

V. WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF GOD'S CALLING

The process of hearing from God is at least two-fold: humility or emptiness and knowing the will of God. This is critical for understanding the three levels of calling as well the translation of these into a specific job or activity.

Another issue that is critical to functioning in our calling is that of spiritual gifts. God has given all of us gifts to be used for ministry. The use of our gifts will be realized when we are fulfilling our calling. "How can I know?" is a question that most of us ask. We will give you a list of practical thoughts to help guide you in the process.

Fenelon *Let Go*

The letters collected in this book were originally penned by François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, the Archbishop of Cambrai, France, during the seventeenth century. While in the office of Archbishop, Fénelon had the opportunity of becoming the spiritual advisor of a small number of earnest people at the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, who sought, under Fénelon's wise direction, to live a life of true spirituality in the midst of a court life which was shamelessly immoral. During his association with these people, he had many opportunities to write, encouraging them to press toward the goal of Christ likeness.

Absolute Trust Is the Shortest Road to God.

I have no doubt that God considers you to be one of His friends; otherwise He would not trust you with so many crosses, sufferings and humiliations. Crosses are God's means of drawing souls closer to Himself. And these crosses accomplish His purposes much more rapidly and effectually than all of our personal efforts put together. Crosses destroy self-love at its very root, down in the depths of the human spirit where we can hardly detect it. But God knows where it is lodged, and He attacks it in its greatest strongholds.

If we have strength and faith enough to trust ourselves completely into the hands of God, and follow Him wherever He leads us there will be no need of stretching and straining to reach perfection. But since we are so weak in faith, and always stopping along the way to ask questions, our journey is lengthened and we get behind in spiritual development. So you see how important it is for you to abandon yourself as completely as possible to God, and continue to do so until your last breath. And don't be afraid. He will never leave you.

George Mueller

Knowing the Will of God

Founder and maintainer for over half a century of the new orphan-houses of Asbely Down, Bristol, England, cared for over 10,000 orphans at a cost that exceeded eight million dollars. Mueller never once asked for anything from anyone - but God. Time after time, Mueller's faith was tested, but God honored that faith and met his needs. Prayer was the key to his strength, success and ministry.

George Mueller mentioned these things that helped him:

- He sincerely sought God's direction.
- He waited patiently on God until he had a word from God.
- He looked to the Holy Spirit (Ghost) to teach him through the word.

He knew the following things led to his making mistakes:

- Lacking honesty of heart
- Lacking uprightness before God
- Impatience to wait for God
- Preferred the counsel of men over the declarations of Scripture

Here is how he summed up the way he entered into a "heart" relationship with God and learned to discern God's voice:

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the knowledge of what His will is.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His Will to me aright.
6. Thus, (1) through prayer to God, (2) The study of the Word, and (3) reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so difficult to get to the point of surrender and humility?
2. Why does God seem to honor this?
3. Which of Mueller's directions is significant to you and why?
4. Have you ever seen this process work?
5. What issues are you currently facing where this process could be applied?

Arthur Miller

Spiritual Gifts

Thoughts on Christians and Careers

So the issue for meaningful Christianity is our work for God's Kingdom on earth built on such a passionate, demanding foundation of love?

God's answer is to endow each of us with gifts and a powerful desire to be of particular use and service. For it is only when these gifts are fully engaged that we pour our heart, soul, strength, and mind into a calling. God literally shapes our heart, soul, strength, and mind through His gifting of us, to be His co-creators to redeem the world.

We love and relate to God through the means He gives us. If we are gifted at performing, be it entertainment, athletics, recitation, trial, or preaching, our relationship with God revolves around our preparing for, performing, and coming down afterwards. If we are a gifted programmer, we relate to God through all the precision and complexity and logic required in our gift of love. If we are gifted at traffic management, appraising horses, mineral deposits or likely strategy of the competition; selling ties or telecommunications systems...our relationship to God is or should be worked out through those activities engaging His gifts to us.

QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on why spiritual gifts are necessary and critical to my fulfilling my calling?
2. What are your spiritual gifts?
3. How are you using them?

THE PRACTICAL PROCESS

In the individual calling arena of our life there are a number of factors that need to be considered to determine God's call. These principles are like lights on a runway as they begin to line up, it gives you a sense of God. A practical perspective that will help one determine God's call. Here are some thoughts that have been developed from the input of Godly leaders that function in the marketplace daily with who people are making business and vocational decisions. They have stood the test of time and experience.

General Perspectives

1. *God doesn't rush the process (Psalms 46:10).*

It is often said God guides and Satan rushes. Watch out when organizations or people put pressure on you to move too fast. Most of the time, speed is not of God. Allow time to pray and get counsel.

2. *The need is not the call.*

Just because there is a need, it doesn't mean you are called to it. This often is given as the justification of my going. It must not be my only reason or confirmation. Yes, when God calls, there is a need, but I can't respond to every need.

3. *Stay put until God has clearly called (1 Cor. 7:17,21).*

God calls us to a vocation (including a specific job, location, etc.). We are to stay where He has placed us. Just because the "grass is greener" or an opportunity arises, it does not mean a change is God's will or His call. This is the world's approach. If God desires a change for you, it will become very clear as we spend time with Him and these principles begin to line up.

4. *Our calling is generally an expansion of the ministry or direction we are about.*

The calling is compatible with our giftedness. Most of the time God doesn't radically take you out of one environment or ministry and place you in another. Although, there are exceptions, our calling often is an extension of the work/ministry where you are functioning. This calling will be compatible to our gifts and giftedness. God will put the desire in our hearts. God does not send us to Africa unless He places a desire/burden to go there.

5. *If God is calling you, He will provide (Phil. 4:19).*

Our calling should not be economically motivated, in fact, often when one is called from the business world to vocational Christian work, there is a lack of desire for making money. Over time, if there's a lack of provision, it could be one of 3 things: (1) God might be proving my character; (2) I may not be asking; (3) God is changing the call. God speaks through resources.

6. God's call will fulfill His purposes.

At the heart of God's call is people. We are not called to function as a lone-ranger, independent of people.

7. I hear the call of God only as I'm "Intimate with God"

Our vocational calling should flow out of an intimate relationship with God and His command to go make disciples. Intimacy with God is more important than a job. If I am not completely obedient to God, He will not disclose Himself to me (John 14:21).

8. All are called.

God calls every believer to a vocation which becomes the arena where we function as instruments of the gospel. There is no higher calling, i.e. pastor, etc. All are equal in God's eyes. God calls men and women to secular and spiritual functions alike - there is no difference to Him. What does make a difference to God is our motives and how we carry out the function.

Specific Steps in Hearing The Call of God

1. Total Surrender

The clarity of God's calling is heard and understood only after we have died to our vision of the calling. If we are not neutral before God (died to self), it is easy to manipulate or rationalize our own desires and give God the credit for it. The call is never a matter of pride or ambition - that's a fast way to disaster.

2. Confirmation from God's word.

Careful attention needs to be given to God and His word for the confirmation. This will come naturally. This is not for me to look at specific verses and manipulate them to reinforce a previously held desire. God will speak if we will but listen. The call is never outside a biblical foundation.

3. Peace

I, my wife and family will be at peace. God does not bring confusion (a lack of peace) when calling someone. If there is confusion, lack of peace, in the message - you can conclude God is not moving yet (it is either not yet the time or not His direction).

This peace comes from God, in spite of sometimes our ability to logically explain the details. A calling of God is a supernatural word of the Father.

4. *Confirmation of the call by others. (Counsel is sought) (Proverbs 15:22)*

There is wisdom in many counselors. Make sure you have Godly counselors that know you, that don't have a vested interest in the outcome (objective 3rd party) and will not just say yes. Be careful not to try and implement all that the counselors say as you will have many opinions and possibly conflicting advice. After receiving counsel, you are ultimately and totally responsible for the decision before God. You must be totally honest as you get counsel - if you only give part of the picture - you manipulate the outcome.

5. *Pray, Pray, Pray*

Much prayer is fundamental to hearing the call of God. In fact, it would be hard to pray too much. Prayer is the real work. God is not playing games with us - He will make His will known.

6. *Circumstances*

Circumstances play a significant role in the direction and timing of God's call. For example, if I sense God's call and it involves a move, yet my reasonably priced house doesn't sell, the message may be one of three things - not the right time, don't make the move (a change of calling) or God didn't call. It is when we manipulate the circumstances, to force our desire of outcome, we are beyond God's call and most likely in the flesh.

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