

Missions – Deciding Where to Serve



Spiritual Gifts

- Most people start their service in the local context where they were saved (Paul in Damascus)
- It is in this context that they develop their spirituality – including their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)
- These spiritual gifts, as they mature, become a guide as to the nature of any future service.
- Gifts guide how we should serve in the Body of Christ. For instance an ‘eye’ trying to serve as a ‘hand’ will just get bruised and lose its sight.
- Gifts are given ‘as the Holy Spirit wills’ and thus are also an indication of God’s will

Natural Abilities

- God has often prepared us for service ‘from our mother’s womb’ and given us natural abilities that are relevant to missionary work e.g. skill as a nurse or physician
- These natural abilities need to be sanctified (of ego) and given over to the Lord to use as He pleases.
- Christ has to be put at the center – and the natural ability used in His service, or it can rapidly ‘go out of tune’.
- Natural abilities can be lifted to a new level by the Holy Spirit: Apollos was a mighty natural orator, but it was when he got filled with the Spirit that he became a mighty apostle.
- Natural abilities are only at best a ‘rough guide’ to God’s will

Relationships & Connections

- All ministry involves the 33 'one another' commandments of the New Testament (love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another etc)
- You can only carry out such commands if you have solid relationships. **YOU CANNOT MINISTER TO PEOPLE THAT YOU SIMPLY CANNOT RELATE TO**
- God may give you a special (fruitful) ministry relationship connection to a group of people – prisoners, the homeless, university students, Japanese, Koreans etc.
- These fruitful and blessed relationships are a very good guide as to who you should minister to.

Measure Of Faith

- Every person has a certain measure of faith (Romans 12:3)
- Our ministry is bounded by what we believe is possible. If you think it is 'absolutely impossible' for you to do something you probably will not even make the attempt to do it.
- On the other hand God may give us the faith to believe Him for extraordinary things in a certain area e.g. for soul-winning or for finances or for answers to prayer
- Those areas where God has given us maximum faith are most probably the areas in which God wants us to serve
- The Devil will attack our measure of faith and try to make us discouraged but we must pray hard and maintain our zeal

Calling

- Most missionaries have a sense of call to a particular area of ministry (e.g. Zimbabwe) or to an ethnic group (e.g. Han Chinese) or even to a certain kind of ministry (e.g. seminary training).
- The call may be a sudden event or a slowly growing conviction of God's will. Beware of being swept along by crusade-style rhetoric & emotion.
- A missionary call is generally (but not always) spiritual, emotional and logical and involves an act of faith:
 - Spiritual – there is a sense that it is from God
 - Emotional – it provides strong motivation to act
 - Logical – it makes solid sense to the person who receives it
 - Faith – there is a need to rely on God, there is a perceived 'risk' that can only be met by the fulfillment of God's promise.
- Calling is validated by fruitfulness. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, which was his calling, was successful. However his attempts to minister to the Jews (which was not his calling) were unfruitful and met with disaster.

Special Leadings – Macedonian Calls

- God may ‘interrupt’ a general call (such as Paul’s call to be an apostle to the Gentiles) with a more specific call such as ‘come over to Macedonia and help us’ (Acts 16)
- Philip was pulled out of the Samaritan revival to meet the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8)
- We should always be spiritually sensitive (and not too programmed) so that we can take hold of these opportunities for fruitful ministry
- After the special leading is over the person goes back to their usual (more long-term) calling

Words From God

- God may speak a special word to you concerning your ministry. For instance Timothy was told to minister according to the prophecies made about him by the elders when they laid hands on him (1 Timothy 1:18, 4:14)
- Write down things that senior Christian leaders of wisdom and maturity (elders) say to you in all seriousness about your ministry – and occasionally review them.
- Do not take any notice of very negative people
- Do not feel that you need approval or permission from men
- Do listen for positive, faith-filled words that come from the “Father of Light” in whom there is no shadow of turning.

Training

- Missionary work cannot be undertaken without training – both pre-field and on the field.
- This can include bible college, language and cultural learning, leadership and communication, and even training in skills such as computer security, house construction or drilling for water!
- The training should be aligned with the gifts and the calling of the individual missionary
- Training can also become a guide to God's will. A person who, in language training, is found to be tone deaf, should not be sent to an area where tonal languages are used (e.g. China)