure himself or herself while feeling invited to join. (Josselson 1994, 23)

Conditions in contemporary society also bear out the need for positive intervention. The presence of options, alternatives, and personal freedom along with the absence of a meaningful frame of reference for many adolescents can lead to paralysis in decision-making and a loss of certainty (Berzonsky 2003, 140). The current atmosphere of moral confusion, ambiguity, and lack of regard for meaning further compounds this problem (Josselson 1994, 23). With unspecified values, disowned religion, and uninspiring occupations, the burning issues for youth are no longer matters of generativity or loyalty or worthiness, but rather of consumption (Josselson 1994, 23). The case for the facilitation of identity development seems to be further substantiated by an environment that has fomented problematic identity issues in later stages of life so that now it is common for adults to continue to wrestle with issues once resolved much earlier in life (Côté 2006, 5).

How a person arrives at his or her identity is a matter of importance as well. As almost a counterpoint to excessive choice, Archer observed that a majority of adolescents do not truly explore alternatives but make unquestioning commitments to the first major value, belief or goal to which they are exposed (Archer 1994, 4). The research of

Chanowitz and Langer also demonstrated that people tend to make premature cognitive commitments based on their initial exposure to information and subsequently fail to critically process and reflect on subsequent details and new information relevant to them (Chanowitz and Langer 1981, 1052). Weak identity commitments have been associated with lower levels of agency and personal hardiness and higher levels of depression (Berzonsky 2003, 138). Waterman's proposal of a third dimension to the identity status paradigm, personal expressiveness, came from his observation that exploration and commitment were not enough to explain the difference in quality of identity development between persons (Waterman 1992, 57-58). This led him to recognize the importance of intervention strategies that promote reflective consideration of identity alternatives and commitments where goals, values, and beliefs are involved (Waterman 1992, 67).

Unquestionably, there is warrant for the exploration of strategies for intervention and facilitation of identity development, especially with a consideration of the valuable resources of spirituality. Erikson acknowledged the imperative of ideological meaning to give a worldview and framework for identity formation (Erikson 1964, 189-190). From G. Stanley Hall in 1904 to Merton Strommen in 1979, researchers have noted that adolescents ask questions that go beyond their current context to address life's greater meaning and their reason for being (Ream and Savin-Williams 2003, 53). The adolescent quest to connect with something beyond self and yet somehow affirm a sense of uniqueness and independence can be satisfied in religious faith (King 2003, 198). What adolescents believe about their own worth may be linked to their perceptions of their relationship to God (Markstrom 1999, 205). Religious leaders and communities have the most natural opportunities in the ebb and flow of life to connect with young

people and discuss the big questions of meaning and truth (Parks 2000, 200). If one considers possible a personal relationship with the Creator and a divine plan for life, the biblical concept of calling becomes a pertinent matter in the exploration of identity development.

The Provision and Experience of Divine Calling

Insomuch that research in identity development explores and incorporates such concepts as thriving, transcendence, the search for meaning and purpose, and spiritual development, there are compelling reasons for a consideration of identity from a biblical perspective. A basic assumption behind the study of identity development is that individual significance matters. “We desire to make a difference. We long to leave a legacy. We yearn, as Ralph Waldo Emerson put it, ‘to leave the world a bit better.’ Our passion is to know that we are fulfilling the purpose for which we are here on earth” (Guinness 2001, 13). At the heart of Christianity and overcoming any differences between its various traditions is the fundamental idea that each human life matters because God has a direction in mind for persons (Placher 2005, 3).

From the standpoint of Scripture, there is a clear link between the development of personal and corporate identity and the idea of calling. The issue of God’s call is essential and paramount for the followers of Jesus Christ (McSwain and Shurden 2005, ix) and there is a strong sense that persons cannot be their own true selves until they become the individuals God wills and do what God desires (Coombe and Nemeck 2001, 3). It follows that alignment with God’s call is a universal necessity if persons are to find true rest, fulfillment and contentment (Brouwer 2006, 32). This discussion of calling seeks to summarize its biblical basis, historical practices, distortions in modern

understanding, its discovery and impact in the individual's life, and its facilitation in the church. In addition, a priority of this review is to conceptualize calling as an intersection of several key factors in a person's life.

A Biblical Understanding of Calling

Scripture defines and illustrates a multi-dimensional view of calling that is simple to grasp and yet complex enough in depth to interact with the identity concept. Like a coin, calling has two sides to many of its aspects.

Calling is both a summons and a directive. There is a coming and going aspect to calling. In terms of a summons, the biblical record has provided a tradition through the stories of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets, King David, and many others that God is a God who has called these and ultimately all humanity to Himself (Harper 2001, 227). The word "calling" itself implies that there is One who calls and compels the hearer to respond (Brouwer 2006, 7). In Isaiah 43:1 where God speaks of calling Jacob and the people of Israel, the seemingly redundant phrase, *qará be-shém*—to name by name, in truth asserts God's insistence on taking the initiative to establish an intimate covenant with individuals (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 50). This is also reflected in the basic meanings of the New Testament Greek *kalein* and its variants, which in addition to "to call or summon," means "to name," and serves as a reminder that in the Bible a person's name often summarized his or her divinely given purpose or identity (Schuurman 2004, 18). The Hebrew term *qahal* and its Greek translation, *ekklesia*, both refer to the people God has called out from the world to serve together as His church (Schuurman 2004, 18). Guinness explains emphatically that this is the primary and most important understanding of calling: "First and foremost we are called to Someone (God),

not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Mongolia)” (Guinness 1998, 31). As a result, he defines calling as “the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service” (Guinness 1998, 29).

The summons of God, however, invariably leads to a directive. When the Bible speaks about a call, it is usually connected to an invitation to a life of faith or a command to perform a special task in God’s service (Placher 2005, 4). The English word “vocation,” derived from the Latin *vocare*, which means, “to call,” expresses the biblical insight that calling is matter of being God’s servants and priests in the world through work and occupation (Patterson 1994, 54). This secondary meaning of God’s diverse callings through tasks, offices, or places of responsibility was named by Martin Luther as external calling and by the Puritans as particular calling (Schuurman 2004, 17).

This dual aspect of calling as a summons and directive is aptly illustrated in 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (NASB) (Patterson 1994, 54). Therefore, while God extends a universal call for persons to approach Him in holiness, He also gifts individuals with a unique personhood and sends them forth to contribute in a unique manner to the building up of the body of Christ (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 65). Henry Blackaby offers the reminder that God could have worked everything by Himself, but chose rather to call “individuals into a special relationship with Himself at the very times He wanted to accomplish His purposes” (Blackaby and Skinner 2002, 7).

Calling is volitional but not optional. Calling is urgent and imperative, but it does not violate a person's right to choose. It is clear in biblical teaching that human beings can resist or reject God's call, as shown in parables like the wedding banquet (Matt 22:5-6) and in the example of a man who lost his chance to become Jesus' disciple because he wanted to first bury his father (Luke 9:59-60) (Schuurman 2004, 21). White has noticed that the tie between vocation and obedience has an etymological basis. As vocation relates to "a call," so obedience shares its roots with the Latin *audire*, which means, "to hear." Thus, obedience is the response to calling and a matter of willingly saying "yes" to the One who calls (White 2004, 125). It is a great mystery and, perhaps to some, somewhat sacrilegious to affirm that God in a sense needs something from us, receives something from us, and waits for us to respond:

To be receptive, to listen to another are not only created virtues but also uncreated qualities. We receive everything from the Lord (1 Cor 4:7), and somehow in the divine purpose God receives from us. In some mysterious way we enhance the glory of God. Every positive act we make is capable of being *ad majorem Dei gloriam* (1 Cor 10:31). God is receptive to our love and to us because God wills it so. (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 24-25)

The ability to choose and the right to refuse the call, however, do not negate the true nature of divine authority: "Neither God nor history waits on the believer's response to God's call and claim" (Blackaby and Skinner 2002, 45). There is something of a paradox in the biblical understanding of giftedness: individuals receive abilities and talents but these remain ultimately God's; persons are only stewards and responsible for the wise management of property that is not their own (Guinness 1998, 47). For believers, this means that the right to develop an independent vision and take life in any direction they please was lost in embracing the Christ of Calvary (Stanley 1999, 14). Similarly, calling as the idea of "who I am in Christ" should not be warped into a sort of

license for self-absorbed thinking that makes personal fulfillment and the pursuit of pleasure the goal (White 2004, 122). In urging students not to waste the gift of life, John Piper has said,

If you are a Christian, you are not your own. Christ has bought you at the price of his own death. You now doubly belong to God: He made you and He bought you. . . . Therefore the Bible says, ‘Glorify God in your body.’ God made you for this. He bought you for this. This is the meaning of your life. (Piper, 2003, 9)

Calling is both individual and communal. Calling is very much an intensely personal matter. The biblical pattern is that when God calls a person to service, He always does so by name: “The call of God is not an impersonal, bureaucratic, faceless procedure. The call of God goes right to the heart of the man, setting him apart to serve God’s dear people” (Leadership Ministries Worldwide 1996, 380). If one truly recognizes God as the great Creator of the universe, His act of incarnation in history and His indwelling through the Holy Spirit defies expectation because He has stooped to extend in person His calling to each one of His creatures (Harper 2001, 227). This personal side of calling infuses a life with dignity and uniqueness (Guinness 1998, 49) (Blackaby and Skinner 2002, 1) and makes all personal circumstances an opportunity to live with meaning and significance (White 2004, 123). A full exploration of the richness of calling, however, must also consider its place in community.

The first and most prevalent meaning of calling in the Bible is the invitation to become a member of the people of God and fully function as part of that community (Schuurman 2004, 17). This corporate calling, as it is sometimes labeled, is the life-response of individuals to God undertaken in common with all other followers of Christ and has precedence, if necessary, even over individual callings (Guinness 1998, 490).

The strong emphasis on individualism in America often overshadows and obscures a biblical sense of calling in community:

Our obsession with our needs and wants and our quest for personal spiritual growth is not a complete reflection of how we are to live. Scripture is full of examples where God speaks to communities rather than individuals. For example, almost every reference to ‘spiritual maturity’ in the New Testament is to a plural audience. I’m not called to resist sin or pursue God by myself, and the goal of spiritual maturity isn’t just for me.” (Livermore 2006, 122)

Similarly, Western religious culture may emphasize individual salvation and well-being to the point that it fatally ignores the way God wishes to work in the body of Christ (Nel 2003, 81). Since giftedness is an aspect of calling, the best and fullest expression of calling will be in the emerging beauty of human community where individuals find their place and the community flourishes because of their contribution (White 2004, 22).

Calling is both general and specific. Calling has universal and particular applications, or more clearly, God has a general design that applies to all believers and specific intentions for how each person fits into that plan. Guinness refers to the general design as ordinary calling, the believer’s response of life-purpose and life-task to God’s invitation to “follow me,” and the specific as special calling, which refers to direct, specific, supernatural communication from God that lays a task or mission on a person (Guinness 1998, 49-50). In recognition of the fact that not everyone receives a direct and unequivocal assignment from God, Guinness sees in the general calling the opportunity for individuals to exercise a “capitalist-style” responsibility and enterprise in their faithful response to God (Guinness 1998, 50).

The general aspect of calling is vital in that it provides the setting or basis for the specific. Paul’s description of calling to the Ephesians emphasizes that individuals must first understand that God has initiated a worldwide plan of redemption for

humanity, that they have a place in that undertaking, and they need to learn what use God expects to make of them in the realization of his larger hopes for humanity (Caudill 1979, 61). Calling is inherently missional in character—there is a world God desires to save and He calls all Christians to share in the mission of Jesus (Senior 2003, ai_110916428). This larger vision of calling supplies the corrective to the mistaken idea that God is in the business of helping people succeed at achieving their personal dreams, even those that are noble and sacrificial (Allender 2005, 103). The call of God will always integrate with His kingdom and His glory (Leadership Ministries Worldwide 1996, 337).

The precedence of the general does not negate the significance of the specific. While it is important in calling to recognize the larger story that is infinitely beyond and untouched by individual choice and design, it is something of a paradox to know that each person can be intimately and powerfully connected to the story through choices that have profound consequences for others (Allender 2005, 58). God does come calling to individuals with impressive assignments, as he did with Bezalel (Exodus 31:11), who incidentally was not a prophet, preacher or evangelist, but a craftsman and artist filled with the Spirit and anointed by God to construct the Tabernacle (Baker 2005, 32). God also speaks particularly to individuals in ways that are discerned quietly, “where the heart of faith joins opportunities and gifts with the needs of others” (Schuurman 2004, 5).

Historical Perspectives of Calling

The biblical doctrine of calling has found expression in different ways through the history of the church. It would be simplistic to assume that the various eras have interpreted divine calling in some progress of understanding that has led to a more mature concept today. More accurately, the recognition and application of calling has changed

radically over the eras because of the way society and the meaning of vocation has changed (Placher 2005, 5).

For the first Christians, calling had everything to do with making the dramatic choice to accept Christ and embrace a new identity with the *ekklesia*, or “called out ones” who worshiped Him (DeSilva 2004, 630). This rapidly growing sect in the Roman world immediately encountered suspicion and resistance because it required such a break from pagan attitudes and values to the point that “everywhere the Christian turned his life and faith were on display because the gospel introduced a revolutionary new attitude toward human life” (Shelley 1995, 40). Because of sporadic and sometimes intense persecution, the fundamental vocational issues for believers or potential believers were first about whether to become a Christian and second with how public one should be in demonstrating his or her faith (Placher 2005, 6). The success of the early church testifies to the fact that many did convert and boldly assert their faith. While aware of danger, Christians took seriously the call to love and serve the Lord in all areas of life and to represent the church and the Spirit wherever they went (Schuurman 2004, 35).

As the church grew and spread throughout the Roman Empire, prevailing views of pagan culture forced it to define biblical responses. Particularly difficult to overcome was the Greek world view of dualism that pitted the material against the spiritual and manual labor against the intellectual elite (Colson with Pearcey 1999, 387). While the church maintained a high view of the physical world as God’s creation, it was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy to adopt a distinction between the sacred and secular realms, thus setting the stage for religious work to be seen as a higher grade of piety (Colson with Pearcey 1999, 387). By the fourth century, Eusebius, the first church

historian, could write about two ways of life for people in the church: a “perfect life” dedicated to spiritual contemplation and service and a “permitted life” that remained for those who chose the more ordinary tasks of farm, family, and trade (Guinness 1998, 32).

The negative aspect of this dualism in the church was that it narrowed calling and excluded most believers from its scope while setting the stage for a distorted understanding of calling that continues to trouble the church this very day (Guinness 1998, 33). There is a sense, however, that the sacred/secular view of life was a legitimate response to the popularity that Christianity soon garnered, the multitudes of half-converted pagans it received as a state religion, and the subsequent dilution of commitment found among its adherents (Shelley 1995, 118). The advent of the monastic movement and religious orders, which certainly had flaws in isolationism, extreme ascetism, and works-based righteousness, nevertheless had the effect of preserving the challenge of the gospel and developing a missionary force during the dark times of the medieval world (Shelley 1995, 123).

It is important to consider that for much of the church’s history the idea of a choice of career was a moot point:

A peasant's son became a peasant; a goldsmith's son joined the goldsmiths' guild. Daughters had even fewer choices. Even at the top of society, in the Middle Ages the king's eldest son became king, the next perhaps a bishop, the third likely joined the army, and the king's daughters were married off to strengthen key alliances. There could be interesting exceptions, but for most people it just wouldn't have made sense to ask, "What are the career choices you are considering?" So whatever "vocation" meant, it did not usually mean choice of jobs. (Placher 2005, 5)

In the medieval era, the monastic ideal was an option but the hard realities of daily work and economical and social necessity meant that, for the majority of people, spiritual calling was not something to understand or pursue (Wogaman 1993, 112).

After long years of decay in the church came the fresh and radical insights of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Luther began the process of demolishing dualistic distinctions by recognizing the work of the cobbler and the preacher as equally holy and valued by God if undertaken in faith (Schuurman 2004, 5). He declared that any form of work that is essential to human well-being could be a fitting response to God's love and considered a calling in every sense of the word (Wogaman 1993, 112). While Luther liberated the idea of Christian vocation from clericalism and made calling more a matter of loving and serving attitude, the opportunity to match one's capabilities to society's needs had to wait for modern development (Wogaman 1993, 112). A generation after Luther, John Calvin brought a new emphasis on the sovereignty of God and His particular and personal direction in individual lives (Shelley 1995, 260). Calvin used the term "general calling" to refer to what all could hear as the preaching of the Word and a call to faith in Christ; "special calling," however, was limited to the way God worked in the lives of the elect to bring to them to faith (Placher 2005, 232). Protestants later would link special calling more closely to vocation, but Calvin was instrumental in breaking piety out of its medieval confinement in the monastery and convent and restoring it into everyday life and labor (Beeke 2004, 145). The efficacy of divine grace, according to Calvin, is a powerful stimulant for human striving and the pursuit of God's calling through work and vocation (Ganoczy 2004, 24). Calvin so elevated ordinary work that later it would be identified as the Protestant work ethic (Pearcey 2004, 82).

While the Reformation brought calling back to the masses, the Puritans were among those who most ably picked up the theme and began to equate calling with work or a job (Guinness 1998, 40). They wholeheartedly believed that all of a person's life

belonged to God and one should seek to serve and obey God's call through a specific life work (Ryken 1990, 25-26). Richard Baxter, the English Puritan preacher, elaborated a common-sense approach about the individual's choice of calling and work through such ideas as: (a) seeking that which is most useful to the public good, (b) fitting work to personal abilities, and (c) enlisting the advice of others (Baxter 1830, 584-87). Perhaps what is most noteworthy to this discussion of calling is the way the Puritans integrated ideas of God, society, and self so that they converged in the exercise of calling (Ryken 1990, 31).

It has been in the modern era that calling has suffered some of its greatest distortions and challenges. With the rise of technology and industry came systems that brought an assault of capitalism on religious significance, stripped the meaning and fulfillment of work, and introduced the habit of viewing everything in terms of economic advance and personal well-being (Schuurman 2004, 8-9). Because of the negative impact of industrialization on individual worth and the diminishing possibilities of meaningful work, Karl Marx raised the issue of "alienated labor" and writers such as Max Weber and Walter Rauschenbush began to question the Reformation emphasis on job as vocation (Placher 2005, 327). The Puritan religious influence eventually faded so that calling became secularized and cut off from faith while work itself was made an "ethic" and became sacred (Guinness 1998, 41). More than ever before, people began to distinguish the private from the public and to compartmentalize the spiritual away from other areas of life (White 2004, 116). In the secular world, calling became a euphemism for personal satisfaction and enjoyment—"a kind of spiritualized career assessment that we give ourselves divine license to pursue" (White 2004, 120), and in religious life, calling

resumed its mantle of professional ministry, being limited to those who would embrace “full time Christian service” (Penner 2005, 43).

While the modern notion of calling faced dissolution from its biblical roots, it was also being forged anew by strong voices who rose up to confront the tide of secularism and complacent Christianity. Søren Kierkegaard devoted his life as a writer to convince his fellow Danes of the need to break out of their everyman religion, hear the call of God, and seek the real meaning of faith (Placher 2005, 333). Near the turn of the twentieth century, Friedrich Nietzsche refused to capitulate to the “God is dead” movement in Europe and recognized the worthlessness of Christian morality without Christian faith, setting the stage later for C. S. Lewis to debunk the notion of calling without a Caller (Guinness 1998, 42). From Germany in the grip of Nazism, Dietrich Bonhoeffer challenged the concept of “cheap grace” that had so weakened the organized church and preached a radical response to the call of Christ as costly obedience (Bonhoeffer 1995, 45).

It is entirely possible to consider that calling in the post-modern age has come full circle to the days of the early church. In spite of Christians’ best efforts, Christianity has slowly been driven from public life in the Western world and replaced with pluralistic and totalitarian approaches to society where Christian assumptions about reality no longer prevail (Shelley 1995, 494). Like their counterparts in the first centuries, many of today’s believers find that trying to live as a Christian is a matter of pushing upstream against the dominant values of culture (Placher 2005, 9). Such times, however, only serve to reenergize calling. The stage is set for a reawakening of the primary sense of calling that is not for self, but God’s glory and not just for a specific area of life, but overall

faithfulness to God (White 2004, 120-21). The revolution that began in the New Testament with the call to let the love and service of the Lord transform all spheres and activities of life into so many callings is threatening to break out in fresh power (Minear 1954, 67-68).

In divesting itself of universal answers, contemporary society has merged its new urgency about the question of life purpose with its insistence on maximum opportunity for choice. The result has only been an intensification of confusion, ignorance, and longing in its members (Guinness 2001, 15-16). The church appears to have a unique opportunity to engage a cohort of young people who seek something deeper than what their world has to offer (Holderness with Palmer 2001, 7). A new generation of believers is learning that calling does not begin with nor is limited to career decisions, but is relevant on a much larger scale (Schuurman 2004, xi). Guinness makes the bold claim that the truth of calling has been a driving force in many of the greatest advances in world history, all the way from Sinai and Galilee to the Reformation and modernity (Guinness 1998, 4-5). Its rediscovery and application would mean no less for today.

Contemporary Applications of Calling

Divine calling has profound implications for post-modern society. Like the prophets of old, it brings significant challenges to cultural norms and ways of thinking that ignore biblical truth. Some significant aspects of calling have emerged as seemingly headline news.

Calling is for all believers. In 1993, television producer Bob Briner issued a challenge to evangelical Christianity with his book, *Roaring Lambs*. Briner was frustrated

with how the church had limited calling to the idea of full-time Christian service and largely ignored the possibilities of a “dynamic, involved Christian life outside the professional ministry” (Briner 1993, 17-18). Others, like Guinness, have also debunked the false dichotomy of sacred versus secular and recognized that calling is an essential aspect of faith that applies to all believers, and not just the clergy and the super-spiritual (Guinness 1998, 32). Sadly, many Christians still fail to discern God’s call in their everyday lives because they assume God only speaks to a few and even then only in extraordinary, miraculous ways (Schuurman 2004, 3).

Calling is a framework for life. Author and speaker John Eldredge has sought to provide a wake-up call to Christians to recover a true sense of place and purpose in the great cosmic drama of redemption. Taking his cues from biblical and mythic stories, he has offered the challenge that, regardless of how much of life seems insignificant and ordinary, God calls every believer to play a crucial role (Eldredge 2003, 32-33). Buford has described calling as a “thematic narrative” that involves living out the image of God in a particular environment within the possibilities and limitations of a person’s talents (Buford 1995, 141). Allender makes this idea far more personal and paradoxical:

We intuit that we are both part of a larger story that is infinitely beyond us, untouched by our choice and design, yet also intimately and profoundly connected to a story that is personal and possibly more profound and far-reaching than we can imagine. We live in the middle of both realities. We are both powerless and unimaginably powerful simply because we have the ability to choose.” (Allender 2005, 58)

Calling mediates choice. A diminished sense of calling in contemporary society has made choice king. A. J. Conyers has noted that the conventional modern sentiment of vocation is almost synonymous with self-determination, directly

contradictory to the idea of attentive listening to the guidance of another (Conyers 2006, 17). Parker Palmer is one of the voices in what appears to be a growing backlash to the modern idolatry of choice. He has defied the American myth of “be whatever you want” and recognized that as created beings, persons have pre-defined limits and, like organisms in an ecosystem, can only thrive within certain parameters (Palmer 2000, 44). It is impossible to deny that modern life has offered up a “smorgasbord with an endless array of dishes,” but the blessing has turned into a curse as the addiction to choice and change has led to decreased commitment and continuity and the meaninglessness that comes from too much of everything (Guinness 1998, 175).

Calling redirects focus from self. One of the best-known lines from any recent Christian writing is in Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life*: “It’s not about you” (Warren 2002, 17). While affirming that calling is a very personal matter, James White notes that nowhere in Scripture is calling described as a “journey of self-discovery” or an encouragement to engage in self-absorbed thinking based on personality, gifting, or experience (White 2004, 122). It is primarily an invitation to go beyond oneself and to follow wherever God leads (White 2004, 125). While calling brings purpose and meaning to a life, it is not about an effort to prove oneself as significant, useful, or memorable, for this would take the focus off Jesus and ignore that calling is less about doing something than it is about following Someone (Guinness 1998, 42-43). In a surprising twist, the call to put self aside and follow Christ leads to the discovery of the real self and true God-given uniqueness (Guinness 1998, 25).

These are but a sample of the ways that a biblical view of divine calling is relevant to contemporary issues. The biggest concern of all, however, pertains to how one

hears God's call in the midst of a busy, noisy, and self-seeking world.

The Personal Discernment of Calling

Late in life, Minna Proctor's divorced father acknowledged that he felt called to become an Episcopalian priest, much to his daughter's surprise. Forced to evaluate her own beliefs, Proctor began to explore questions about the credibility and uncertainty that surround the discernment of divine calling:

It's a complicated process. It is at once administrative, unscientific, inexact, dependent on trends, intuitions, hierarchies, interpretations—dependent on people who live here on earth, traffic in the invisible, and strive after truth, acknowledging a priori that it is the striving itself that is the only certain truth. (Proctor 2005, 81)

Proctor immediately recognized that the discernment of calling, whether done individually or corporately, has a strongly subjective element (Proctor 2005, 77).

While some may see this as the flaw that turns calling into whatever people wish to make of it, others recognize that calling in the true biblical sense is anything but self-determination. It is the "idea of self being 'laid hold of' by another, having a claim made upon his time, his future, his destiny, the shape of his life that originates from outside the self" (Conyers 2006, 17). The call of God has nothing to do with fulfilling personal dreams, no matter how much they may seem to serve His purposes (Allender 2005, 103). For too long, calling has been bound to the word "career," from the French *carriere*, meaning "a road" or "a highway," thus leading to the idea that calling is like choosing one's course with a map in hand and a goal in mind. The better word is "vocation," where the emphasis is on listening and responding to a voice, which leads to a walk by faith (Robbins 2005, 27).

Many might prefer that God would use extraordinary and unmistakable means to extend His call, such as in the biblical scenes of a burning bush or the appearance of

angels. If God were to approach every person in a face-to-face confrontation to express His divine intentions, it would eliminate freedom and leave no room for trust and faith (Johnson 2002, 53). The New Testament does not provide a formula for discernment, but it does give the key elements that are part of the process: personal giftedness, the needs of others, obligations, discussions, and prayer (Schuurman 2004, 37-38). For the vast majority of Christians it is clear that God's callings are discerned quietly when they connect the meaning of their faith, along with their gifts and opportunities, to the needs of others (Schuurman 2004, 3-4). Vocation cannot be seen merely in terms of personal preferences and passion with time, talents, and treasure, but more importantly as a "relational sensibility" in which persons recognize how their vocation serves the whole of life, deepens their understanding of the world, and aligns their purposes with eternity (Parks 2000, 148). A picture emerges of calling as engaging several dimensions, namely, listening to God, discovering one's giftedness, and recognizing the needs of the world (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 40). These dimensions lend themselves to a conceptualization of the discernment of calling to be discussed later.

The Role of the Church in Calling

A deeper understanding of the discernment of calling brings into question its corporate dimensions and the essential role the church must play. The fundamental assertion here is that calling "is discovered and lived out in the local church" (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 36). The Christian community provides the supportive and challenging context in which God can cause vocation to emerge and in which individuals can experience and live out their giftedness in the midst of its diversity (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 133). The church can serve as a mediator of calling through its teaching,

preaching, and other ministries (Schuurman 2004, 20). Even a secular mindset such as Proctor's can affirm the unique ability of the church to provide a process of discernment and confirmation for each of its members (Proctor 2005, 240). Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

In regard to the recognition and fostering of calling among young people, many Christian communities flounder or abdicate in this responsibility for the reason that the adults themselves lack mature vocational consciousness and have no idea how to approach calling in their own lives, let alone in others (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 134). Many churches and pastoral ministries have failed to help believers connect calling to all of life because they ascribe religious meaning primarily or even exclusively to church-related roles and activities (Schuurman 2004, xii-xiii). Even in youth ministry, structures exist that isolate young people from the resources of wise adults, extended families, and practical experience with the world such that they must cultivate a future for themselves on their own and somehow achieve healthy integration into the adult community without support (White 2004, 20).

The indictment of the church is clear. "Roaring lambs" will not emerge from the ranks of young believers as long as they are led to believe that calling is for special days, special people and special professions instead of everyday people in everyday jobs representing Christ in all areas of society (Briner 1993, 49-50). The soft sell that seeks to make Christianity appear easy and palatable for the masses is missing the mark with a generation that is not looking for the easy way out (Placher 2005, 11). The church is facing an era where there is great inconsistency in the development of young people into spiritually mature and vitally functioning members of churches and society (Nel 2003,

79). It is time for a renewal of the necessity and priority of divine calling in each believer and church.

The Necessity for a Reenvision of Calling

Business as usual with the distortions and neglect of calling will not suffice in ministry to today's young people. This review underscores the need for a fresh appreciation, understanding and application of the truths of calling. As a matter of review and summary, here is the evidence:

Without calling, youth are likely to experience confusion and purposeless.

In a series of studies Barna found that the majority of American teenagers have no clear “philosophy about life that guides their lifestyle and decisions” and have defaulted to a societal status quo by deciding that the main purpose in life is enjoyment and personal fulfillment (Barna 2001, 83). The nature of calling is to anchor people onto God's purposes and to find their meaning in what He has created them to be and do. Apart from this, there is restlessness, discontent, difficulty, and a lack of real fulfillment (Brouwer 2006, 32).

Without calling, young people are likely to leave the church.

In a review of research pertaining to youth and religion, Rick Lawrence stated, “Most of our teenagers never cross the bridge from the land of window shoppers to the land of never-look-back Jesus followers. . . . they're not connecting faith to the everyday things that make up their ‘real world’” (Lawrence 2006, 44). As an antidote, the church's unique opportunity is to help youth encounter the dependable, generous and loving God who calls them to faith, ministry, and mission greater than they can imagine (Holderness and Palmer 2001, 8-9).

Without calling, people tend to remain self-determinant. The modern prejudice is to think alone, be the master of one's fate, and captain of one's own soul (Conyers 2006, 19). The conviction of God's call trumps all illusions and pretensions of personal choice and whimsy, a much-needed corrective in a culture where everything seems to be optional (Guinness 1998, 177). Authentic Christianity invites people to bring everything—their relationships, their hopes, their career, their entire identity—into the context of God's plan for the world (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 27-28).

Without calling, persons miss their true uniqueness. It may be a bit part in God's great cosmic drama, but each person has the opportunity to say "yes" to that most central, well-contoured passion inside him or herself that will reveal something of God's beauty that no one else's part in the story can duplicate (Allender 2005, 69). "God's call," says Guinness, "resonates in us at depths no other call can reach and draws us on and out and up to heights no other call can scale or see" (Guinness 1998, 84).

Without calling, life tends to be unintentional. The realities of day-to-day existence and the complexities of working through vocation lead most people to choose and act spontaneously, compulsively, or at best, practically. They fail to consider deeply the distinctions of identity, lifestyle, and mission (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 86). In postmodern culture, the Christian lifestyle now requires swimming upstream against dominant values and assumptions that are contrary and even antagonistic to faith. Such intentionality could very well require an experience of calling much like that of the early believers, outsiders themselves, whose vocation was simply to live as Christians (Placher 2005, 9).

One way that calling may be reenvisioned is in a conceptualizing of ways that it can be explored, measured, and even facilitated. This is not to say that calling can be neatly boxed, categorized, objectified, or manipulated, but that it is a doctrine in need of further examination and application. If a strong sense of God's call relates to greater purpose and meaning in life, this can be measured. If the discernment of God's call corresponds to a stronger and clearer sense of identity, biblical faith and psychology's new emphasis on positive development have another common ground.

Toward a Conceptualization of Calling

A conceptualization of the experience of calling may seem to be a rather hopeless enterprise, akin to the scientific exploration of mystical experience. A secular journalist's investigation of Christian vocation elaborates on this impression:

The finding of one's calling is an entirely individual, personal enterprise. Among the many calling stories that people tell, the most common characterization of "the moment of truth" comes as a great unmistakable and overwhelming sense of calm—an expressly interior state. Recognition by the community, on the other hand, is the real acknowledgement of this abstract notion. And it's a complicated process. It is at once administrative, unscientific, inexact, dependent on trends, intuitions, hierarchies, interpretations—dependent on people who live here on earth, traffic in the invisible, and strive after truth, acknowledging a priori that it is the striving itself that is the only certain truth. (Proctor 2005, 81)

Conceptualization, however, is still a real possibility. In psychology, a construct is defined as an effort to describe and give tangible form to "an abstraction that is not directly seen but inferred through observed regularities in cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses in various settings" (Teglasi et al. 2007, 215). Purpose in life, for instance, is a construct that has gained validity as an important psychological variable that can predict a range of key individual characteristics (Robbins and Francis 2005, 73). Some phenomena are so complex and comprehensive that they require a framework of

constructs. Human spirituality, for one, has been described as including the following components: (1) a search for meaning in life; (2) an encounter with transcendence; (3) a sense of community; (4) a search for ultimate truth, or highest value; (5) a respect and appreciation for the mystery of creation; and (6) a personal transformation” (Hill et al. 2000, 57).

The incentive to develop a psychological conceptualization of the experience of calling is the possibility of advancing the field by developing a clear, working definition of something so innately spiritual and religious and providing an honest assessment of the strengths and limits of the effort to measure it (King and Boyatzis 2004, 3). In addition, discernment is one of those matters that can easily fall into what Shields and Bredfeldt call the bias of private knowledge. A carefully researched theory of the experience of calling can bring into question untested personal views and expose the distortions of bias and opinion, while simultaneously lending itself to open discussion and scrutiny (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 127-28).

There are legitimate concerns and criticisms to acknowledge in an effort to measure calling’s effects. From a humanistic perspective, they include reductionism (a tendency to focus on areas of deficit), depersonalization (expert opinion takes precedence over personal experience), artificiality (assessment becomes its own clinical reality), and judgmentalism (persons are placed in a false dichotomy of “normal” versus “pathological”) (Friedman and MacDonald, 2006). From a theological perspective, the effort to conceptualize the experience of calling must guard against the development of truth claims that ignore, exceed, or even violate the teaching of Scripture (Shields and Bredfeldt 2001, 50-51). The sacred must not be marginalized or confused with something

an individual or researcher arbitrarily considers as important; only that which has divine attributes can qualify (Hill et al. 2000, 67).

While the sacred may not be measurable, the human experience or perception of it is certainly a possibility. To this end, a meaningful conceptualization of calling as an experience requires construct validity. Such a measure must be built on two basic assumptions: (1) the construct must refer to a real phenomenon—something that exists apart from the ways it is potentially measured, and (2) variation in the construct affects responses to items in the measure as well as responses in life situations to which the construct pertains (Teglasi et al. 2007, 216). If the experience of calling is to be valid as a construct, therefore, its presence or absence, or degree thereof, should be measurable and should impact a person's approach or response to life situations in some way.

Calling as an Intersection

Aristotle may have been the first to describe calling as something of an intersection: "Where talents and the needs of the world cross, therein lies your vocation" (Covey 2004, 76). Frederick Buechner has deepened this with his great prose: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (Buechner 1992, 185-86). McSwain and Shurden introduced this idea to young people and portrayed calling's "home address" as the intersection of God's kingdom, a person's passions, and the world's pain (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 40). In his investigation of adolescents and noble purpose, Damon has agreed that "calling is both meaningful to the self and important to the world beyond self (Damon 2003, 15). In his "eighth habit" which Stephen Covey defines calling as finding one's voice, unique personal significance is discovered in the center of overlapping dimensions:

Voice lies at the nexus of *talent* (your natural gifts and strengths, *passion* (those things that naturally energize, excite, motivate and inspire you), *need* (including what the world needs enough to pay you for), and *conscience* (that still, small voice within that assures you of what is right and that prompts you to actually do it). (Covey 2004, 5)

Even as one standing on the outside of religion, Proctor understood that calling represents the intersection between religious desire and the “real, daily world” and results in an opportunity to move forward in faith (Proctor 2005, 97). In a list of indicators that point to a calling, Johnson noted that often there is congruence between the inner sense of call and outward circumstances. He also recognized that calling is sometimes affirmed through a convergence of events, influences or choices that seem to be more than coincidence (Johnson 2002, 59). Following the lead of these and others, it is reasonable to consider the discernment of calling as the confluence of several factors, or components.

Listening to God. Clearly and emphatically, calling begins with God, and listening to God an essential element in a person’s experience of divine call. God is the one who takes the initiative, whether directly or indirectly in calling a person (Coombs and Nemeck 1992, 52). Consequently, an awareness of God is essential for believers (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 9), and the discovery of calling should be grounded in the context of a life intent on getting to know God (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 12) (Feenstra and Brouwer 2009, 18). Henry Blackaby has made a strong case for the need for every believer to relate to God in a close, intimate way: “We contend that God *does* speak to his people. However, people must be prepared to hear what he is saying. It is crucial that Christians clearly understand what God is communicating to them and know how to respond appropriately” (Blackaby and Blackaby 2002, 17).

Scripture plays an essential role in calling in that God often speaks through a text in Scripture and always speaks in accordance with the teachings of Scripture (Johnson 2002, 37). While a call is a subjective experience with God, a person must discern and evaluate it in the context and under the authority of the Bible (Iorg 2008, 9). Blackaby again underscores the foundational element of Scripture in calling:

The entire Bible bears witness to the truth that God, from eternity, chose to work through His people to accomplish His eternal purposes in the world. He could have worked everything by Himself, just as He worked in creation, but he chose not to do it that way. Rather, the Bible tells how God calls individuals into a special relationship with Himself at the very times He wanted to accomplish His purposes. (Blackaby and Skinner 2002, 7)

Clarity from God is a reasonable expectation in the discernment of divine calling, but exacting specificity is not:

To the extent that we blithely rush to be explicit, we betray our modern arrogance and forget the place of mystery in God's dealings with us. . . . In many cases a clear sense of calling comes only through a time of searching, including trial and error. And what may be clear to us in our twenties may be far more mysterious in our fifties because God's complete designs for us are never fully understood, let alone fulfilled, in this life. (Guinness 1998, 52)

Part of the vagueness or fluidity of calling is due to its progressive nature. God brings persons into being in such a way that they are becoming—creation as an ongoing process. Therefore, existence and vocation are not static, but dynamic, and the call that God has set in motion is intended to unfold gradually throughout the course of a lifetime (Coombs and Nemeck 1992, 68).

One of the quantifiable components of this aspect of calling is in the idea that persons can recognize a point in their lives when they came to know themselves as loved and claimed by God and subsequently fueled and energized in their vision by this experience (Johnson 2002, 52). Jeff Iorg similarly identifies an element of calling as a

“profound impression from God,” sometimes filled with emotion but always accompanied with life-changing implications (Iorg 2008, 11). Such a moment or experience typically does not exist apart from a significant and abiding walk with God: “The ability to discern develops in a relationship with God, as one becomes rooted and grounded in the heart of God” (Farnham et al. 1991, 25).

Another critical component of assessment in a sense of calling is a person’s responsiveness and obedience to God. Perhaps no one offers a stronger word about obedience than Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

The actual call of Jesus and the response of single-minded obedience have an irrevocable significance. By means of them Jesus calls people into an actual situation where faith is possible. For that reason his call is an actual call and he wishes it so to be understood, because he knows that it is only through actual obedience that a man becomes liberated to believe. (Bonhoeffer 1959, 83)

In other words, the confirmation of a call may only come after steps of obedience are taken in response to the call (Robbins 2005, 28). The call of God requires movement so that more can be revealed: “God cannot steer a parked car. If we’re vigorous in pursuing the kingdom, then God can use these blockages, these opportunities, these experiences. But following vigorously is vital” (Harper 2001, 232). Practices of faith are essential to calling. The discernment of calling requires a life with God at the center so that there is a commitment of life, mind, and will translating into priorities, values, and lifestyle (Holderness and Palmer 2001, 24). Discernment looks for a real turning of the heart toward God which leads to a reorientation of values deep within the person (Farnham et al. 1991, 26.)

Finally, but not exhaustively, the dimension of calling as hearing from God retains the rich and powerful idea of “being laid hold of” by another. Calling in its most

profound sense is “an experience of being drawn, pulled, tugged, newly fashioned, almost if not completely killed, for the sake of that which calls you on” (Conyers 2006, 17). It is important to remember that true calling is intensely personal, leading a person first and primarily to God Himself rather than to some place or state (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 50).

Discovery of self. A second component of calling is the avenue of internal exploration. This is not a matter of self-centeredness or selfishness, but rather a recognition and acceptance of the self’s uniqueness and worth as being created by God (McSwain and Shurden 2005, 20). Covey describes as “birth gifts” the talents, capacities, privileges, intelligences, and opportunities that lie within a person waiting to be opened through the person’s decisions and efforts (Covey 2004, 40). This understanding, that calling is discovered along the line of what a person is created and gifted to be, insists that a sense of calling should precede choices regarding job and career (Guinness 1998, 46).

The internal dimension of calling does not exclude divine origin and supervision, but simply highlights what God has already provided within the person. This is clear in Scripture upon an examination of the natural abilities of persons responding to God’s call. For instance:

Saul’s intelligence, passion, and comprehensive grasp of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition were not cancelled by his call and callings. Rather they were redirected and transformed into fruitful service to the church and the world. The spiritual gift, and its related calling, brings something genuinely new to an existing individual, but assessing natural gifts can help in the discernment of spiritual gifts and related callings. (Schuurman 2004, 38-39)

Bezalel, the first person reported by the Bible to be filled with the Spirit, was called and empowered by God to construct the tabernacle and all its furnishings using artistic gifts and abilities already present in his life (Baker 2005, 32).

In a sense, the discernment of calling intertwines listening to God with listening to self. Calling is not a scramble to grasp something outside of self and out of reach, but an affirmation of the true self, hearkening to the voice that calls a person to be what he or she was born to be and fulfill the original selfhood given by God (Palmer 2000, 10). Such introspection is a challenge for most people because they pay more attention to outward circumstances and markers than they do than the lessons of their own life and story (Allender 2005, 2). The root of calling is not in temporary personal, social, and cultural circumstances but in obedience to God along the lines of the gifts and opportunities He has given and the particular and concrete qualities of one's own person (Loder 1998, 226).

Because there is a tendency to interpret calling in terms of selfishness, self-discovery must ultimately lead to something outside of self. Allport's analysis of religion and prejudice clarified that a significant aspect of intrinsic religion, or seeing religion as an end rather than a means, is the transcendence of self-centered needs (Allport 1966, 455). Feenstra and Brouwer's study of vocational identity found a positive correlation between confusion about vocation and a view of religion as simply a means (Feenstra and Brouwer 2009, 19). The purpose of giftedness is stewardship and service (Guinness 1998, 46) and through calling God sends forth each individual to make a unique contribution to the building up of the body of Christ (Coombs and Nemeck 2001, 65). Discernment

requires that a person must first own what is deep within but then live it out for the sake of others (Allender 2005, 68).

Calling, then, should not be construed as merely the business of pursuing one's dreams, even those that would sacrifice for God's purposes. God's tendency seems to be that of dissolving these in the midst of loss and heartbreak only to recreate them on a deeper level of his purposes (Allender 2005, 103). The vector of self-discovery also does not embrace the myth of modern freedom and limitless choice, which tends to hide the fact that so much in a person's life is already given and beyond the realm of choice. People do not choose their DNA, their parents, or their communities of early nurture (Schuurman 2004, 120).

Self-discovery or self-knowledge is certainly no simple matter, but in terms of the discernment of calling, it is something recognizable. There are signposts to calling in the study of self, particularly in the naming of one's deepest passions (Allender 2005, 71). If one of the main ways to discover calling is in finding what one is created and gifted to be (Guinness 1998, 46), then an effort can be made to identify the amount of progress in this search. Self-discovery requires time spent in reflection and review of one's past experiences, attitudes, and relationships (Johnson 2002, 35).

Embrace of the world's need. A third vector or component of calling is the experience of finding and accepting one's place in serving God and others in the world. There is an innate desire in humanity to discover and fulfill a purpose bigger than self (Guinness 2001, 15). Buechner speaks of vocation as that work which a person needs most to do and the world most needs to have done (Buechner 1992, 185-86). Retracing Frankl's thoughts on the obligation to live for something greater than self, Haddon

Klingberg wrote, “Each of us is responsible for something, to someone. By using our freedom to act responsibly in the world, we uncover meaning in our lives” (Klingberg 2001, 8).

For the Christian, the perception of genuine human need and the knowledge that one has the abilities to meet that need becomes fertile ground for the discernment of calling (Schuurman 2004, 39). This dimension of calling, however, suffers most with contemporary culture’s preoccupation with self-fulfillment. As mentioned before, young people today are at risk of missing the sense that life can be a noble mission for the sake of the greater good; there is a part to play in a cosmic struggle between life and dark and there is truly something at stake (Dean 2004, 113).

In terms of calling, an encounter with the world’s needs does not exist apart from the workings of God. The pattern of God’s call in Scripture often meant people were invited, selected, or presented with the opportunity to do something. For them it was not an extensive effort of exploration but simply a matter of living in faith and responding to what God put before them (White 2004, 123). This is an important point in this consideration of discernment. Apart from a miraculous voice or sign in the heavens, God’s call is normally experienced in and through the regular proceedings of life—quite often in the duties, relationships, and opportunities right where one is (Schuurman 2004, xi).

Routine existence, however, is not without its wake-up calls. Suffering has often been the medium for God’s call, and for many persons a face-to-face encounter with human pain has roused them to awareness (Johnson 2002, 39). Comfort does little to stir a sense of vocation, but tragedy shapes the deepest passions and affliction leads

persons to become their truest selves (Allender 2005, 76). Injustice figures in as well.

Parks discusses the need for young adults to have a serious engagement with the truth of the world, which includes an encounter with “things that should not be so” (Parks 2000, 148).

For an encounter with the world’s need to be a significant factor in the discernment of calling, it must lead to personal engagement. An experience with tragedy, for instance, if not ignored or denied, but faced openly and even battled, often becomes a scene of learning and transformation (Allender 2005, 86-87). This engagement translates into a person’s appreciation of work. Rather than meaningless drudgery, work becomes a part of a vision, such as when a man recognizes the difference between filling and stacking bags of dirt and building a dike in order to save a town (Stanley 1999, 9). Similarly, a mere acknowledgement of the state of the world’s need is clearly insufficient in the context of authentic calling:

Passionless Christianity has nothing to die for; it practices assimilation, not oddity. Passionless Christians lead sensible lives, not subversive ones; we are benignly “nice” instead of dangerously loving. We become a race of amputees, cutting off passion—that divinely appointed impetus toward the Other—in order to fit in with all the other limbless Christians who are incapable of reaching out. Every now and then we feel a phantom pain, an impulse toward suffering love. But for the most part, we have learned to live without the capacity to extend ourselves.” (Dean 2004, 52)

In short, an embrace of the world’s need is a matter of both inspiration and participation. What one does comes out of what one truly values (Allender 2005, 62). Calling can be resisted and rejected (Schuurman 2004, 21), but if embraced, it cannot avoid leading the called to contribute in some way to God’s mission and the care and redemption of all that He has made (Schuurman 2004, 40).

The Overarching Concern: Belief Versus Behavior

A further word is needed regarding the conceptualization of calling and how today's adolescents have a tendency to separate belief and life. The NSYR found that most teenagers believe religion is important but fail to connect it to their everyday living (Richardson 2005, 107). Barna previously had discovered that only three out of ten self-described Christian teenagers claimed to be absolutely committed to the Christian faith (Barna 2001, 121). A culprit in this is that youth tend to model after the adults they know who "see no dissonance in living separate 'everyday' and 'church' lives" and whose main focus as believers is often to extract themselves from "the real world" and construct a Christian sub-culture (Lawrence 2006, 44-45).

Interviews conducted with teenagers through the NSYR illustrated another dimension of this concern. The vast majority of youth found it difficult to articulate their religious beliefs and explain how those beliefs connected to the rest of their lives (Richardson 2005, 110). Lawrence believes this emanates from both an ignorance of proper religious belief as well as a lack of training in how to express faith to others (Lawrence 2006, 78). The impact of post-modern culture also cannot be ignored. Richard Dunn describes the current spiritual climate as one that has traded absolute truth claims and a transcendent God for a personalized belief system that is about "creating a god that works for you" (Dunn 2001, 32).

One of the implications of this issue for research into the experience of divine calling is the need to recognize the different domains of measurement related to spirituality. Gorsuch and Walker label these domains as belief, motivation, and behavior and describe them as follows:

1. Belief expresses a person's judgment as to the likelihood that a statement of fact is true about conditions external to the person.
2. Motivation, part of which is attitude, is what a person would do if he or she were capable of and allowed to do it.
3. Behavior is a function of the situation and all that a person brings to that situation (Gorsuch and Walker 2006, 93-94).

It is already established that beliefs about God, His work in the world, and the role of Scripture are essential considerations in the discernment of calling. It is also clear that at heart, calling is a matter of direction and motivation. In addition, this review has observed the necessity of individual's responses to calling as a matter of obedience. For this study, these factors influenced the design of a measure that was based upon components of discernment (listening to God, discovering self, and embracing the world's need) using test items that discriminated between beliefs and behaviors.

Profile of the Current Study

Adolescence may be a recent addition in the long history of human development, but the struggle for young people to identify an independent self and find a place in the world is nothing new. What is certainly new is the retreat and demise of social and spiritual frameworks that have previously helped adolescents make this transition amidst today's intense challenges of change and uncertainty (Kessler 2002, [kessler1.htm](#)). The removal of faith and religion to the realm of choice means that the building blocks of religious education and spiritual formation can no longer be taken for granted (Queen 1996, 491). Without a doubt, the American church is currently losing the battle for the younger generation—one source reporting as many as two-thirds of church-going young adults drop out between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two (Rainer and Rainer 2007, 2).

With such concerns, this review has sought to lay a foundation for an exploration of the relationship between the experience of divine calling, adolescent identity, and purpose in life. It has affirmed the adolescent need for personal integration and a pathway to maturity. It has celebrated the emergence of a focus on positive human development in psychology as well as a new openness in the social sciences to consider the impact and influences of religious and spiritual development. The overview of the biblical, historical, social, and individual implications of calling makes in itself a strong case for churches to promote a greater recognition, appreciation, and understanding of calling for this generation of adolescents and young adults.

The quantification of an adolescent's perception and experience of divine calling makes possible an investigation between it and standard measures of positive development. It can test the idea that calling is not only vital to the spiritual experience of believers but also definitive as a self-shaping resource in other areas of their development. Furthermore, it could lay the groundwork for a consideration of how to facilitate the experience of calling. This study has therefore sought to create and validate such a measure to use with older Christian teenagers and to correlate its results with their scores on specific measures of identity development and purpose in life.

Regardless of these and other efforts, God's call will undoubtedly retain its mystical and intensely personal aspects and the great unseen variable, God Himself, will not be categorized and boxed by any amount of research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

While calling is no insignificant topic in the world of vocational guidance and career development, a biblically based understanding of calling critically narrows its origins to God and then widens its application to the whole of life. With the aim to understand how to recognize and to appropriate one of the greatest self-shaping resources available to Christian adolescents, this study has sought to develop a measure of the sense of divine calling with older adolescents. This measure was utilized to discover the extent of their encounter with divine calling as well as whether a significant relationship existed between it and their identity development and purpose in life.

Research Question Synopsis

The following questions were explored using the VCS, the PIL, and the EIPQ:

1. To what extent do older Christian adolescents perceive and respond to a sense of divine calling?
2. To what extent, if any, is there a distinction between belief and behavior in older adolescents in discerning a sense of divine calling?
3. What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents' sense of a divine call and their identity development?
4. What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents' sense of a divine call and their purpose in life?

Through the use of the above survey instruments, this study tested these hypotheses:

1. A majority of older Christian adolescents are unlikely to report a strong sense of divine calling.
2. Behaviors that correspond and relate to the experience of divine calling are a greater predictor of a sense of calling than the presence of beliefs associated with calling.
3. Older Christian adolescents who report a strong sense of divine calling are more likely to have an achieved identity status as compared to those with a lesser sense of calling.
4. Older Christian adolescents who report a strong sense of divine calling are more likely to have greater purpose in life as compared to those with a lesser sense of calling.

Design Overview

This study first involved the construction and validation of a new test, the VCS, a self-assessment using Likert scale items to measure the multiple dimensions of an experience of divine calling. The test included items generated from the three vectors, or components, of calling and as addressed in the literature review, rated and revised by an expert panel, and initially reviewed by a small group of older Christian adolescents. All items were also grouped into one of the two subscales representing belief or behavior.

The first version of the test was administered to a small group of older Christian adolescents and an item analysis performed. Items were eliminated or modified, leading to a second version of the test that was administered to another group of older Christian adolescents and young adults. Another round of item analyses and review resulted in a third and final version of the test.

For external validation, three approaches were taken. First, the test was administered to masters' level students from two seminaries so their scores could be compared to the freshman student population of this study. The assumption was that the seminarians as a group should reflect a higher sense of divine calling than the population

of this study. A t-test was used to determine if the seminarians had high enough scores to be considered a statistically different population. A second approach to validity included a comparison of the seminarians' results on the VCS with their self-assessment of calling. A final approach to validity involved comparing the scores of one group of seminarians on the VCS with their results with another measure of calling, the Christian Vocational Assessment Scale (Feenstra 2009).

Reliability of the instrument was gauged through a split-half reliability using Cronbach's alpha.

The second part of this study made use of the finalized VCS instrument along with the PIL test and the EIPQ to test a population of students from the freshmen classes of two Christian colleges. The results of this testing was compiled and analyzed to determine the prevalence of the experience of calling, a comparison of the belief versus behavior dimensions in calling, and possible correlations between the experience of divine calling, identity status, and purpose in life.

Population

The development of the VCS involved a population of older Christian adolescents from churches. The research population of the study was older Christian adolescents and young adults, from approximately eighteen to twenty years of age, who were freshman students at one of three Christian college campuses: Huntington University in Huntington, Indiana; North Greenville University in Travelers Rest, South Carolina; and Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas. All three schools consider themselves to be Christ-centered, theologically conservative, and open to students regardless of faith. Huntington is affiliated with the Church of the United

Brethren in Christ, USA. North Greenville is affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist State Convention and is aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention. Howard Payne University is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and is aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention.

In Table 1 is a summary of the 2009-10 enrollment information for these three schools.

Table 1. University demographics of research population

<i>School</i>	<i>Freshman Enrollment</i>	<i>Under-graduate Enrollment</i>	<i>Male/Female (%)</i>	<i>Out of State (%)</i>
Huntington University	246	923	45/55	44
North Greenville University	494	2132	53/47	27
Howard Payne University	323	1388	61/39	2
Total Enrollments	1063	4443		

Samples and Delimitation

The first version of the VCS was administered to 28 Baptist students who attended the Southern Baptists Conservatives of Virginia Youth Evangelism Conference held in Colonial Heights, Virginia in August of 2009. Participants were professing Christians between 17 and 22 years of age and active members at churches affiliated with the SBCV. Their churches were representative of those with active youth and college ministries benefiting from either professional or volunteer youth ministry leaders.

A second version of the test was administered to 32 older adolescents aged 18 to 22 from two churches: Faith Baptist Church of Bartlett, Tennessee and Richland Creek

Community Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Both churches are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

To validate the VCS, 33 masters-level students enrolled at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas and 19 students at Southeastern Baptist Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina were enlisted to take the final version of the test. These students represented an older age group, ranging from 21 to 56 (average age: 29), and a majority of males (39 out of 52). The choice of this group was based upon the probability that they would represent a population that has strong personal experiences of divine calling and likelihood to score highly on the VCS.

For the administration of the combined instrumentation of the VCS, PIL, and EIPQ, the research sample consisted of freshman students at Huntington University, North Greenville University, and Howard Payne University who responded to an invitation from their respective school administration to participate in this study. This included 124 students from Huntington University, (50.4% of freshman enrollment), 24 students from North Greenville University (4.0% of enrollment) and 30 students from Howard Payne University (9.3% of enrollment). The total number of participants was 178.

Delimitations include the following: (1) participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 20 to represent the responses of those who are generally recognized as older adolescents; (2) only those participants who identified themselves on the survey as Christians, specifically confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, were included in the results to avoid unnecessary variance; and (3) participants had to respond to email communication and be able to access and complete the survey via the Internet.

Limitations of Generalization

The data from the sample will not generalize in any way to non-Christian adolescents and cannot be applied to other religious or non-religious viewpoints and worldviews. The understanding of the concept of calling varies greatly between the biblical view and secular mindsets. In addition, since there may be some difference of opinions about the availability and application of calling among Christian denominations and even among many churches within the Baptist tradition, the data may not fully generalize to other Christian freshmen within the three universities in this study.

The data from the sample will not generalize to freshman students in the population older than 20 years of age. Because of their experience and relationships, older students are likely to have made more progress in identity development as well as purpose in life.

Instrumentation

The main research of this study made use of a set of demographic questions and three instruments administered as one survey to the population.

Demographic Questions

Five demographic questions were included in the instrumentation and inquired about age, gender, school year/class, professed faith in Christ, and status as a church member.

Vectors of Calling Survey

The VCS is a new tool constructed as part of this study. It is a self-assessment using Likert scale items to measure the multiple dimensions of personal experience and

response to divine calling. Test development began with the generation of over eighty items derived from vectors of calling as described in the literature review. All potential test items were grouped into two subscales representing the belief or behavior domains of spirituality. An initial review of items was conducted with a small group of older Christian adolescents to check for clarity and coherence. Next, these items were submitted to an expert panel (as per instructions in Appendix 1) to be rated and revised or eliminated. The expert panel was approved by the researcher's dissertation advisor and is listed in Appendix 2. See their feedback in Appendix 3.

Test items were further modified and the test validated internally through use with older Christian adolescents through a first and second version (see Appendix 5.) The final version was administered to two groups of seminary students for external validation by comparing their scores with (1) the freshman students of the research population, (2) their self-assessment of their experience of calling and (3) their scores on another recent measure of calling, the Christian Vocational Assessment Scale (Feenstra 2009).

Purpose in Life Test

A second instrument used in this study, the PIL, was developed by Crumbaugh and Maholick in 1964 to measure a sense of purpose from the point of view of the experiencing person. It has become the most commonly researched Logotherapy instrument used in clinical psychology (Guttman 1996) as well as the most influential (Damon 2003, 122). This test is composed of two parts: Part A contains 20 questions on a 7-point Likert scale, and Part B consists of a series of open-ended questions. This study followed the pattern of the majority of existing research on the purpose in life construct in using only Part A of the PIL. Numerically higher scores on Part A of the PIL reflect

increased purposefulness. A recent review of the PIL reported a range of test-retest reliability from .66 to .83 and Alpha coefficients from .86 to .97 (Melton and Schulenberg, 35, 2008). The PIL has been proven useful with adolescents (Sink, van Keppel, and Purcell 1998), but tends to see life satisfaction as a requisite component of purpose rather than a concern for the world beyond oneself (Damon 2003, 122).

Ego Identity Process Questionnaire

A third instrument used in this research relates to the measurement of identity status. Until Gerald Adams and his team first developed an objective, self-reporting measure in 1979, identity development was primarily assessed through clinical interviews and coding strategies (Adams 1998, 11). That instrument and subsequent versions, including the EOMEIS-II, have proved quite useful for ascertaining identity status, but could have reduced effectiveness with students due to the number and the wording of some items (Balistreri, Busch-Rosswagel, and Geisinger 1995, 180).

The EIPQ is a 32-item scale that measures the dimensions of identity exploration and commitment in eight different areas: occupation, religion, politics, values, family, friendships, dating and sex roles. The uniqueness of the EIPQ over other measures of identity is its separate exploration and commitment scores, which allow for more powerful statistical analyses to be conducted with the instrument. The 32 items are equally divided between exploration and commitment and use a 6-point Likert scale.

Internal consistency estimates of .80 and .86 for the commitment and exploration scores, respectively, were reported as well as test-retest reliabilities of .90 for commitment and .76 for exploration (Balistreri, Busch-Rosswagel and Geisinger 1995,

185). A later study by Anthis established reliabilities that included coefficient alphas of .72 and .71 for the commitment and exploration scores, respectively (Anthis 2003, 88).

Scoring the EIPQ requires that positive items receive 6 points for “strongly agree,” 5 points for “agree,” 4 points for “slightly agree” and so on. Scoring is reversed for negatively worded items. Items for the sub scales of exploration and commitment are summed separately, with totals ranging from 16 to 96 each. The median of each subscale is determined to assign participants into one of four identity statuses as defined by Marcia (1966). For both exploration and commitment, scores falling on or above the median are classified as high, the remainder, low. Participants with low scores on exploration and commitment are to be classified as diffused; low scores in exploration but high in commitment are classified as foreclosed; high scores in exploration but low in commitment are classified as moratorium; and high scores in both exploration and commitment is classified as achieved.

Ethics Review

Initial field testing of potential items for the VCS was conducted with older adolescents as exempt research with the permission of the dissertation supervisor. The test items from the PIL, EIPQ, and the first and final versions of the VCS were submitted to the Ethics Committee at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and approved for use in research with a young adult (ages 18 to 20) population.

Research Procedures

The research design involved two distinct phases: the construction and validation of the VCS and the administration of a combined survey instrument to a population of freshmen students.

Phase 1–Construction of the VCS

The initial version of the VCS was constructed from over 80 items generated from the precedent literature on calling. Each item was chosen to represent one of three subscales corresponding to the vectors, or components, of calling: listening to God, discovering self, and embracing the world’s need. Items were also classified as either relating to belief (an intention, opinion, attitude, or expression of conviction) or behavior (matters of conduct, activities, or practice). These items were initially reviewed by a small group of older Christian adolescents and some items were eliminated as repetitive or vague.

Expert panel review. A total of 65 items with instructions were submitted by email (Appendix 1) to an expert panel of four youth ministry professors (Appendix 2). Panel members were asked to rate the items for appropriateness and usefulness in a survey to measure a sense of calling and to recommend as needed the modification or elimination of any items. Appendix 3 summarizes the ratings and comments by the expert panel. Items were modified or eliminated to create version 1 of the test.

Internal validation. The test was validated internally through two versions. The first version of the VCS included 55 items on a six-point Likert scale (see Table A1 in Appendix 5) and was administered to thirty Christian older adolescents (ages 18 to 22) attending the SBCV Youth Evangelism Conference in Colonial Heights, Virginia. Permission to administer the surveys was obtained through Steve Maltempi, Student Ministry Strategist of the SBCV staff. From the scores, item analyses were conducted using SPSS software to eliminate or refine items with:

1. Low or high difficulty (items with universally equivalent responses);
2. Low consistency (items with low correlation to the others and/or that negatively affect reliability);
3. Low discriminability (items with low corrected item-total correlation).

Table 2 summarizes the item analyses for this version of the VCS and notes the decision regarding each item. This analysis led to the elimination of 12 items, a modification of 9 others and a decision to expand to a seven-point Likert scale to help respondents express greater variability to items. It was noted that some participants had difficulty with the negatively coded items.

Table 2. VCS version one item analysis and decision list

<i>Item</i>	<i>Difficulty (low if >4.6)</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted (Alpha is .935)</i>	<i>Corrected item-total correlation (low if < .30)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Decision</i>
(Items 6, 14, 19, 32, 44 and 49 were recoded in criterial direction.)					
1	4.857	.931	.394	low difficulty	Delete
2	4.393	.931	.400		Keep
3	4.643	.931	.431	low difficulty	Modify
4	4.571	.931	.419		Keep
5	4.429	.930	.511	redundant with #11	Delete
6	4.643	.931	.288	low difficulty; low correlation	Delete
7	4.607	.930	.557		Keep
8	3.750	.929	.563		Keep
9	4.607	.930	.545		Keep
10	3.926	.930	.576	redundant with #13	Delete
11	3.750	.929	.622		Keep
12	3.607	.929	.631		Keep
13	3.929	.929	.672	make more behavior- oriented	Modify
14	3.464	.930	.475		Keep

Table 2—Continued. VCS version 1 item analysis and decision list

<i>Item</i>	<i>Difficulty (low if >4.6)</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ($\alpha =$.935)</i>	<i>Corrected item-total correlation (low if < .30)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Decision</i>
15	4.185	.933	.113	low correlation; alpha increases	Delete
16	4.179	.932	.244	low correlation	Modify
17	4.519	.932	.184	low correlation	Delete
18	4.786	.930	.597	low difficulty	Delete
19	3.741	.933	.258	low correlation, alpha increases	Delete
20	3.889	.928	.723		Keep
21	3.815	.930	.454		Keep
22	4.107	.928	.705		Keep
23	4.000	.929	.709	vague	Modify
24	4.286	.929	.634		Keep
25	4.679	.931	.346	low difficulty	Keep
26	4.481	.930	.518		Keep
27	4.000	.929	.576		Keep
28	4.143	.931	.321		Keep
29	4.000	.931	.428		Keep
30	4.929	.932	.179	low difficulty; low correlation	Delete
31	3.821	.930	.450		Keep
32	3.929	.933	.303	alpha increases	Delete
33	3.643	.931	.375		Keep
34	4.714	.932	.141	low difficulty; low correlation	Delete
35	4.107	.931	.400		Keep
36	4.321	.932	.234	low correlation	Keep
37	3.320	.933	.705	alpha increases, hard to understand	Modify
38	4.107	.928	.635		Keep
39	4.000	.929	.631		Keep
40	4.333	.929	.358	redundant with #39	Delete
41	4.036	.929	.545		Keep
42	4.667	.931	.421	low difficulty	Modify
43	4.357	.930	.406		Keep
44	4.214	.931	.430		Keep
45	4.179	.931	.426		Keep
46	3.714	.931	.531		Keep
47	4.464	.931	.483	Vague, hard to answer	Delete

Table 2—Continued. VCS version 1 item analysis and decision list

<i>Item</i>	<i>Difficulty (low if >4.6)</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ($\alpha =$.935)</i>	<i>Corrected item-total correlation (low if < .30)</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Decision</i>
48	3.929	.930	.752		Keep
49	3.929	.930	.483		Keep
50	3.821	.928	.752	vague	Modify
51	4.464	.929	.687		Modify
52	4.250	.931	.333		Keep
53	3.964	.929	.604		Keep
54	4.429	.933	.259	low correlation; alpha increases	Keep
55	4.630	.932	.238	low difficulty; make more behavioral	Modify

The second version of the VCS, now with 43 items, was administered to a group of thirty-two older adolescents (ages 18 to 22) from two churches: Faith Baptist Church of Bartlett, Tennessee, and Richland Creek Community Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Both churches were affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Items again were analyzed for difficulty, consistency, and discriminability. Another decision list was constructed to review the items (see Table 3). Cronbach's Alpha increased slightly to .935 and eleven items were dropped initially due to low difficulty, low consistency and/or low discriminability. The negatively worded items (11, 33 and 38) were found to be problematic and three other items proved to be redundant so the decision was made to reword or eliminate them. Cronbach's Alpha increased to .937 as a result. Nine other items were modified.

The final version of the VCS used in the instrumentation (see Appendix 7) with freshmen students contained 26 items with a 7-point Likert scale.

Table 3: VCS version two item analysis and decision list

<i>Item</i>	<i>Difficulty (low if >5.80)</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ($\alpha =$.935)</i>	<i>Corrected item-total correlation (low if < .40)</i>	<i>Decision</i>
(Items 11, 33, and 38 were recoded in criterial direction.)				
1	5.81	.933	.559	Keep
2	6.47	.935	.234	Drop
3	6.09	.932	.683	Drop
4	4.71	.933	.556	Keep
5	5.84	.932	.626	Keep
6	4.97	.933	.583	Keep
7	6.00	.933	.500	Drop
8	5.19	.932	.704	Keep
9	4.80	.932	.666	Keep
10	5.66	.933	.605	Keep
11	4.59	.936	.275	Drop
12	6.06	.932	.652	Keep
13	5.03	.932	.668	Keep
14	4.63	.932	.617	Keep
15	5.71	.933	.557	Keep
16	5.59	.934	.453	Keep
17	5.94	.933	.607	Modify
18	6.25	.932	.652	Drop
19	5.97	.934	.483	Keep
20	5.22	.936	.096	Drop
21	5.52	.934	.372	Modify
22	5.19	.935	.290	Drop
23	4.94	.936	.153	Drop
24	5.38	.936	.112	Drop
25	5.71	.933	.551	Keep
26	6.22	.934	.395	Modify
27	5.09	.935	.419	Keep
28	5.75	.933	.670	Keep
29	5.25	.932	.685	Modify
30	5.56	.933	.608	Keep
31	5.63	.934	.429	Modify
32	6.13	.933	.685	Keep
33	6.00	.936	.262	Drop
34	5.31	.932	.706	Keep
35	4.97	.935	.338	Modify
36	5.59	.932	.660	Modify
37	4.91	.932	.607	Keep

Table 3—Continued. VCS version 2 item analysis and decision list

Item	Difficulty (low if >5.80)	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ($\alpha =$.935)	Corrected item-total correlation (low if < .40)	Decision
38	5.25	.938	.032	Drop
39	5.25	.933	.534	Keep
40	5.66	.932	.638	Keep
41	5.34	.934	.463	Modify
42	5.19	.933	.551	Keep
43	5.38	.934	.428	Modify

External validation. Three steps were taken to help determine external validity of the VCS. First, the final version of the VCS was administered to 52 Baptist seminary students for comparison of their scores with all the freshmen students in the main study. The seminary group included 19 students from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and 33 from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Approval for this testing was granted from Richard Ross, Professor of Student Ministry and Assistant Dean at SWBTS, and Alvin Wright, Professor of Student Ministry at SEBTS, for the students at the respective schools. These students were pursuing masters degrees and represented an age group ranging from 21 to 56 (average age: 29.4), and were a majority of males (39 out of 52).

These seminarians' scores on the VCS were compared to the research population's scores to see if the two groups represent different populations in terms of calling. A null hypothesis for a *t*-test was set as: $H_0: \mu_{\text{freshmen}} = \mu_{\text{seminary}}$ or $H_0: \mu_{\text{freshmen}} - \mu_{\text{seminary}} = 0$, specifying that the sample means of the two groups would indicate that they are of the same population. The alternative hypothesis was: $H_1: \mu_{\text{church}} \neq \mu_{\text{seminary}}$ or $H_1: \mu_{\text{freshmen}} - \mu_{\text{seminary}} \neq 0$, specifying that the means of the two groups likely represent

two separate populations. A rejection of the null hypothesis paired with a higher mean score by the seminarians would demonstrate that the VCS can make a distinction between groups that are expected to be different in their sense of calling.

A preliminary test for the equality of variances indicated that the variances of the two groups were equal ($F = .19$, $p = 4.69$). The mean score for the seminarians ($M = 168.21$, $SD = 11.56$, $n = 55$) was significantly larger than the scores for freshman students ($M = 153.50$, $SD = 26.48$, $N = 143$). The results of a two-sample t-test with two-tailed values showed that the t statistic (3.87) was greater than the t critical (1.97) at $p = 0.0001$. The null hypothesis that the two groups represented the same population was rejected.

A second step to determine validity involved the comparison of the total scores of the seminarians on the VCS with their scored response to a baseline question on calling. This item was based on Guinness' (1998) definition of calling, required a response from 1 (this is not true of me) to 7 (this is very true of me), and read: "I have experienced God's call so decisively in my life that everything I am, everything I do, and everything I have is a response to his summons and service." Using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, a result of $r = .708$ (significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed) was obtained, indicating that there was a significant correlation between VCS scores and a self-assessment of the experience of calling.

As a third and final effort to investigate the construct validity, the SEBTS seminarians' ($n = 19$) scores on the VCS were compared with their results from the Christian Vocational Assessment Scale (Feenstra 2009) also using the Pearson r . The CVAS (see Appendix 6) has similarities with this researcher's instrument in that it explores calling from a Christian standpoint and seeks to assess "understanding of

vocation, defined as discovering one's identity, understanding the world, knowing ways to explore calling, and discerning one's purpose in relation to God's will" (Feenstra and Brouwer 2009, 2). The CVAS is an 18-item scale and uses a three-factor structure identified and confirmed in two studies: (1) an awareness of God's purpose, (2) an understanding of one's individual identity, and (3) confusion about vocation. In one study it was proven to have significant correlation with the Meaning in Life Questionnaire and the reliability in terms of alphas for each of the subscales and the total vocation scale was high: God's purpose as .86, confusion as .81, individual identity as .80, and total vocation score as .88 (Feenstra and Brouwer 2009, 16).

Before comparing the seminarians' scores on the VCS with the CVAS, a test was conducted for correlation between their CVAS scores and their self-assessment with Guinness' statement on calling. A result of $r = .760$ (significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed) was obtained, providing a slightly higher correlation than the VCS/self-assessment outcome ($r = .708$). Correlating the scores between the VCS and the CVAS yielded a Pearson r of 0.525, significant at the 0.05 level ($n = 19$). This positive relationship between the two measures is evidence that they tend to measure similar concepts. Figure 1 is a scatter plot of the seminarians' results on both tests.

There are some significant differences between the CVAS and the VCS:

1. In the current milieu of designer religion and therapeutic moralistic deism (Smith and Denton 2005), the VCS seeks to assess divine calling by items that have a clear context in biblical truth and spiritual practices.
2. The VCS recognizes the need to measure an individual's recognition and engagement with the world's needs. The CVAS does not include this as a category.
3. The Christian understanding of calling involves both belief and behavior subscales, a distinction not made in the CVAS.

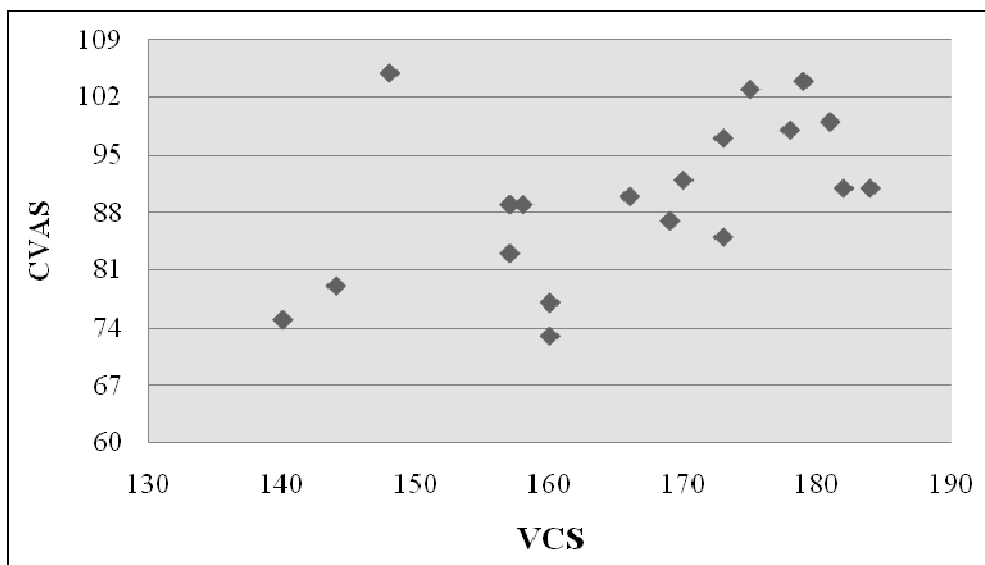


Figure 1. Scatter plot of seminarians' scores on the VCS and CVAS

Despite these differences, the positive correlation between the VCS and the CVAS contributes somewhat to the validity of the VCS.

Reliability. For reliability, the final version of the VCS used in the main study with freshmen students yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .966 ($n = 143$).

Phase 2–Population Testing

In its second phase, this study made use of the VCS along with the PIL and the EIPQ to test a population of freshman students from the enrollment of three Christian colleges. Permission to test the students was granted at Huntington University by Karen Jones, Professor of Ministry and Missions; at North Greenville University by Don Dowless, Vice President for Academic Affairs; and at Howard Payne University by Brent A. Marsh, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students. Using university email and chapel announcements, students were invited to participate in the study through a

web-based survey tool, Survey Monkey. As an incentive, gift cards and a book about purpose in life were offered through a drawing for those who agreed to participate. Several follow-up emails were sent to the freshmen at each campus as an effort to increase survey returns.

Demographic data obtained from the population included age, gender, school year/class, professed faith in Christ, and church membership (yes or no).

The data obtained in terms of total scores from the VCS was first analyzed to determine the population mean, dispersion (standard deviation), and frequency distribution to gauge the extent of divine calling as experienced among the students.

Next, the data from the EIPQ was processed to categorize each participant into one of the four identity statuses. The question then was posed, “How do higher scores in the VCS correlate to the identity achievement status?” Student VCS scores were grouped into either an “identity achievement” or “other” and a *t* test was run to compare the group means. A null hypothesis assumed that the mean of VCS scores from either group is equal to the other, so that $H_0 \mu_{\text{other}} = \mu_{\text{achieved}}$. The alternative hypothesis was that the mean of the identity-achieved group is not equal to the other. A rejection of the null hypothesis along with higher scores by the identity-achieved group on the VCS would indicate that there is a relationship between the experience of calling and identity achievement.

A similar operation involved the comparison of the VCS scores with the PIL. The composite PIL score of each participant ranged between 20 and 140 points, and this score was correlated to the score on the VCS using the Pearson *r*. A high correlation would indicate a relationship between the two measures.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The aim of this research was to construct a valid tool to measure the experience of divine calling and to discover if a significant relationship exists between calling and participants' identity development and purpose in life. This chapter will analyze and display the research findings.

Compilation Protocol

Following approval of the research design and instrumentation, two separate administrations of the VCS were planned to complete its construction and determine validity. The first test version was administered on paper to older adolescents attending a Youth Evangelism Conference. Following analysis and revision, a second version was also administered on paper with older adolescents at Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee and Richland Creek Community Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Scores from both versions were entered manually into SPSS for the item analysis.

The final version of the VCS, a baseline item on calling, and the CVAS were administered through an internet survey site (Survey Monkey) to graduate students in classes at two Baptist seminaries. Scores from these items were downloaded and imported into Microsoft Excel for analysis.

For the research population, participants were recruited from the freshman classes at Huntington University, North Greenville University and Howard Payne

University through university emails and class and chapel announcements. North Greenville limited its participation in the study to only Christian Studies students. Participants from all three schools were offered incentives through a drawing of gift cards and the provision of a free book, *Live Life on Purpose* by Claude Hickman, to the first 50 to respond.

The three tests and demographic questions for the study were formatted into separate sections of one survey for online administration through SurveyMonkey.com. Instructions were given for each section. Separate collectors were used for each school. This arrangement provided features such as: (1) item validation and required completion of survey responses, (2) screening of ineligible participants and (3) results that could be downloaded directly into Microsoft Access and SPSS. Participants were able to click on a link in the email or type in a URL address to go directly to the website and take the survey. The letter of consent and agreement to participate were displayed prior to the other survey questions and required a positive response for the participant to continue. Results of the survey were viewable online in real time. The researcher maintained participant anonymity and conducted the drawings by asking participants to provide only a student ID upon completion of the survey.

Demographic Data of the Research Sample

The demographic data from the research sample from the three schools is listed in Table 4. The total population for the research was 178 with 23 excluded due to failure to complete the survey or inappropriate age. All participants indicated that they had professed faith in Christ. Females (60%) outnumbered males substantially. A significant number (21.3%) indicated no church membership at the time.

Table 4: Demographic data of research sample

<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>% of sample</i>
<i>University</i>	Huntington	124	-
	Exclusions	14	-
	Final	110	71.0
	North Greenville	24	-
	Exclusions	6	-
	Final	18	11.6
	Howard Payne	30	-
	Exclusions	3	-
	Final	27	17.4
<i>Totals</i>	Participants	178	-
	Excluded	23	12.9
	Sample Total	155	-
<i>Age (sample)</i>	18	70	45.2
	19	82	52.9
	20	3	1.9
<i>Gender (Sample)</i>	M	62	40.0
	F	93	60.0
<i>Profession of Faith (Sample)</i>	Yes	155	100
	No	0	0
<i>Church Membership (Sample)</i>	Yes	122	78.7
	No	33	21.3

Findings and Displays by Research Question

This section discloses the actual results of the research method and how the data were analyzed. First is a summary of the construction of the VCS followed by the findings of the research with freshman students using the VCS, the EIPQ and the PIL.

Construction and Validation of the VCS

In completing the design of the VCS, a four-step process was used. First, potential items were generated by the researcher from the literature review of calling and screened with older adolescents. Secondly, these items were presented to an expert panel of youth ministry seminary professors for review, modification, and possible elimination.

Thirdly, a first version of the VCS was administered to a group of 30 older adolescents followed by item analyses and review using the software SPSS. Fourthly, a second version of the VCS was administered to another group of 32 older adolescents followed by another round of item analyses using SPSS. The final version of the 27-item VCS is listed in Appendix 7 as part of the instrumentation used in the main study.

For the purpose of establishing external validity, the VCS was administered to graduate level seminary students as a three-fold comparison group. The scores of the seminarians on the VCS were first compared to their scores on a related instrument, the CVAS, resulting in a positive correlation of $r = .525$. Following the administration of the VCS and the CVAS to the seminary students, an analysis for external validity was conducted. The results of a comparison between the seminarians' scores on the VCS and their response to a baseline question on calling were correlated and described by a Pearson r . The seminarians' scores on the VCS and the CVAS were also analyzed by a Pearson r to determine the correlation between the two tests.

As a final effort to establish construct validity, the seminarians' scores on the VCS were compared to those of the research sample (freshmen students) to see if the two groups represent different populations in terms of calling. Using a t test, the null hypothesis was set as: $H_0: \mu_{\text{freshmen}} = \mu_{\text{seminary}}$ to postulate that that the scores of the two groups are of the same population. Failure to reject the null hypothesis would be a point against the validity of the VCS as a measure of calling. The alternative hypothesis was set to be: $H_1: \mu_{\text{church}} \neq \mu_{\text{seminary}}$ specifying that the scores of the two groups likely represent two separate populations. A rejection of the null hypothesis in conjunction with higher scores by the seminary students would provide evidence of validity for the VCS.

Question 1

Question 1 asked, “To what extent do older Christian adolescents perceive and respond to a sense of divine calling?” From the research sample, data obtained in terms of total scores from the VCS were first analyzed to determine the sample mean, dispersion (standard deviation), skewness and kurtosis to gauge the extent of divine calling as experienced among the sample of students. See Table 5 for these descriptives. A frequency distribution was constructed to visually represent the students’ scores against a normal curve (see Figure 2). Possible scores from the VCS can range from 27 to 189.

Table 5. Descriptive data from freshman students’ VCS scores

N	155
Mean	152.28
Standard Deviation	26.77
Standard Error	2.15
Skewness	0.33
Kurtosis	-0.99
Range	117
Confidence Level (95.0%)	4.25

From this initial data, these observations can be made:

1. The negative skew in the distribution indicates that the students in general scored rather highly on the VCS. A score of 108 (from a possible range of 27 to 189) on the VCS would mean a participant’s average response to items was midway between “not true of me” and “very true of me.” In the case of the freshman students, 141 scored above this midpoint of the test. In fact, the mean score of 152.8 is equal to 81% of the highest possible score.
2. While kurtosis is not excessive, the distribution and range of scores show that there are a significant number of outliers, possibly due to the way the test was constructed or administered.

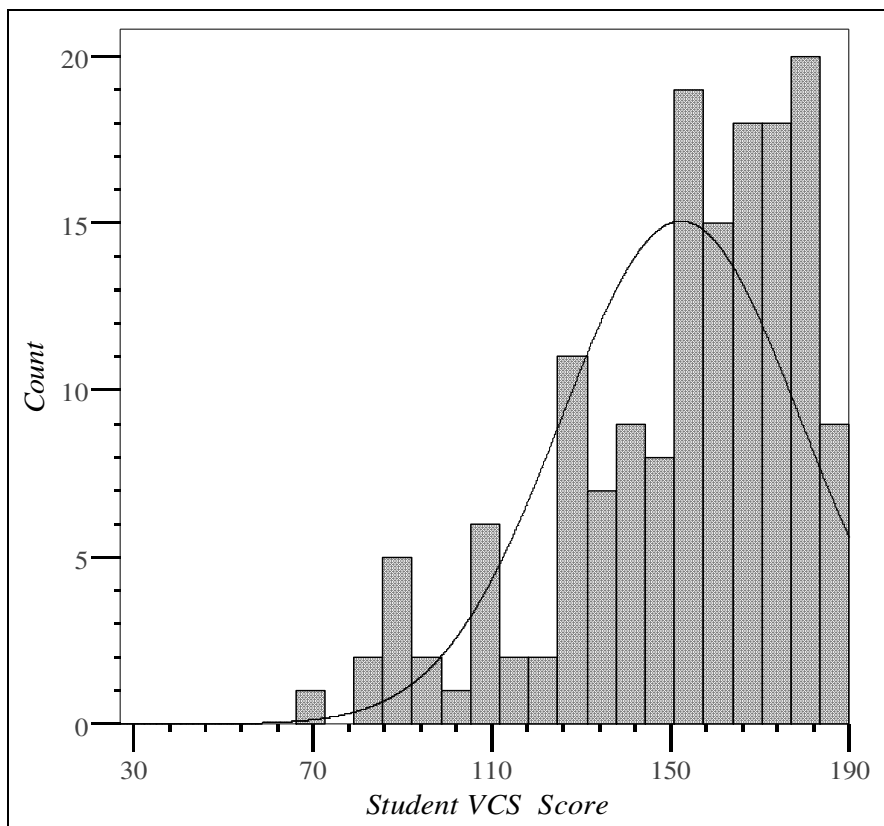


Figure 2. Distribution of freshman students' VCS scores

- The standard deviation of 26.77 includes 32.7% of the test's possible range of scores. In other words, approximately 68% of the students scored between 126 and 179 on the test.

Question 2

Question 2 asked, "To what extent, if any, is there a distinction between belief and behavior in older adolescents in discerning a sense of divine calling?" Items in the VCS were generated from the three vectors or dimensions of calling discussed in the literature review. The same items were also grouped into separate belief and behavior subscales. See Table 6. The scores from the belief and behavior subscales of the VCS were totaled separately and analyzed for descriptive statistics.

Table 6. Subscales of the VCS

Subscales	Vectors			<i>Total</i>
	Listening/Responding to God	Discovering Self	Embracing the world's need	
Belief items	1, 5, 6, 8, 10	9, 11, 12, 20	14, 16, 18, 21, 25	14
Behavior items	2, 3, 4, 7, 15, 19, 26	13, 17, 24	22, 23, 27	13
<i>Total</i>	12	7	8	27

See Table 7. Belief scores showed a slightly higher variation based on the standard deviation as well as a slightly lower difficulty as evidenced by a higher average item score. Both subscales, however, correlated highly with the VCS total, so that belief ($r = .989$) and behavior ($r = .986$) were almost identical in results.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for belief and behavior subscale scores

N=155	<i>Average Item Difficulty</i>	<i>Min./Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Belief (14 items)	5.75	37/98	80.50	14.38	206.76
Behavior (13 items)	5.52	35/91	71.78	12.72	161.87

Figure 3 illustrates the similarity of subscale results with scatter plot. A regression analysis revealed Beta values of 0.537 for belief and 0.475 for behavior at a significance of $p = .000$ and $n = 155$. Belief proved to be a better predictor than behavior of the overall VCS score.

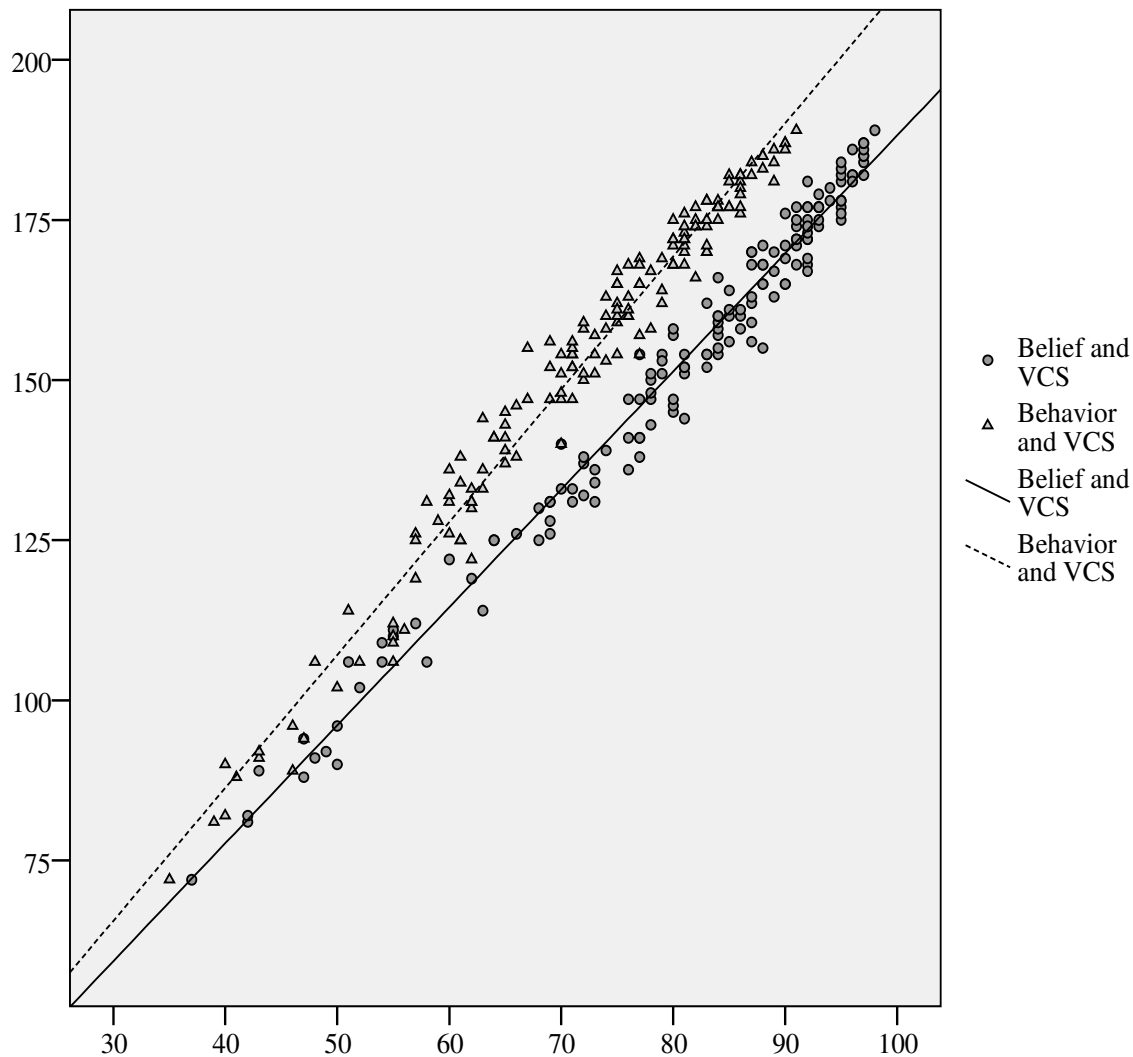


Figure 3. Scatter plot for VCS belief and behavior subscale scores

Question 3

Question 3 asked, “What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents’ sense of a divine call and their identity development?” Of the research sample, 147 out of 155 students completed the EIPQ. Scores were first processed in Excel to categorize each participant into one of the four identity statuses using the test’s two subscales to measure exploration and commitment. After reverse-scoring the

negatively worded items, item scores for each subscale were totaled and the median determined. Students who scored above the median in both subscales were classified as identity achieved. Other identity statuses were similarly determined based on the combination of scores above or below the median of the subscales. For this research sample, the exploration median was 66 and the commitment median was 72. See the results for all four identity statuses in Table 8.

Table 8: Students' EIPQ identity status

<i>Identity Status</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>% of Sample</i>	<i>Mean of EIPQ Scores</i>	<i>Mean of VCS Scores</i>
Achieved	45	30.6	149.89	164.40
Moratorium	31	21.1	136.29	146.45
Foreclosed	31	21.1	138.65	155.19
Diffused	40	27.2	126.23	147.91
<i>Total</i>	147			

Students with achieved or foreclosed status tended to score higher on both the EIPQ and the VCS. Note again that identity status is not determined by total score on the EIPQ but by position relative to the median on the subscales.

Student VCS scores were then grouped into one of two categories, either as “identity achieved” or “other,” so a *t* test could be run to compare the groups to see if they were statistically different. A null hypothesis was set to assume that the mean of VCS scores from the groups were equal, so that $H_0 \mu_{\text{other}} = \mu_{\text{achieved}}$. The alternative hypothesis was therefore set to $H_0 \mu_{\text{other}} \neq \mu_{\text{achieved}}$ to assume that the means were not equal to each other. Using SPSS software, a Lavene's Test for Equality of Variances produced a *p* value of .000, thus showing the two groups had unequal variances. A two-

sample t-test with two-tailed values provided a t statistic of 4.56 with 133.89 degrees of freedom with a p value of 0.000. The null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that there was a statistically reliable difference between the identity achieved students and those classified as “other.”

The EIPQ can also be used as a progressive score measure. Comparing students’ VCS totals with their EIPQ totals yielded a Pearson r of .438 at a significance level of 0.001. The scatter plot in Figure 4 shows a generally positive trend between students’ EIPQ total scores and their results on the VCS. There are significant outliers, however, pointing to the fact that the identity measure explores multiple domains beyond just religion and spirituality.

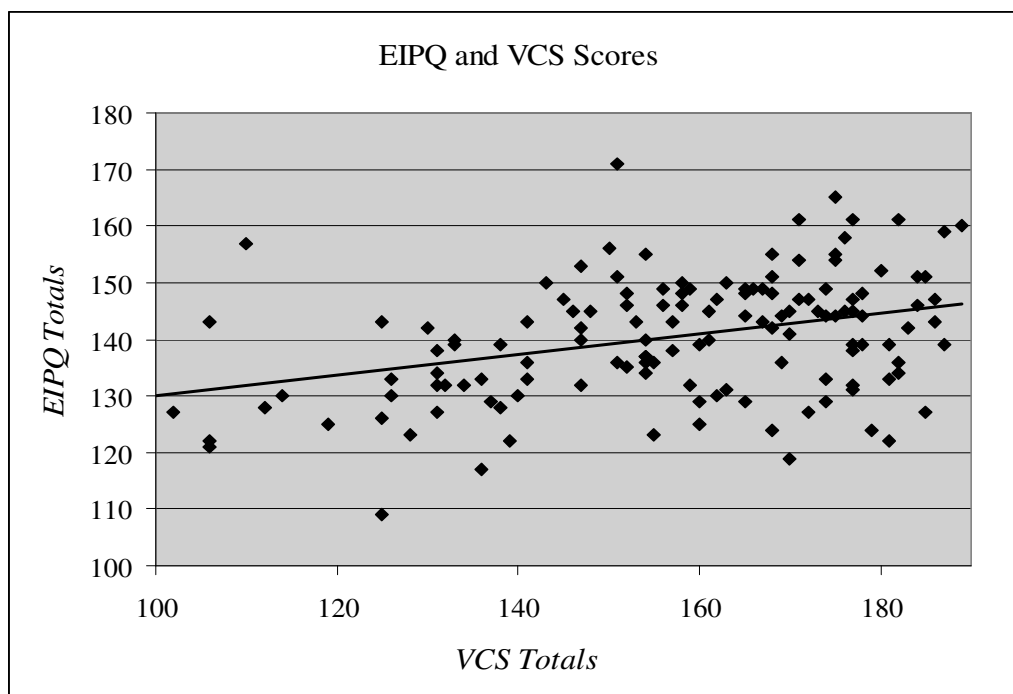


Figure 4. Scatter plot of EIPQ and VCS Scores

Question 4

Question 4 asked, “What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents’ sense of a divine call and their purpose in life?” Of the research sample, 151 out of 155 students completed the PIL for the purpose of comparing their results with their scores on the VCS. The PIL contains 20 questions on a 7-point Likert scale with items scored from 1 to 7 and possible totals from 20 to 140. Numerically higher scores reflect increased purposefulness. Based on the original norms (N= 1,151), scores of 113 and above suggest definite purpose in life, scores between 92 and 112 are indeterminate, while scores 91 and below suggest a lack of life purpose (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Guttman, 1996).

Table 9 displays an initial examination of the PIL results. According to the original PIL norms, 46.4% of the research sample could be classified as having increased purposefulness but only 9.3% as lacking purpose. The mean score of 109.63 is less than four points below the original cut-off point for increased purposefulness, signifying that

Table 9. Results from Students’ PIL Scores

N = 151			
<i>PIL Classification</i>			
	N	%	VCS means
Increased Purposefulness	70	46.3	120.78
Indeterminate	67	44.4	102.99
Lacking Purpose	14	9.3	82.83
<i>Descriptives for PIL Totals</i>			
Mean	109.63		
Standard Error	1.08		
Standard Deviation	13.28		
Sample Variance	176.31		
Kurtosis	0.36		
Skewness	-0.47		
Range	71		

overall PIL scores were fairly high. Most significant in the data are the mean VCS scores related to the PIL statuses, with there being a significant increase from lacking purpose to increased purposefulness.

In comparing the students' PIL totals with their scores on the VCS, a Pearson r yielded a positive correlation of .560. Figure 5 displays a scatter plot of students' scores on both instruments and the linear fit.

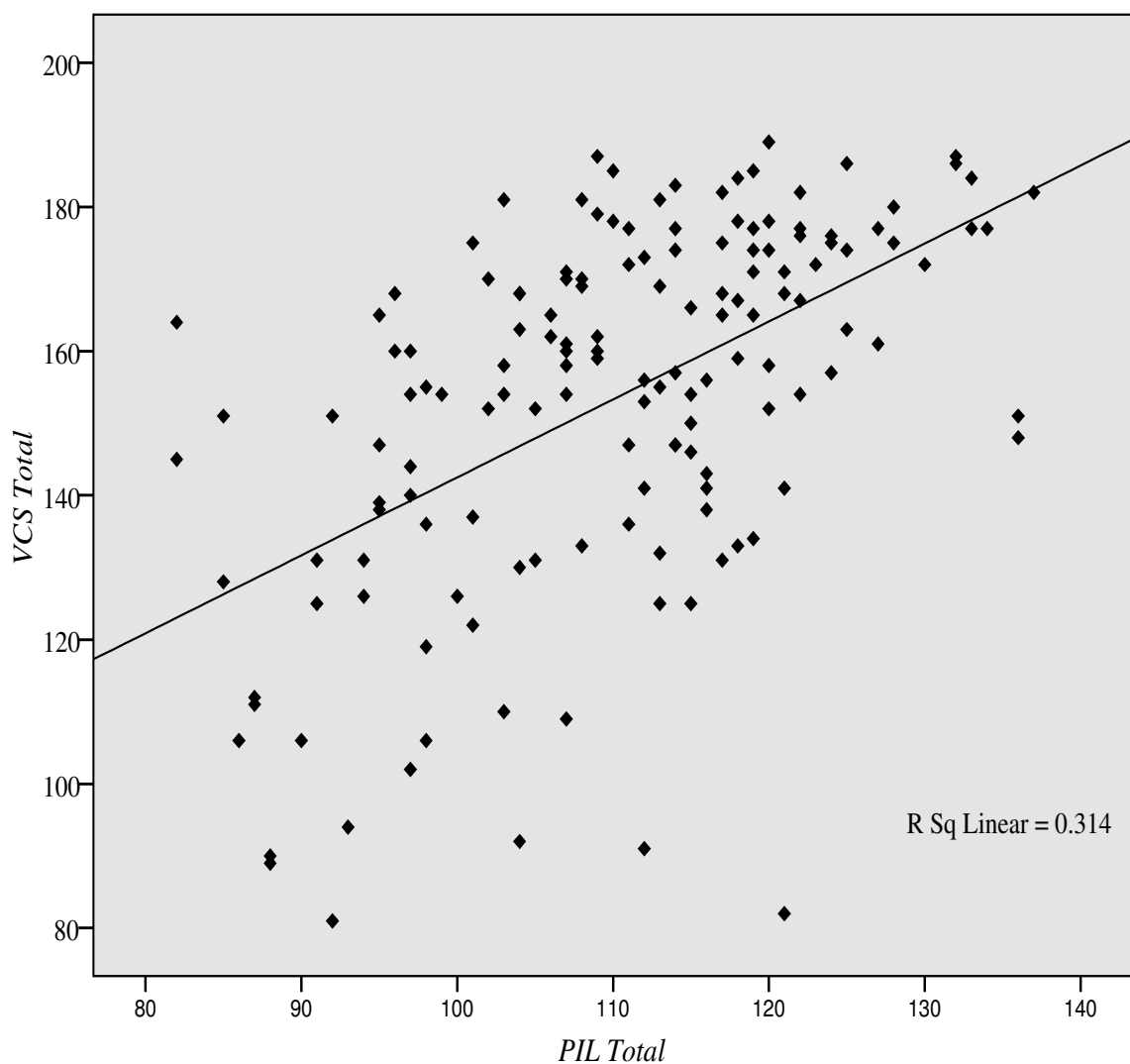


Figure 5. Scatter plot of PIL and VCS scores

Evaluation of the Research Design

This section of the study will explore the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Of particular interest will be following:

VCS Item Selection and Modification

With the availability of many other spiritual and religious-based test instruments, the items generated for the VCS could have had many forbears. In truth, the genesis of most items came from the literature review of biblical and historical understandings of calling.

The difficulty came in identifying those statements that would have the greatest congruence with the experience of divine calling and not just general Christian values and experience. This is where this study's view of calling as the intersection of vectors (listening to God, awareness of self and embrace of the world's need) became the guide and initial filter of item creation and selection.

Quality feedback was received from older adolescents who reviewed the list and identified items that were confusing, irrelevant or difficult to answer clearly. In retrospect, even more of this kind of feedback with the succeeding versions of the test could have probably contributed to better-worded statements with greater clarity, especially for the sake of using the VCS with younger adolescents.

The first two versions of the VCS had six negatively worded items that required reverse scoring. Their purpose was to make sure test takers would read items carefully, to increase difficulty and to maximize variance. These items, however, did not fare well in item analyses with older adolescents and were all eliminated in the final version. Based on the relatively high means on the VCS of the research sample, a future

version of the test would likely benefit from the careful addition or modification of current items to regain negative options.

As a 27-item test and as judged by this researcher, the VCS by itself is not too lengthy an instrument to use with adolescents. Combined with other instruments, especially like the ones in this study, the VCS is likely to face the challenge of waning interest and attentiveness of test-takers. This study was geared toward the validation of measuring the experience of divine calling and thus used multiple tests (the PIL, EIPQ and CVAS) to provide several means to assess the success of this endeavor.

Internal and External Validity Measures of the VCS

A strong point for the VCS is its external validity. This study compared the VCS to an existing test about calling, the CVAS, as well as to a self-assessment of calling by Baptist seminary students. Both comparisons yielded positive correlations. The VCS also gained external validity through the comparison of the seminarians' scores with those of the research sample.

For internal validity, items in the final version performed quite well in terms of criteriality and discriminability. It became readily apparent, however, that item difficulty would be the greatest challenge in the construction of this kind of test. The research sample (Christian college students in churches and Christian universities) certainly played a factor in producing test results with negatively skewed distribution. It is very possible that younger populations (such as younger adolescents in church) or similar populations in other settings (Christian college students in a public university) could raise the item difficulty scores in the VCS.

The Data Collection Method for the Research Sample

The use of an internet survey tool for the research sample provided both advantages and disadvantages. In the creation and modification of the VCS, paper surveys were used and resulted in some unanswered questions and multiple responses to an item, thus reducing the number of usable items. The internet survey approach eliminated these problems with required item completion and response validation. In addition, the online format was user friendly to test takers, streamlined the collection and organization of data and did not require the physical presence of the researcher or others to conduct the test. This format also provided case logic to use consent and demographic responses to redirect or filter ineligible participants.

The singular disadvantage of the internet survey format for this research was in its reliance on participants to go online and complete the survey on their own. The best results were gained from one university where students were given repeated reminders in the classroom and through email. In the other schools, the reminders were more limited and the response much lower. The effort to produce a true random sample was hampered by confidentiality rules as required by all three universities. Administrators in each case were gatekeepers of the students contact information, preventing the researcher from direct access of a random selection and personal involvement with follow-up.

A disadvantage with the internet approach harder to gauge is the distinct possibility it could introduce technological bias. Students with a greater proclivity to use the internet are more likely to respond to the survey than others. This may be more pronounced with other populations than the research sample, owing to the fact that college students are typically and comfortably users of internet tools and resources.

With the prevalence of computer access, especially with the research sample, it is evident that the internet method of data collection is highly useful. It does not, however, replace the need for good access to the population, overlarge sample sizes and specific follow-up reminders.

The Efficacy of the Research Population in Exploring Divine Calling

This study's population of Christian freshman students served well in establishing the usefulness of a new instrument to measure the experience of divine calling. While their scores on the VCS were relatively high, their roles and experience in distinctly Christian settings may allow this study's results to serve as a benchmark if the instrument is used with other populations. The students in this study were also a safe choice to minimize needless variation and inconsistency that could come from factors other than the experience of calling. They were old enough to have likely considered questions of personal meaning, purpose and career, and yet young enough to not have all those questions answered. They were likely to have made faith commitments and to be comfortable with answering questions of a personal, spiritual nature. Their understanding and application of biblical calling may not have been that of this study, but they were likely to be familiar with the concept of calling and at least for some to have sensed the call of God in their lives.

The Relevance and Effectiveness of the EIPQ and the PIL

While psychologists continue the debate over the effectiveness of measurements of identity, the use of identity statuses remains prevalent as a way to assess at least in some fashion young people's progress toward personal integration and

maturity. A significant motivation behind this study was to determine if the experience of divine calling has a relationship with such progress. The EIPQ provided not only a method to determine the identity status of individuals but also a progressive measure of exploration and commitment that could be correlated to the VCS.

Purpose in life is a psychological construct that also seemed to have a high degree of relatedness to divine calling. The results of this study using the PIL leave room to consider the fact that a clear sense of purpose may not always accompany calling. The PIL, like the EIPQ, is a tool that addresses a broader sweep of life than just spiritual questions. Most likely, it resists the compartmentalization that so often constrains spiritual belief and practice in American culture. In a sense, the PIL in this study is a “reality check” to compare with the students’ scores on the VCS.

A Consideration of Other Relevant Statistical Measures

For both the purposes of validity and for considering the relationship between calling and spiritual well-being, the VCS could be compared to results with the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Ellison and Smith 1991). The SWB is a general indicator of well-being that may be used for the assessment of both individual and congregational spiritual well-being. It provides an overall measure of the perception of spiritual quality of life, as well as subscale scores for Religious and Existential Well-Being.

As a replacement for the PIL, the Developing Purposes Inventory (Barratt 1978) might be suitable. This instrument is intended to measure students' development on Chickering's vectors of developing purpose which include: (1) avocational-recreational purpose, (2) vocational purpose and (3) style of life. A drawback with this test is its length of 45 items.

For an assessment of identity, the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-II (Adams 1999) was seriously considered for use in this study.

This measure constitutes 64 items that assess the degree of identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion for an individual within each of eight identity-defining areas. A 24-item version of the EOMEIS-II is available, but it treats politics as a main area of identity, a focus that could introduce unneeded variation in this study. The EOMEIS-II has a long record of use in identity research, but the wording of items seems to be dated and not as relevant to older adolescents today. The length of the complete version was a significant factor in the decision not to use it in this research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research into the perception and experience of divine calling among older adolescents forms the basis of the conclusions in this chapter and leads to a critical review of the research questions and hypotheses stated in the beginning of this study. The research will provide information from the findings that will suggest implications related to beliefs, theories, and practices related to calling and older adolescents. In addition, in this chapter the researcher will subjectively propose applications and possibilities that can be derived from the research findings. Finally, suggestions for future additional research in the field of study as well as modifications to the current study will be noted.

Research Purpose and Questions

The goal of this study was to develop and utilize a biblically-based measure of a sense of divine calling, the VCS, and to use this measure with older adolescents to discover the extent of their encounter with divine calling and whether a significant relationship exists between it and their identity development and purpose in life.

The following questions were explored through the use of the VCS, the PIL, and the EIPQ:

1. To what extent do older Christian adolescents perceive and respond to a sense of divine calling?

2. To what extent, if any, is there a distinction between belief and behavior in older adolescents in discerning a sense of divine calling?
3. What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents' sense of a divine call and their identity development?
4. What relationship, if any, is there between older adolescents' sense of a divine call and their purpose in life?

Through the use of the above survey instruments, this study seeks to test these hypotheses:

1. A majority of older Christian adolescents are unlikely to report a strong sense of divine calling.
2. Behaviors that correspond and relate to the experience of divine calling are a greater predictor of a sense of calling than the presence of beliefs associated with calling.
3. Older Christian adolescents who report a strong sense of divine calling are more likely to have an achieved identity status as compared to those with a lesser sense of calling.
4. Older Christian adolescents who report a strong sense of divine calling are more likely to have greater purpose in life as compared to those with a lesser sense of calling.

Question 1

Using the findings from the VCS, the hypothesis that most older Christian adolescents are unlikely to report a strong sense of divine calling was not supported in this study of the research sample. The perception of divine calling was not lacking in a majority of the test subjects. The rejection of this hypothesis is mitigated by the fact that the VCS did demonstrate a significant difference between a sample of seminary students and the freshmen of this study.

Taking this at face value, the good news is that there were freshman students on three Christian university campuses who could confirm personal values and behaviors that are keeping with a highly significant sense of divine calling. It is possible that they

still constituted a minority of their peers, but this was not proven in this study. Their positive responses to items such as, “My life’s direction and plans for the future are a result of God’s call,” and “I have made significant changes in my life based on what I believe God has asked me to do” are a matter of encouragement for those who work in Christian ministry with older adolescents. With the current news about students dropping out of church after high school and possibly falling away from Christianity altogether, here is at least a small segment of the population that is not missing the experience of following God and translating this relationship into their destiny.

This research began with the expectation that the experience of divine calling would be limited to a select few of older Christian adolescents. That expectation may bear out with research of adolescent populations in other settings and age ranges. This research sample at best likely represents a small slice of older adolescents who come from strong religious backgrounds and already have significant spiritual resources and experiences. The results of the VCS with this group may very well serve as a benchmark to give future studies of young people and divine calling a reference point. Regardless of the results in this study, there remain large-scale forces in this society that are arrayed against adolescent maturity and personal integration.

A caveat may be necessary in confirming the results of the VCS in this research. It is possible that students today are becoming adept at compartmentalizing their lives to the extent that their spirituality is protected and unsullied from many of their other life experiences. In an article about Millennials and their coexistence with contradictions, Tim Elmore gives this explanation:

They are frequently aware of the paradoxes in their life and they seem to be able to live with them. They demand high morals from leaders, yet they admit to cheating

on tests in school themselves. Paradox is OK with them. This means we must help them navigate the ones that could cause a train wreck in the future, and choose a course of action that enables them to live with integrity. This may be the most exciting—and amusing—time to be a mentor to a student. (Elmore 2010, <http://www.growingleaders.com/index.php/articles/122.html>).

In spite of this concern, the understanding of calling that was largely present in the research sample could serve as a strong foundation for the mentoring and integrating experiences that Elmore recommends.

Question 2

The subscales of the VCS related to belief and behavior yielded some difference in their predictions of the total VCS score, but belief actually proved to have a slightly better correlation than behavior. The hypothesis that calling-related behaviors are a better predictor of a sense of calling than calling-related beliefs had to be rejected by this study. In retrospect, this hypothesis was doomed from the beginning of the construction of the VCS. For behavior to be a better predictor of the sense of calling as measured in the VCS, test takers would have to score higher in behavior items rather than belief. The assumption behind the original hypothesis was that proper beliefs are easier for individuals to assert than the corresponding behaviors. The likelihood that persons would engage in calling-related behaviors without a corresponding affirmation of the beliefs is quite small.

In terms of the research question, the results of this study did find that the subset of behavior items was more difficult as test items than the belief subset. The original assumption in regards to behavior was confirmed, but not in a convincing way. Christian Smith's study that found the coexistence of intellectual commitment but

functional disregard toward God in Christian youth (Morton 2005, 37) was not confirmed to any great significance by this study.

There could be several reasons for why the gap between belief and behavior was not measured to be greater. Seven of the thirteen behavior items in the VCS were related to the listening/responding to God vector. In this category, it may be especially difficult for persons to discern much of a distinction between their spiritual beliefs and their behaviors. Another possible reason is that it is difficult to quantify calling-related behaviors in such a way that the measurement does not become legalistic and confining. An item that states, "I spend time reading my Bible and praying every day" would be more satisfying to the researcher's desire to be specific, but is it really a necessary condition of calling? It is also possible that beliefs and behaviors related to calling are part of the same dimension and not recognizable as distinctions by the instrument.

Question 3

The idea that the experience of calling is a positive shaper of the self is on the line with this question. The hypothesis that the experience of divine calling is associated with identity achievement was not rejected, giving further rationale to think of calling as congruent with optimum development. The results of the study indicated a significant correlation between higher scores on the VCS and identity achievement. In addition, the students with achieved status were shown to be a statistically different population in terms of their experience of calling.

Spirituality and religiousness represent only one domain of what psychology describes as the construct of identity. The presence of numerous outliers in the VCS and EIPQ comparison is a testimony to the fact that some of the students' experience of

calling did not necessarily lead to coherence in all other areas of identity as measured by the EIPQ. It is understandable that older adolescents are still working through the implications of their faith in terms of their relationships, politics, occupation and gender roles. This study, nonetheless, advances the idea that the experience of calling is related to a stronger sense of identity overall.

It is interesting to note that students with foreclosed status fared nearly as well on the VCS as the achieved students. This tends to support the idea that a significant number of individuals have an understanding or experience of divine calling that has precluded or preempted their exploration of other choices. Of course, it is important to remember that instruments like the EIPQ are not designed to recognize the difference between lack of exploration and a predisposed rejection of lifestyles and options contrary to the Christian faith. This disclaimer still does not eliminate the concern that a foreclosed status in an older adolescent is not the optimum state. It raises the question of whether some students have been led to make uninformed and untested spiritual commitments. Biblical and historical calling as articulated in this study describes it as a matter of exploration and encounters with God, self and the world. Calling is not an excuse for the unexamined life.

Question 4

Purpose in life, while related to identity, represents another aspect of positive adolescent development that is more of an attitudinal and motivational aspect of personhood. The hypothesis that the experience of divine calling relates to a greater sense of purpose in life was not rejected in this study. Not only was there a positive correlation between students' PIL and VCS scores, but those who by PIL norms would be considered

as having increased purposefulness clearly scored the highest on the VCS. Conversely, the small group (9.3%) who rated as lacking life purpose had the lowest mean scores with the VCS. These results of this study support the idea that the experience of divine calling is strongly associated with purpose in life and thus may have a significant influence in the positive development of adolescents. This study's effort to measure calling also gains credibility and provides rationale for the VCS to be used as a tool to assess youth from this aspect of their spirituality.

Students' scores of the PIL followed a similar trend of negative skewness as the VCS, indicating that overall the research sample not only rated relatively high in the experience of calling but also in purpose in life. This indeed may have been a rather elite group to measure. It is expected that the testing of other populations of adolescents would likely yield greater variation in PIL scores.

Research Implications

This research speaks to the concern first expressed in this study, that today's adolescents face serious issues confronting their ability to arrive at a mature, coherent, and meaningful self in the context of authentic relationship with God. The overarching question has been, "Can young people experience God's call in such a way that it is measurable and is positively related to other important dimensions of their life?" The encouraging answer expressed so far in this chapter also leads to the following implications.

The Impact of Calling

As the review in this study has made clear, postmodern youth are faced with many choices and are products of a society that tells them, "You can be whatever you

want to be.” The self-constructed identity is built on the false assumption that persons are accountable to none else but themselves. Identity that is received from God, however, transcends mere personal preferences and is a trustworthy foundation that gives purpose and meaning beyond the self.

Calling is not a separate dimension of the Christian life; it is simply the perspective that God speaks to His people personally and corporately, generally and specifically, so that they truly become followers who are defined by the One they follow. Calling is what makes discipleship primarily a relationship—one that involves listening to, learning from and obeying a Person rather than simply adopting of a set of rules and proper beliefs.

This study affirms that the experience of divine calling relates strongly to aspects of positive development and holds great potential for personal integration. Youth live in a world full of contradictions and stresses that tend to fragment the self and encourage shallow, multiple identities. God’s call is a unifier of the self. What greater resource is there for young people to develop coherency than the discovery that God has called them so decisively to Himself that everything they are, everything they do, and everything they have can be charged with devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service?” (Guinness 1998, 29).

The Availability of Calling

This study tapped a group of older adolescents who had largely embraced both beliefs and behaviors associated with calling. The fact that many of them rated so highly in this area of life is cause to consider that the same could become true for many others. The results from the research sample are a testament to the understanding that calling

should not be limited to career choices and professional ministry. If God's call is primarily a job or a particular role, is the calling rescinded when the individual is no longer able to work? Again, the definition of calling in this study applies to all of life and all that a person is, has and does.

While it is important to remember that Jesus himself spoke of the narrow way that leads to life which few tread and even said, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14 NASB), the church should be careful of artificially constricting the path further. The call of God is first and foremost a call to God, and the invitations to salvation, sanctification and service are often intertwined and sometimes simultaneous. Who is to say what the categories of God's service are? The call to missions and the call to the pastorate certainly continue to serve as strategic, biblical, time-tested avenues of response to God. The Old Testament narrative reminds us, however, that God speaks to and uses fig-pickers, shepherds, soldiers, cupbearers, artisans, exiles, and prisoners in unpredictable ways to further His mission in the world. There is no reason to limit the availability of calling to "the few, the proud, the Marines."

Research Applications

In addition to the implications from the precedent literature, this study seeks to provide empirically based insights for youth ministry practitioners and others desiring to facilitate the spiritual maturation of adolescents.

The Advocacy of Calling

No one tells God who, how or when to call, but someone needs to prepare and assist young people to listen and respond to God, like Eli did with the young boy Samuel (1 Sam 3). It became clear in both the literature review and the construction of the VCS

for this research that the call of God usually involves the mediation of others in some way. This may include the corporate encouragement and support of the church, consistent biblical teaching and preaching, or the mentoring of an adult. Calling does not usually happen in a vacuum.

Youth need help in hearing and understanding the call of God. They live in a culture that at best marginalizes faith and at worst sabotages it. Without intervention, it is likely that they will unwittingly allow their identity to be shaped by the forces of consumerism and hedonism. The cafeteria approach of choosing values, beliefs and experiences by personal whim may lead to a meal of C. S. Lewis' proverbial Turkish Delight: tasty at first but empty and unfilling at the last. Those who minister to youth should help them embrace the God-called life rather than the self-made life.

It is time for Christians to reclaim the right definition of vocation. As discussed in the review, vocation is simply another word for calling. The voice in vocation should be that of God and not merely personal interests and proclivities. To limit vocation to career choices invites a compartmentalization in life that's hinders the integration of self. Calling certainly brings direction and purpose to work, but it also applies to relationships, vision, service, values, and everything else along the way. Calling is not limited to actions—to what a person does—but defines who a person is.

With this in mind, the facilitation and interpretation of vocation should not be abdicated to the realm of secular career counseling. The church is uniquely qualified, as Holderness says, "to invite God into the conversation" and assist a young person in the integration of faith, work and lifestyle (Holderness 2001, 10-11). The church can provide the rich resources of God's Word, a caring and discerning community, and a heart for the

world to help young people to discover the possibilities and implications of God's call in their lives.

The Study of Calling

This study has introduced a measure that quantifies some of the experience and perception of calling for the purpose of research. It may be limited and primitive as a first effort, but it can serve as a step toward greater understanding. The social sciences have struggled to define ideal development because of a reluctance to address teleology (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 28). While there is progress in the number of studies involving psychology, religion and spirituality, it is left to Christian researchers to discover the richest connections between faith and human development. Research is not needed to prove the worth of divine calling; it is needed to explore the connections it may have with specific areas of life.

This is a call for critical thinking regarding the current theological practices and cultural perspectives of divine calling—they need to be tested biblically and weighed in the balance. In some churches, for instance, calling may be viewed almost entirely as a subjective experience that needs no correlation with objective truth and external behavior. Seminaries have welcomed students with a personal testimony of calling, but observers over time can testify that ultimately some of these bore little evidence of a true encounter with calling. Search committees accept at face value a ministerial candidate's personal affirmation of calling with little idea how to confirm it.

Similarly, in congregations where calling is only defined by professional ministry, people with profound encounters with God are left with few choices to apply their experience to life. Such a concept may also force people into existing categories and

deny a progressive unfolding and understanding of God's call. For instance, what should come next for the young teenager who responds in an invitation to a call to international missions?

There are other unanswered questions about calling. What are those things that mute the call of God in some people? Why do some people seem to "get it" and others miss it? What constitutes a false sense of calling and what, if any, are the signs that a person is misled or even deluded in this sense? What about the stories of calling such as Jonah's, where misery was more the byproduct than fulfillment? In effect, do many limit God's call to the comfort zones of their life? There are specific recommendations for further study elsewhere in this chapter, but the point here is that the experience of calling from a research perspective is something of an unexplored country. A fertile territory awaits and may offer the resources needed to battle the forces that generate adolescent disintegration and futility in the postmodern world.

Research Limitations

The findings and implications of this research, while presenting some usefulness to understanding a larger Christian adolescent population, has significant limitations of applicability that need to be considered.

First, the findings and implications of this study for older adolescents should be considered only in the context of a biblical view of calling and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Calling should not be considered in the secular framework of personal choice or passion apart from the direction and will of God. Conclusions from this research cannot be applied to other religious viewpoints and worldviews. In addition, it should be noted that because of differences of opinion about calling among Christian

denominations, some might not agree with the comprehensive and practical application of calling to believers as described in this material.

Second, the study drew its data from a convenience sample of freshman students at three private Christian universities. While this ensured the likelihood of accessing a population of appropriate age with Christian belief and practice, it also limited the study to a very limited slice of older adolescents. These were students in strongly Christian settings who were likely to have had a significant background of Christian experience. They also proved to be favorably disposed to participating in this research as shown by their willingness to complete the survey online on their own time. It is obvious that the study excluded adolescents who do not attend college and even those who attend a public or non-Christian college as well.

Third, the research in this study has focused on underclassmen who are between 18 and 20 years of age, thereby limiting its application to younger adolescents. While there is a great diversity among youth regarding identity development and other measures of growth and development, older adolescents tend to have processed more questions, options, and experiences related to their identity and purpose in life. Thanks to the literature review, this research can speak with some insight to the needs of younger age groups, but not with the authority of data drawn directly from them.

Because of this study's reliance on the self-report of older adolescents in a Christian university setting, there is a significant possibility that respondents sought to provide answers they perceived as desirable or expected in such settings. Students may have described an appreciation and application of calling and purpose in life better than they truly experience or practice. It is hoped that the anonymous and private nature of the

internet survey helped to lessen some of this tendency for participants to “talk a better game than they play.” The limits of quantitative survey research in comparison to direct observation and personal interview are obvious.

Further Research

This study has prompted much thought about future directions and possibilities in adolescent research and the arena of divine calling. The use of the VCS with other adolescent populations to determine the extent of their perception and experience of divine calling would be a logical first step. At what age does the sense of calling begin to manifest itself in a sample of Baptist youth? How would the teenagers at a large Christian summer camp rate themselves? Do students at a Christian private college tend to rate themselves higher than Christian students at a public university do? It is likely such use of the VCS would lead to its modification and refinement to become even more valid and reliable in its assessment of the sense of calling.

An endeavor that could be of great interest and helpful discovery is to explore factors that may influence the experience of calling in adolescents. The VCS could be paired with questions that inquire about their experiences with such things as personal mentoring, family crisis, church attendance, parental church involvement and Bible reading to determine which has the highest correlations are likely to predict a sense of calling.

This study’s discovery of identity-foreclosed students with a high sense of divine calling raises questions all of its own. Is this status a result of moral conviction or inherited belief? Beyond the items of the VCS, how do these students understand calling? Is their experience of calling any different than those with identity-achieved status? If

calling is best understood and most coherent through a process of exploration and commitment, what are the implications for those who have made the commitment only?

A final suggestion for further research is for a qualitative study regarding Christian adolescents and calling. Interviews based on items from the VCS could yield rich detail about the relationship between identity and spirituality, a more accurate assessment of calling behaviors appropriate to beliefs and greater insight into causal factors of calling.

APPENDIX 1

EXPERT PANEL INSTRUCTIONS

CONSTRUCTING A SURVEY ON CALLING...

Thank you for your willingness to assist me in developing items for a survey intended to measure a sense of divine calling in a person. What I attempt to do may seem to be presumptuous, especially in light of the fact that calling is God's initiative, not humanity's. I do believe, however, that calling is a two-way street, requiring both God's overture and a person's response. With your help as a member of an expert panel, I hope to build a case for the greater understanding, appreciation, and even facilitation of calling in the youth ministry of the church.

Background:

Attached is a summary of my purpose in researching the experience of divine calling in students. In brief, the goal of this study is to develop and utilize a biblically based measure of a sense of divine calling and to use this measure with older adolescents to discover the extent of their encounter with divine calling and whether a significant relationship exists between it and their identity development and purpose in life.

Based on my literature review, I anticipate that there are three components of calling which the survey should address:

- responsiveness to God
- discovery of self
- engagement with the world.

I plan to administer the survey to college students and young adults of ages 18 to 20 in order to not stray too far from the developmental aspects of adolescence and yet to allow for at least some of the maturation experiences of young adulthood. I expect to use a Likert Scale of 1 to 7 to allow for a greater range of response.

Instructions:

Also attached in this correspondence are a number of potential survey items in an Excel spreadsheet. If you would prefer to view the items in a Word document, I can provide that upon request. Using the spreadsheet, please review the items and do the following:

1. In the yellow cell or box to the right of each item, rate the item on a scale of 1 to 5 for its appropriateness and usefulness. "1" represents least appropriate or least

useful in a calling survey and “5” represents most appropriate or most useful. In the example below, the survey item has been given a rating of “4.”

5	The Bible is my guide to life.	4		
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2. In the green cell, please type the letter “R” if you think the item is unnecessary and should be eliminated from the survey. Similarly, type the letter “M” if you think the item should be modified and stated in a better way. You may also choose to leave this blank.

7	There is work in this world for which God has invited or selected me to do.	3	M	
---	---	---	---	--

3. Finally, if you wish to provide a comment or suggestion regarding an item, please use the blue cell to enter your text.

23	It is important that I follow wherever God leads.	4	M	<i>Too generic and easy to affirm. Consider “I have learned that I should follow...”</i>
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Please note that some items are redundant. I will combine, reword, or eliminate items as needed to finalize the instrument.

When you are finished, be sure to save the spreadsheet as a separate document, using the “save as” command. Return it to me as an attachment in an email. I will tabulate the results with others and finalize a first draft of the instrument for reliability testing and validation.

I will be glad to keep you posted as I continue in my research. Thanks again for your time and wisdom.

George Siler

APPENDIX 2

EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Richard Ross, Professor of Youth Ministry
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Ft. Worth, TX

Karen Jones, Professor of Ministry & Missions
Huntington College
Huntington, IN

Wesley Black, Professor of Youth Ministry
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Ft. Worth, TX

Howard D. Owens, Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies and Christian Education
Tennessee Temple University
Chattanooga, TN

APPENDIX 3

EXPERT PANEL REVIEW

The following is a compilation of results from the expert panel members' review of the initial items for the Vectors of Calling Scale.

Table A1. Expert Panel Results

<i>SURVEY ITEMS:</i>		Composite rating (on a scale of 1=least useful; to 5=most useful)	
		↓	Rater's initials plus "m" (modify) or "e" (eliminate) ↓
		↓	Suggestions or comments about this item ↓
Component 1: Responsiveness to God			
<i>Note: Some items may be worded negatively to improve the accuracy of the survey.</i>			
1	God is personally active in the world today.	3	HO-M; KJ-M Seems to distract from the main thrust of the study. Maybe modify: God acts through me in the world today....definitely a belief component; some ques. measure belief, but may not measure responsiveness
2	I sense that God is at work in my life	5	KJ-M Perhaps "know that God is at work" would be stronger
3	My life is to be lived out in response to what God wants me to be	4.75	KJ-M Perhaps "who God wants me to be and what he wants me to do"- a confusion between doing and being?
4	I am engaged in a search for God's purposes for my life.	5	WB-M This is vague. May need to broken out into several more specific items. "Thinking about it..." "How I spend my time..." "My relationships with others..." "How I spend my money..." etc.

Table A1—Continued

5	I believe God has created me to be unique and valuable to himself.	4.75	KJ-M	Somewhat awkward- "I am valuable to God and uniquely created" might work better
6	I choose to live my life in submission to God's plans for the world.	4	WB-M; KJ-M	Too vague. Spell out specific areas of life to live in submission...."I live my life..."; choosing and doing may represent the problem identified in # 1
7	God speaks to people today through ways such as Bible study, prayer, and the wisdom of other believers.	4.25	RR-M; KJ-M	If you are measuring responsiveness to God, should not it read "God speaks to me today through . . ."; ...too similar to #11
8	The Bible is my guide to life.	4.75		
9	God has called me to serve him in specific ways.	5		
10	There is work in this world for which God has invited or selected me to do.	4.75	WB-M	They may sense this could be true but be too unsure to give an honest answer.
11	I feel that God has asked or invited me to do something for him with my life.	4.25	WB-M; RR-M; KJ-M	Same as 10. "Something" is too narrow...maybe omit the "I feel that"- make it more definitive; could change it to "I know" or "I believe"
12	I feel that God has entrusted to me specific things he wants me to do.	4	WB-M	Same as 10, 11
13	I have decided to live all of my life to the glory of God.	4.25	WB-M; HO-M; KJ-M	Does this mean I have made a profession of faith, made a specific decision to full-time vocation, or just to be a good Christian?...People who sense a call, I doubt, will claim explicitly such ownership of their lives. I am afraid what occurs is that they (we) project their (our) wishes onto God and their (our) preferences will return as "a divine call" effectually giving them (us) license to act as they (we) will....Maybe "I try to live..." or "I am committed to live..."
14	I feel that God is leading me in a specific direction.	3.75	WB-M; KJ-M	Basically, a good question, but again this age group may be too unsure of the direction to answer realistically....vague...

Table A1—Continued

15	I have talked to others about how God is leading me.	4.25	KJ-M	May not measure responsiveness, but only how they have dealt with their calling
16	I seek God's will for my life regularly through prayer.	5		
17	I have spent time getting to know God.	3.75	WB-M	You might want to spell out ways such as prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship with other believers, tec.
18	My life is mine to plan and use as I see fit.	3.25	WB-M; HO-M	This could be interpreted several ways - (1) God has nothing to do with my life; (2) I am responsible for making my own decisions; (3) my parents don't make my decisions anymore; etc....People who sense a call, I doubt, will claim explicitly such ownership of their lives. I am afraid what occurs is that they (we) project their (our) wishes onto God and their (our) preferences will return as "a divine call" effectually giving them (us) license to act as they (we) will... Good item to "test" the understanding and commitment to calling
19	I am being obedient to God's leading in my life.	4.25		
20	I have made adjustments in my life based on what I believe God has asked me to do.	5		
21	I seek to understand God's purpose for my life.	4.75		
22	God's purposes and plans for me are more important than my own.	4.75	KJ-M	Hmmm...may suggest that God's plans are drudgery that take us away from personal satisfaction; what about the concept that following God's plans bring joy and purpose that we don't experience when we live life without consulting him or trying to please him...I don't see that reflected in this survey.

Table A1—Continued

23	I know when God is speaking to me.	3.75	HO-m; KJ-M	While he speaks to us, God's voice is difficult to know objectively. Too many times we think God speaks to us, when it is only our own inner voice not our Maker's. Modify: I believe God speaks to me, or God speaks to me. ...God speaks to me...???
24	God extends his call to some believers but not all.	3	WB-M; KJ-M	This has a lot of theological implications (Calvinism, for example) and may deal more with theological interpretation than to the domain of vocational calling....does this measure responsiveness to God's call or belief about calling?
25	I believe I am accountable to God for the way I live my life.	4.5	KJ-E	Once again...belief versus actual implementation.. "I am accountable to God..."#27 is better
26	It is important that I follow wherever God leads.	4.75		
27	I live with a sense of accountability to God.	4.5		
28	God has influenced my dreams for my future.	4.5		
29	God has given me a strong sense of direction for my life	4.75	WB-M	Basically, this is a good question, but may be confusing because some may feel a strong sense of calling, but so unsure of the direction that they cannot easily answer this question.
30	I pray to God about significant decisions before I make them.	4.75		
31	I have changed directions with my life as a result of God's call.	4.75	WB-M; KJ-M	They probably have changed directions several times, some as a result of God's call and some as a result of adolescent searching. Perhaps use something like, "In some decisions, I have changed directions..." "My future plans and life direction are a result..."
Component 2: Self Awareness				
32	I have discovered some things to do in life for which I have a passion.	4.75	KJ	I have a passion for... Not sure, but it seems somewhat awkward...

Table A1—Continued

33	I believe that am uniquely gifted for a purpose.	4.5	WB-M	Some may still be searching and not able to answer this realistically. Perhaps use something like, "In some areas of my life, I believe that I am..."
34	My relationship with God helps me know who I am.	4.25		If this statement is stated in the positive, then I believe it is theologically off. Who I am is MORE important than what I do (i.e., the heart).
35	I have a good understanding of my strengths and weaknesses	4.25		
36	I have discovered interests and abilities in my life that God wants me to develop.	4.5		
37	Others have helped me recognize and develop my unique gifts and abilities.	4.75		
38	I have had to give up some things in order to follow God's will for my life.	3.5	KJ	This belongs in section #1, and I would include it there...
39	I am loved and claimed by God as one of his own.	3.75		
40	What kind of person I am is as important as what things I do.	3.75	RR-M; KJ-M	"My identity and character are as important as the things I do."
41	I feel that I have little in my life to offer to God.	4	HO-E; KJ-M	Because the study is of people who have a sense of "call," I have difficulty seeing them with this kind of doubt.... omit the "I feel" and change to "I have..."
42	I have a good understanding of my gifts and abilities.	5		
43	I have known at least one person in my past or present who has set an example I wish to follow.	3		
44	I have had to overcome some difficulties in pursuing my calling.	3.25	WB-M; KJ-M	This is pretty vague. What will the answer to this question tell you?...seems more like responsiveness than self-awareness
45	Others have confirmed that they see a God-given direction in my life.	4.5		
46	Reflecting on my past experiences and relationships has helped me learn much about myself.	4		

Table A1—Continued

Component 3: Engagement with the World				
47	My faith helps me see and understand the needs of others	4		
48	I feel that my purpose is connected to God's vision for the world.	4.75	WB-M	A little vague. "my purpose in life..."
49	I am a partner with God in his work in the world.	3	WB-M; RR-E	Involves a theological interpretation. Am I a partner, a "slave", a submissive follower, etc. The word "partner" sounds like two equals.
50	I feel led to do something about what's wrong in the world.	3.75		
51	There is work that I can do that gives me deep gladness.	4.5	KJ	I love the question, but maybe best in section #2
52	I have an opportunity to make a difference in the world	3.25		
53	I feel that it is important that I serve others with my life.	4		
54	I can contribute to God's plan for the world	4.5	WB-M	Contribute money? Time? My life?
55	In whatever work I am to do, I want to represent God.	5	KJ	Maybe best in section #1?
56	My experiences in serving others have shaped me as a person.	3.25		
57	Other people have helped me discover the right direction for my life.	3.75	KJ	What is "right direction?"
58	In my daily life I often feel that I am part of something bigger than myself.	4	WB-M; KJ-M	A little vague. Could be interpreted as part of the football team, the campus student congress, a fraternity, a racial group, a political cause, etc.... "In my daily life" might cause some to rate this lower than it actually should be rated
59	I have discovered needs in the world I am seeking to address.	4.25		
60	I feel that I can make little difference in the world.	4	HO; KJ-M	See comment 41....Caution: Some will think this means "they" and not "God through them"...could be confusing
61	God has given me a cause in which to invest myself.	4.5	WB-M	Overall not a bad question, but see item 58 above.

Table A1—Continued

62	I am convinced that my life is part of a noble mission for a greater good.	4.75		
63	My church family has helped me recognize God's will for my life.	4.5	WB-M	Does "My church family" mean the church I grew up in or the church family where I now attend?
64	My encounters with pain and suffering in the world have stirred me to greater awareness of a purpose for my life.	4.25	KJ-M	Can you shorten this at all?
65	It is difficult for me to explain my life's purpose to others without including my relationship to God.	5		

APPENDIX 4

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CALLING SURVEY

Vectors of Calling Survey Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to create and utilize a biblically-based measure of a sense of divine calling and then to use this measure with older adolescents to discover the extent of their encounter with divine calling and whether a significant relationship exists between it and their identity development and purpose in life.

This research is being conducted by George Siler for purposes of completing a dissertation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, you will respond to items in the attached survey that relate to divine calling. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey instrument, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research and by checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Instructions: Please respond to the following statements by clearly circling the letters as appropriate. It is important to answer all questions in the survey. Please do not answer any question more than once. When you have completed the entire survey, please place the survey in to the envelope held by your instructor.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX 5

VECTORS OF CALLING SURVEY:
EARLY VERSIONS

Table A2. Version 1 of VCS

For each of the following statements please circle the choice that best indicates the extent of your agreement or disagreement as it describes your personal experience: SA = Strongly Agree D = Disagree MA = Moderately Agree MD = Moderately Disagree A = Agree SD = Strongly Disagree						
1. I know God is at work in my life	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
2. I seek to live my life in response to who God wants me to be and what He wants me to do.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
3. It is important to me to understand God's purposes for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
4. I believe I am valuable to God and uniquely created.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
5. God has spoken to me through ways such as Bible study, prayer, and the wisdom of other believers.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
6. I do not consider the Bible as my guide to life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
7. There is work in this world which God has invited or selected me to do.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
8. I seek God's will for my life regularly through prayer.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
9. I believe God is leading me to do something specific for him with my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
10. I make choices based on God's purposes for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
11. I spend time getting to know God through Bible study, prayer, and worship.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD

Table A2—Continued

12. I am being obedient to God's leading in my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
13. I have made adjustments in my life based on what I believe God has asked me to do.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
14. I tend to make important decisions without regard to my relationship with God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
15. I seek to understand God's purpose for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
16. God's purposes and plans for me give me greater joy and satisfaction than my own.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
17. I am accountable to God for the way I live my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
18. It is important that I follow wherever God leads.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
19. I see little of God's influence regarding my dreams for the future.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
20. God has given me a strong sense of direction for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
21. I pray about significant decisions before I make them.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
22. My future plans and life direction are a result of God's call.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
23. I have had to give up some things in order to follow God's will for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
24. I have discovered significant things to do with my life for which I have a passion.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
25. I believe that God has fashioned and gifted me for a specific purpose.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
26. My relationship with God helps me know who I am.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
27. I have a good understanding of my strengths and weaknesses	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
28. I have discovered interests and abilities in my life that God wants me to develop.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD

Table A2—Continued

29. Others have helped me recognize and develop my unique gifts and abilities.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
30. I am loved and claimed by God as one of his own.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
31. My actions truly reflect what is in my heart.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
32. I have little in my life to offer to God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
33. I have a good understanding of my gifts and abilities.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
34. I have known one or more godly persons who have set an example I wish to follow.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
35. Others have confirmed that they see a God-given direction in my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
36. Reflecting on my past experiences and relationships has helped me learn much about myself.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
37. There are some worthy possibilities for my life that I have discovered to be incompatible with God's will for me.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
38. My faith helps me see and understand the needs of others	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
39. God's vision for the world shapes my goals in life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
40. God has invited me to join Him in his work in the world.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
41. I feel led to do something about a need that is in the world.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
42. There is work I can do that gives me deep gladness.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
43. Whatever I do in life, I feel it is important that I serve others.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
44. There is little I can do to contribute to God's plan for the world	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
45. I look for ways to represent God in my work.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
46. Other people have helped me discover how I fit into this world.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
47. I often feel that I am part of something bigger and more important than myself.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD

Table A2—Continued

48. I have discovered needs in the world I am seeking to address.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
49. I feel little compulsion to change things that are wrong in the world.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
50. God has given me a cause in which to invest myself.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
51. I am convinced that my life is part of a noble mission for a greater good.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
52. My relationships in church have helped me recognize God's will for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
53. Pain and suffering in the world have stirred me to greater awareness of a purpose for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
54. It is difficult for me to explain my life's purpose to others without referring to my relationship to God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
55. I am willing to serve with my life wherever I am needed most.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD

Table A3. Version 2 of the VCS

<i>For each of the following statements below, please circle the number that best indicates how well this item describes your personal experience. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (this is not true of me) to 7 (this is very true of me).</i>							
	<i>1=not true of me</i>			<i>7=very true of me</i>			
1. I seek to live my life in response to who God wants me to be and what He wants me to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. It is important to me to understand God's purposes for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I believe I am valuable to God and uniquely created.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I have invested time in Bible study to find my purpose in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. There is work in this world which God has invited or selected me to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table A3—Continued

6. I seek God's will for my life regularly through prayer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I believe God is leading me to do something specific for him with my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I spend time getting to know God through Bible study, prayer, and worship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I am being obedient to God's leading in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I have made significant changes in my life based on what I believe God has asked me to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I tend to make important decisions without regard to my relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I have discovered that God's plans for me give me greater joy and satisfaction than my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. God has given me a strong sense of direction for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I pray about significant decisions before I make them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My life's direction and plans for the future are a result of God's call.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I have had to make sacrifices in order to follow God's will for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I have discovered significant things to do with my life for which I have a passion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I believe that God has fashioned and gifted me for a specific purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. My relationship with God helps me know who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I have a good understanding of my strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I have discovered interests and abilities in my life that God wants me to develop.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table A3—Continued

22. Others have helped me recognize and develop my unique gifts and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. My actions truly reflect what is in my heart.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I have a good understanding of my gifts and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Others have confirmed that they see a God-given direction in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Reflecting on my past experiences and relationships has helped me learn much about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I have considered and rejected some career possibilities because I have discovered them to be contrary to God's will for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. My faith helps me notice and understand the needs of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. God's vision for the world shapes my goals in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I feel led to do something about a need that is in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I have discovered a kind of work I can do that gives me deep gladness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Whatever I do in life, I feel it is important that I serve others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. There is little I can do to contribute to God's work in the world	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I look for ways to represent God in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Other people have helped me discover how I fit into this world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. It is important to me to know that my life is part of a noble mission for a greater good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. I have discovered needs in the world I am seeking to address.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. I feel little compulsion to change things that are wrong in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table A3—Continued

39. God has led me to embrace a particular need or cause in which to invest myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. My relationships in church have helped me recognize God's will for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Pain and suffering in the world have stirred me to greater awareness of a purpose for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. It is difficult for me to explain my life's purpose to others without referring to my relationship to God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. When it comes to serving, I usually go where I am needed the most.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX 6

CHRISTIAN VOCATION ASSESSMENT SCALE

Table A4. The CVAS (Feenstra and Brower 2008)

<i>Circle the number that most closely matches your feelings toward each of the following statements. Although questions may appear similar, please consider each on its own. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal).</i>							
	<i>1=not at all</i>			<i>7=a great deal</i>			
1. To what extent do you feel you understand your God-given identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. To what extent do you feel that you understand your own purpose in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. To what extent do you feel confused about how your identity is being shaped.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. To what extent do you feel you contribute to God's plan for the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. To what extent do you feel confused about where God might be leading you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. To what extent do you feel you will fit in your own unique place in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. To what extent to you feel that you are obedient to where God is leading you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. To what extent do you feel you feel the directions you've taken in your life have helped you understand God's purpose for the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table A4—Continued

9. To what extent to you feel you understand the gifts you've acquired.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. To what extent are you confused about where your life is taking you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. To what extent do you feel that your purpose is connected to God's vision for the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. To what extent do you feel the directions you've taken have helped you to understand God's purpose for your life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. To what extent do you feel that God is placing you where He chooses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. To what extent do you feel you understand your natural talents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. To what extent do you feel you understand your place in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. To what extent are you unsure of how you could contribute to God's plan for the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. To what extent do you feel you live all of your life to the glory of God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX 7

FINAL INSTRUMENTATION

Part 1: Demographic Questions

1. What is your age? I am _____ years old.
2. School year/class: _____
3. Gender: ___male ___female
4. Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?
___yes ___no ___not sure
5. Are you currently a member of a church? ___yes ___no

Part 2: Vectors in Calling Survey

For each of the following statements below, please circle the number that best indicates how well this item describes your personal experience. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (this is not true of me) to 7 (this is very true of me).

	<i>1=not true of me 7=very true of me</i>						
1. I spend time getting to know God through Bible study, prayer, and worship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. There is work in this world which God has invited or selected me to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am being obedient to God's leading in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I have made significant changes in my life based on what I believe God has asked me to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	<i>1=not true of me 7=very true of me</i>						
5. I have discovered that God's plans for me give me greater joy and satisfaction than my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. God has given me a strong sense of direction for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I pray about significant decisions before I make them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My life's direction and plans for the future are a result of God's call.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. God has given me a passion to do certain things with my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My relationship with God helps me know who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I have discovered specific interests and abilities in my life that I know God wants to use.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Others have confirmed that they see a God-given direction in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I have spent time reflecting on my past experiences and relationships to learn more about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. My faith helps me notice and understand the needs of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I have developed my goals in life around God's purposes in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I feel led to do something about a need that is in the world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I have discovered a kind of work I can do that gives me deep gladness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Whatever I do in life, I feel it is important that I serve others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I look for ways to represent God in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Other people have helped me discover the part I can play in this world.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I feel that my life is part of a noble mission for a greater good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I have discovered needs in the world I am seeking to address.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. God has led me to embrace a particular need or cause in which to invest myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 4: Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri et al 1995)

Your honest answer to each item is very important. There is no right or wrong answer, but for the scale to be useful, you should choose the answer that seems to fit you best. Please circle the response that is most true for you.

*A = strongly disagree B = moderately disagree C = disagree
D = agree E = moderately agree F = strongly agree*

1. I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.
A B C D E F
2. I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.
A B C D E F
3. I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.
A B C D E F
4. There has never been a need to question my values.
A B C D E F
5. I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.
A B C D E F
6. My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.
A B C D E F
7. I will always vote for the same political party.
A B C D E F
8. I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.
A B C D E F
9. I have engaged in several discussions concerning behavior involved in dating relationships.
A B C D E F
10. I have considered different political views thoughtfully.
A B C D E F
11. I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.
A B C D E F
12. My values are likely to change in the future.
A B C D E F

13. When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.
A B C D E F
14. I am not sure what type of dating relationship is best for me.
A B C D E F
15. I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.
A B C D E F
16. Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.
A B C D E F
17. I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.
A B C D E F
18. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.
A B C D E F
19. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.
A B C D E F
20. I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find ones which are best for me.
A B C D E F
21. I think what I look for in a friend could change in the future.
A B C D E F
22. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.
A B C D E F
23. I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.
A B C D E F
24. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family's structure.
A B C D E F
25. My ideas about men and women's roles will never change.
A B C D E F
26. I have never questioned my political beliefs.
A B C D E F

27. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.

A B C D E F

28. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.

A B C D E F

29. I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.

A B C D E F

30. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.

A B C D E F

31. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.

A B C D E F

32. My beliefs about dating are firmly held.

A B C D E F

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PERCEPTION OF DIVINE CALLING WITH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PURPOSE IN CHRISTIAN ADOLESCENTS

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Chair: Dr. Brian C. Richardson

This dissertation explored the possibility of quantifying and measuring the experience of divine calling to develop and utilize a biblically based instrument, the Vectors of Calling Survey (VCS), with older Christian adolescents to discover the extent of their encounter with God's call. The measure was also used to explore the relationship between calling, identity development, and purpose in life.

Divine calling was identified as a life-shaping experience for Christian adolescents, available to all believers, and applicable to all of life. The need for divine calling was juxtaposed to critical issues in post-modern adolescent development, such as ambiguity, adult abandonment, excessive choices, and superficial spirituality. The effect of calling was compared to the psychological concepts of identity, positive development, purpose, and transcendence. A conceptualization of calling was developed from a review of the biblical, historical and practical dimensions of divine calling. The study endorsed a perspective of calling as the intersection of vectors, including listening to God, discovering self, and embracing the world's needs.

The development of the VCS included field testing, item analyses, revisions, and validation. The research procedures of the study were explained, including the administration of the VCS with the Ego Process Identity Questionnaire and the Purpose in Life Test to freshman students at three Christian universities.

An analysis of findings provided details about the sample and the statistical results. Data from the VCS indicated a sense of divine calling was largely present in the research sample, likely to be expressed by beliefs more than behaviors, and positively associated with identity achievement and purpose in life. A surprise was the significant correlation between foreclosure and a sense of calling. Suggestions for improvements of the research design were offered.

Among the conclusions derived from the study were these: (1) a strong sense of calling strengthens identity; (2) calling has broader application than pre-defined ministry roles; and (3) a sense of divine calling can be measured. Implications included the need to advocate calling and to study calling from a developmental perspective. Suggestions for further study included the effects of calling and the facilitation of personal receptiveness to calling.

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