

followers to come together and form His “church” (Acts 1-2).

The next time someone tells you they don’t like “organized” religion (the church); ask them if they like organized health care (hospitals); and organized education (schools); for their family.

Organizations require leaders and that is what Jesus is doing here. As we put it, these men were being “called to preach”. Jesus needed help when He preached in Judah for six months; and it seems His six new followers, helped Him off and on; dividing time between this and spending time with their families and their jobs. It all changed here. They were told to “leave their nets” (their vocations) and follow Him full time.

Church leaders are called “**Pastor-teachers**” in Ephesians 4:9. Their main calling is to teach and preach the Bible. In Acts 20 they are called, “**elders**” (v17) and “**overseers**” (v28). They are responsible for the work of the churches they are called to lead (Hebrews 13:7; 17).

No one **decides** to become a church leader. Early on, Paul “**appointed**” leaders (Acts 14:23), but in Acts 20, he said it was really the Holy Spirit who “**appointed them overseers**” (v28). A continuous miracle for the past 2,000 years, that goes largely unnoticed, is that people in each generation become aware of a call from God. They cannot silence it or refuse if they want to remain faithful to God. Paul said God “set him apart before he was born, to preach” and said, “**Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel**” (Galatians 1: 15-16 /1 Corinthians 9:1).

The roots of this are found in the Hebrew prophets who became the “conscience” of Jewish religion. God called Moses when he was 80 to be His prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10) and the one to free his people from slavery (Exodus 3). Jeremiah was probably in his teens when he said the “**word of the Lord came to him**” and

said, “I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations before you were born” (1:1-3).

Jeremiah’s ministry was hard, but he couldn’t quit. In chapter 20 he told God He had “seduced - tricked” him into becoming a prophet (v7). He said, If I say to myself that I will not speak in His name (God) anymore; it (the message) becomes a fire shut up in my bones (v9).

Wisely, the Bible tells local churches to have “qualifications” and “examine” those who feel they are called (1 Timothy 3). This is why denominations have councils, committees, etc. to see if they can give a person their stamp of approval. Some may say no group has the right to keep someone from preaching. That is right; but a group appointed by the church, has not only the right, but the responsibility under God, to examine those who will lead their churches.

THE CALL TO HELP

Jesus and the Twelve preached all over Galilee for two and one half years and Luke says, “**There were some women with them who ministered to them and provided financial support**” (Luke 8:1-3). We all have a part in the work of the church. It is a team. Some of these ladies came from the families who met that first year in Capernaum.

In our churches, we “praise” Jesus and talk about how much we love Him. Words are cheap and He says, “**The one who loves Me, obeys My commands**” (John 14:23). That means doing our part in His church. Jesus also said we are His *friends* if we do what He says (John 15:14).

We love to sing, “What a friend I have in Jesus”, but the question is, can Jesus say, “What a friend I have in Bob or Sue, etc.”

A patrolman pulled an elderly lady over for doing ninety miles an hour. She said, “Sir, if I don’t drive ninety, I forget where I’m going”.