

May 2000: The Call of God

by Aaron Greenway

On the hearts of many in the Body of Christ today is the issue of what it is God wants them to do, where God wants them to go. This has also been an issue with me in the past two years and is still an issue as I continue to seek God's will for my own life.

God's will for our lives is certainly real and relevant and needs to be addressed. No doubt that God calls us to certain things: counseling, missions, music, teaching, pastoring, lay leadership, etc. The list goes on. God has a special part for each of His children to play as He exercises His sovereign plan in the world. But I think there is a confusion in what all this means and how we respond to it.

Let me give you a scenario:

To many Christian universities and seminaries in America, Christians come from churches all over the country to be "obedient" to God's "call" on their lives. They step out and come by faith. When they get here, they take a full load in school, work to pay for their expenses, and they are probably even doing ministry in a church somewhere. But as they focus on their ministries and on getting their degrees so they can go onto to a "bigger" ministry, many times, they let their quiet times slip and they allow their relationships with others to slip. How they respond to God and others has changed, not for the better. This is very easy to do, because they (we) are so busy. However, things continue to build. Sin, in some form, creeps in. As a result, they become even more resistant to others, hiding in the shadows, not willing to be "exposed." And the things in their lives, that displease the Lord, cause them to build walls, not allowing anyone to make inroads into their lives so they can be healed.

**God is not concerned with
what we do for Him
as much as He is in
what we become
because of it.**

These same people graduate and are given pastorates in our churches all over the country. God

blessees and many are won to Christ. Christian school and seminary seemed to work! These Christian leaders have accomplished their goals in true American, task-oriented fashion. But what was brewing below the surface has come to a boil. Before you know it, you see headlines like these: “Local Pastor Asked to ‘Step Down’ After Being Leveled with Sexual Accusations” or “Church Treasurer Caught Stealing from Church.”

Obviously, there are other scenarios. But, let me ask a question: Do people who seem to follow God’s call vocationally automatically glorify Him in doing so? Do people who win countless people to Christ have ministries that glorify the Lord? To be more specific, do we measure success by outward appearances? I believe that we have the notion that God’s call on our lives or God’s will for our lives is simply to operate within the confines of a vocational calling and in what is quantifiable evidence of that ministry. While this is true, in part, to take this view only of ministry is deadly to our witness.

To first debunk the idea that a ministry’s success hinges only on outward success, **let me give a few examples** that confer to the opposite:

Jeremiah never had one convert in His entire life. Did his ministry glorify the Lord?

How about **Job** who underwent huge loss? Was He in the middle of God’s will?

How about **Jesus** who in one week had what seemed to be the whole city on His side only to have them turn against Him a few days later. Was Jesus a failure? Was He in the center of His Father’s will?

We have a tendency to look at outward success and determine that a person’s heart is right because of what we see as “results.” However, I am becoming more and more convicted and convinced that God does not call us to a vocational ministry because we have anything to contribute. God can use us or not use us. He is quite capable of getting the job done irregardless of our participation. God does not use us because He has no other alternative. On the contrary, God uses us in order to *change us*. He uses us so that we may be conformed to the image of His Son (Ephesians 1:3-4). If we lose this perspective, we are in deep, DEEP trouble!

Based on this perspective, God is not concerned with what we do for Him as much as He is in what we become because of it. If our lives are filled with secrets, hypocrisy, bitterness, lust and we try to hide from God and the accountability of the Body of Christ, we are inevitably going to shame the name of Christ. To do otherwise is going to require that we are exposed, that we are REAL (See March 2000). We are going to have to be willing to take the dreams, the ministry goals and throw them all out the window if our dreams ever become our god, where we are worshipping the dream and not the Dream-maker.

Take note that we must be laid bare before our God (Isaiah 32:11) and others so that our ministries become an outgrowth of a genuine relationship with God. Furthermore, we cannot see ministry simply as a slot to be filled. It is never just a direction to go. It is never a job or a vocation. It is the result of an intimacy with God. And it is accomplished through our lives so that inevitably we can be more like Him. In this process, the world sees something authentic and then they want it! Ministry and the call of God cannot be detached from the reality of our hearts.

So what are we willing to do? Are we resistant to being exposed? Are we willing to go anywhere and do anything to have more of Jesus. Are we bypassing what may seem to be “ineffective” or “irrelevant” ministry for “visions of grandeur?” If we do, we have robbed God of the glory He deserves in our own lives, and no ministry is able to cover up that blemish. Remember, if we are not being broken, we are being hardened and ultimately, we will pay the price.

Today, let us be laid bare before God. Let us learn to be open to Him and with others in the Body of Christ. Let us to be willing to lay down the hate, the lust, the bitterness, the lack of concern for others, the apathy in our relationship with the Creator. One day, He will expose us anyway (Romans 2:16). We can make that day easier or harder. The choice is ours.