

BUT I DON'T FEEL CALLED

Paul, the Apostle, said, "*Don't be unwise (vague), but understand (firmly grasp) what the will of the Lord is.*" Eph 5:17

Volumes have been written on the subject. Yet, before they go out of print, others have taken their place. And we still want to read more about this elusive something known as "God's will for my life."

A HANDFUL OF STRAWY GRASPS

1) THE LORD TOLD ME... And so we begin preparation, until...something goes wrong! Or it becomes too hard! Then! "GOD changed His mind!" No, we don't say that. It sounds...so...unGod. We do say, "He closed that door!" Which is saying the same thing. And we have brought God down to the capricious level of man. A word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, a prophecy to confirm His will—YES! But the "revolving door" of God's will—NO!

2) FINGER POINTING & PROMISE CARD DEALING...Out of context Scripture is a dangerous game to play in decision making. I do know of a man who was seeking the Lord for a wife. (This is good.) As he was reading Peter's Letters. "*Grace be unto you*" became His promise of his wife's name! It worked! But one could also "finger point" to this combination: "*Judas went and hanged himself.*" "*Go thou and do likewise.*"

3) YOU SEEK FOR A SIGN...Though, again, signs have been used in God's guidance of men (the wise men), our vulnerability to natural or supernatural phenomenon puts them—if used by themselves—in a very precarious category.

4) LORD BLESS MY PLANS...We in America, regard individualism as a highly-valued ideal. Though our heroes of Buffalo Bill and Babe Ruth have been replaced by the latest sports figure or space traveler, it is still the unique—only I did it—of the hero that makes them stand out.

Is it any wonder, then, that the American Christian approaches God with his "very own plans?"

The focus of "CALL" is not, "me and my plans", but *His Will*, and my participation in that Will. Esther struggled over the issue of losing her head, whereas Morticai said: *God will save His people. But who knows but that He wants you to participate in that salvation?*

5) DO YOUR OWN THING. After all, God isn't that interested in your plans! Unfortunately, others have capitulated, and having fallen prey to the spirit of this age, are saying, "Live by the Good Book. But beyond that, use your own God-given judgment."

It is impossible for me to understand or believe that the One who attends the funeral of every sparrow does not have a greater care than that in the plans of my life!

Well! Enough of that! We *do* want to walk in our day-by-day decisions as Christ did, Who said, "*I work the works of the One Who sent Me.*" John 9:4 And again, "*I do nothing of Myself, but My Father has taught Me...*" John 8:28

In a sequence of three "CALLS", I would like to present a "firm grasp" and a precise answer to the excuse, **BUT I DON'T FEEL CALLED!**

CALL TO MISSION

God reveals Himself in the Word as an outgoing, missionary God. "*For God so loved the world...*" "*He is not willing that any perish...*" "*Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?*" "*Tell them, I AM sent you...*" He is involved in the lives of people, so that all may call Him Father.

Jesus went out to all sorts of people. The children sat on His knees; the prostitute washed His feet with her tears; the religious leader sought His counsel by night; he touched the leper. He refused to be bound by human social barriers!

And the comfort, teaching and power of the Holy Spirit is with us now, and even to the end of the world.

"*To a nation that did not call on My name, I said, 'Here am I. Here am I.' All day long I have held out My hands...*" Isaiah 65:1-2. He is a Person who reaches out to people.

The individuals that the Reaching Out God chooses and calls, then, have to become outgoing people, also. Jesus said it succinctly: "*As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you!*" John 20:21.

The mission of the Church is Outreach. Once the newly formed church (or movement of churches) gets over the initial euphoria of "I'm saved!", it needs to get down to the business of the Kingdom. Since God is a missionary God, His Church must be a missionary Church. Every Christian "accepted" a "call to mission" when he became a follower of Christ—whether he realized it or not!

The Church of Jesus Christ is a militant Body. There is no room for detente; no allowance for "peaceful" coexistence with other religious tradition. YES, the Gospel of Christ is an all-inclusive message of hope—Whosoever will, may come. But it is an equally all-exclusive doctrine—No man comes to the Father but by Me.

"*All authority in Heaven and earth has been given to Me,*" Jesus said. "*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...*" These marching orders have never been rescinded. The Church does not need to wait for additional guidance before it goes out to make disciples. **BOTH** in your hometown, **AND** in the surrounding counties or states, **AND** to the most hated and despised of all people (Samaritans), **AND** to all nations. (As contrasted by the totally erroneous idea of First *here*, then *there*, then *there*, then *there*.)

In this general sense, then, every committed Christian, as a disciple of Christ, is called to the Mission of the Church: Outreach.

CALL TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

In an equally clear analogy, all Christians are called to exercise some function in the local fellowship of believers. The Spirit distributes—as He chooses—a diversity of gifts. As the individual "exercises" within the Body, it becomes evident to him *and* the Body which gift(s) he has been equipped with by the Holy Spirit. As he functions within that Body those spiritual gifts are developed.

In a most dramatic way, Joseph (increaser), who had joined himself to the Body of believers in Jerusalem, having come from Cyprus, when his gifting was

recognized, was given a new name, Barnabas, which means "Son of consolation, exhortation, encouragement, comfort." Quite a gift! Thank You, Holy Spirit!

Scripture is also clear that—from God's perspective—the gifts that man looks on as the more prominent, are less. And the less honorable, more feeble, uncomely parts are to be given greater honor. That there should be no schism in the Body.

Now He places certain apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (each with their giftings) in the Body "*...to equip and train the saints for the work of the ministry!*" The end result is that every believer is "perfected" to fulfill some function in the Body of Christ. Some become "mouths"; some a listening ear (a much-lacking function in the Church!); the "smellers" of trouble; the pituitary gland! And even the appendix that seems to be just "hanging on" to that lower intestine! *All* are needed for their respective function.

(Medical science still declares some organs—vestige, left over from some pre-human existence. It is interesting that as they are learning more and more about how the human body functions, fewer and fewer parts are called "vestige"!

Do I have to draw out the parallel? I will! Some pastors look over their congregation, declaring this member or that one—vestige! But as they learn more about how the Body functions, fewer and fewer parts are "hangovers" from their previous sinful life!

CALL TO A LOCATION

Everyone is born to live somewhere! (Not a very brilliant declaration, but it had to be said somehow!) We grow up and become a part of that culture.

We experience our counter-cultures, but the Hippies of the 60's became the upwardly mobile of the 80's. They settled down in their 3.4 bedroom houses in the suburbs with 2.3 children and 3.2 cars, etc! And today they are the Boomers who are starting to retire. Enculturization did its work for the perpetuation of society.

Until they become a part of the Body of Christ. And the leadership begins recognizing their giftings in relating to people of other cultures; their facility with language; their ability to communicate the simplicity of the Gospel; their heart beating with God's, "*not willing that any perish.*"

A MISSIONARY CALL

As these three "CALLS" are merged into one, they constitute a missionary call. A missionary is a Christian called (just like all others) to make disciples of all nations; he manifests social, professional and spiritual gifts appropriate to bridging cultural distinctives; he is open to the location change necessary to fulfill that *call*.

But it is at this point that many lose out, for they have somehow been trained—NOT until I hear a voice from Heaven! or, When I see the handwriting on the wall!

We can't counter that with a simplistic: "Go where the needs are!" For there are thousands of needy ministries around the world asking for come along side help.

How, then, do we get from "here" to "there"? From where we are at the moment to where God wants us to be?

A look at the Book of Acts with this question in mind will give us at least six different ways that *call to location* occurred, and could occur today:

1) **SUPERNATURAL DIRECTION:** Acts 13:2 is clear that church leaders heard the Holy Spirit say, "I want Barnabas and Saul." Later, Paul had a vision of the Macedonia man appealing, "*Come over and help.*" Acts 16:9

A friend several years ago was attending Prairie Bible Institute in Canada, a school with a strong cross-cultural vision. Direct supernatural guidance came to his friend the first night he was there: He had a dream. A plane appeared in a cloudless sky. It began skywriting! One word: NEPAL! Through an amazing set of circumstances, upon graduation, he was invited by nationals to this otherwise difficult-to-get-into country!

2) **"SANCTIFIED" COMMON SENSE:** Paul's second journey, however, was initiated by a sensible, responsible plan to go back and check up on how the brothers were doing in the cities they had previously visited. Acts 15:36

From a vast number of unreached people groups that have been identified in recent years—even delineating their degree of openness to the Gospel, a friend of mine made a logical determination to prepare himself to minister to one of them. He, and his family, with their church's blessing, were able to leave within a year.

3) **CIRCUMSTANTIAL GUIDANCE:** There wasn't a Christian in Jerusalem following the martyrdom of Stephen who cried out, "But I don't feel called!" When the persecution came, they split! Acts 8:1; 11:19 Also, when Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome, Aquila didn't "go into a season of prayer" with Priscilla over it; they left! Acts 18:2

A pastor friend in central California had established a good ministry among a group of "field workers". When he heard they had been picked up and bussed back to Mexico, his first response was disappointment. When I pointed out that he had just sent out his first missionaries, his countenance brightened.

4) **INVITATION BY BELIEVERS:** It appears the Macedonia "man" turned out to be a woman! One Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira! And when she and her household were baptized, she "*constrained Paul and his team to stay there.*" Acts 16:14

So strong would be the church's desire for Paul to stay in Ephesus, yet, so he could keep his schedule to arrive in Jerusalem for the feast, he had the elders meet him in Miletus, instead. Acts 20:17

Third World Christians, today, are standing—so to speak—on a Macedonia shore. They are crying out a *new* Macedonia Call: Come over and help us. Teach us the Word in such a way that we can go out and teach others. And as God is raising up Third World Christians as the new missionary force, the very best thing we in America can do is respond to their invitation to come!

5) **SENT BY A CHURCH:** When the church in Jerusalem heard of the revival going on in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to "check it out." Acts 11:22

A key to responsible action and accountability is the church's initial involvement with the missionary call. Too often, the church leadership is the "last to know" when one or another of their "members" goes cross-culturally.

Church leadership, *identify, train, send and support* those members of your Body "gifted" in ministry to the uttermost parts.

Even young churches can participate in God's will of guiding missionaries. The brothers of Thessalonica and Berea, sensing the danger of persecution, sent Paul away. Acts 17:10, 14

Over the past many years, I have worked with many individuals wanting to go to the fields of the world. Without exception, those who have a strong sense of their church sending them, go with a greater confidence. Though some have gone without—and have done well in the field, there is always an “emptiness” in their feeling of moral support.

6) **SENT BY MISSIONARY LEADERS:** It is clear from Luke’s writings, that as Paul’s ministry team grew (at one point eight men were traveling with him), it became his responsibility to send them here or there. Timothy and Erastus were sent to Macedonia from Ephesus. Acts 19:22

When we first applied to Wycliffe Bible Translators we requested to be sent to Columbia. We had been there; had talked with the principal; we had a good “feeling” about the place. When the Wycliffe board decided to accept me as a missionary teacher, though, they saw a greater need for us in Peru. We allowed them to guide us in this way.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

In an essay of this length, it would be futile to think to cover the enormity of this subject—all the ramifications of knowing His will:

The integrity of the upright shall guide them;

Conditional (if/them) guidance;

The sovereignty of God;

The will of satan;

“Let this mind be in you...”;

A voice behind you saying, “This is the way...”;

Thy Word is a Lamp to my feet.

Subjects as these, and more, bring us the whole Counsel of God.

But one final thought that I believe encompasses all considerations of His will for my life:

LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE (ACT AS UMPIRE) CONTINUALLY IN YOUR HEARTS—DECIDING AND SETTLING WITH FINALITY ALL QUESTIONS THAT RISE IN MINDS... Col 3:15 AMP

“My peace I give to you: not as the world gives, give I to you.” The peace that Christ gives is not pictured in the calm, pastoral scene of sheep by still waters, nor of a newborn infant warm in the safe arms of its mother.

It is rather a picture of a raging river of life coursing between its banks, now through a mountain gorge, now across the open plains; there is deep-flowing, sure motivation that keeps surging in spite of surface splashing of uncertainty. The winds of adversity can whip up the waves to white-cap ferocity. Yet the river keeps moving by the force of the current. His peace in my heart is that current, assuring me that I am in the flow of His will.

“The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wills.” Pro 21:1