

A Bethany International Publication

coMISSION

MAGAZINE

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The coMISSION Magazine is published biannually by Bethany International

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A Message from the President

Ten years ago, on April 23rd, 2006, my first day on the job as President, I met with a major donor to tell him that we would not be selling Bethany's campus. Though he had been pushing for this, Bethany's board did not feel it was God's leading. This campus should again be "filled with young people" training for missions. God is faithful and has been giving amazing confirmation of that decision, as Bethany is entering a new season of mission opportunity.

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder...of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end." (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 ESV) To see the light of God's kingdom shine into the places where darkness has reigned for thousands of years is why Bethany was called into existence in the first place, and why we continue today.

During the second week of March, Bethany mission leaders and partners met in Cambodia to clarify our Engage500 criteria for identifying and reaching people groups with the Gospel:

1. People groups who are less than .5% Christian.
2. People groups with no or very few Christian workers among them (unengaged/under-engaged).
3. Groups in or close to regions where we currently have workers (for sustained engagement).

These are unreached people groups that have been particularly difficult to engage due to geographic remoteness, religious resistance, and political, economic and social instability.

Prayer is essential for the release of new workers, engaging new people groups, and seeing spiritual breakthrough in regions that have "walked in darkness." As the Apostle Paul said, "A wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." (I Corinthians 16:9) To embrace this vision is to contend for spiritual breakthrough. May it be so!

In this CoMission magazine we will share with you amazing impact that has come during this past year. We praise God for the more than 25,000 people who have come to faith in Christ and 1000 new churches in 92 countries. There are thousands of workers serving in remote places, faithfully proclaiming Christ Jesus, and discipling new believers. These workers come from many nations—we're honored to come alongside to help as they are trained and sent.



May God encourage your heart and fill you with vision as you read this edition of CoMission!

Dan H. Brokke
President of Bethany International

MISSION STATEMENT:

To take the church to where it is not by recruiting, equipping, and fielding followers of Jesus who are transformed by the cross, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are effectively prepared with intercultural educational experience, and lead by serving with global partners to transform individuals and communities, delighting God's heart and extending His Kingdom.



DELIGHTING GODS HEART & EXTENDING HIS KINGDOM

WHAT WE HAVE DONE TOGETHER IN 2015-16

A REPORT ON BETHANY INTERNATIONAL'S MINISTRIES & IMPACT

The mission statement of Bethany International is to "take the church to where it is not and help others do the same." This report shares very encouraging and inspiring reports about what the Lord has done through Bethany and its many partners worldwide.

BETHANY GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

- In February 2016 the university was accredited by the Association for Biblical Higher Education.
- August 2016 enrollment is up to 233 students of which 118 freshmen represent the largest class size in BGU's history.
- Students understand the mission of Bethany International to take the church to where it's not.



Elizabeth Greenough, a student, states, "Coming to Bethany was one of the best decisions I have made in my life. I have grown in my walk with the Lord, have learned more about myself, the Bible, and just how much God loves us. Chapel is amazing. The staff cares deeply not only about

our academics, but also our spiritual and physical well-being. Bethany is life changing."

BETHANY GATEWAYS (INTERNATIONAL MISSION)

- Missionaries fielded: 90
- Number of countries where Bethany Gateways Missionaries and BGU Alumni serve: 39
- New missionary candidates in process: 34
- BGU Sophomores preparing for Global Internship: 75



Bethany missionaries Sam & Jonhild Dunya began serving in a small village in Southern Ghana over 20 years ago, with the hopes of planting a church. They not only planted a church in that village, but have seen nearly 150 churches planted over the years. As their vision and concern

turns towards unreached regions, we are working with them to see Ghana transition into a Gateway Access Platform, as they train and launch Ghanaian church planters into the unreached tribes in the surrounding region.

PUBLISH4ALL

- Publish4All has pioneered a high-quality, low-cost print-on-demand system that can be installed and operated anywhere in the world to enable the printing of affordable content at the local level.
- 95 Publish4All Systems have been deployed to 58 countries.



Tim Kelly directs a highly successful Publish4All print center in Nairobi with a Kenyan staff of five. Tim's vision is to see Kenyans with missionary hearts, training other Africans in print-on-demand technology, in order to reach every corner of the African continent with the Gospel message, in print.

CMS-Africa operates a Publish4All system. They state, "We no longer need to keep inventory—saving on space and costs of storage, we can keep revising each book as we get feedback from the field. We can customize each of our publications for the customers. The quality of the product is excellent."

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- Bethany and its international partners work in more than 1,012 people groups in 92 countries around the globe, 269 of which are unreached people groups.
- 300 missionary training schools in 29 countries are preparing nationals to take the Gospel to those who never have heard (shown in the photo are students from one of the schools)
- Launched Engage500 mission goal to engage an additional 231 unreached people groups, for a total of 500 (Engage500). Partners have targeted 53 unreached people groups they plan to engage.
- In 2015 Bethany and its international partners planted about a thousand churches and discipled about 25,000 people.



Bethany has helped the Kale Heywet Church in Ethiopia develop effective cross-cultural missionary training. Seven schools are now preparing missionaries. In the last five years more than 24,000 Muslims have become believers and are on track to see 25,000 people brought to faith in Christ in the next five years. Also, 30 missionaries are serving outside of the country.



BETHANY INTERNATIONAL YEAR END FINANCIAL REPORT

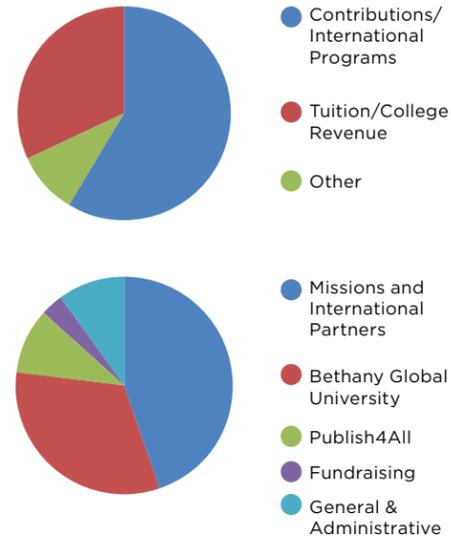
This report provides an overview and accountability regarding how financial resources were utilized to accomplish ministries of Bethany International.

For the year ended June 30, 2016

| REVENUE AND SUPPORT | Preliminary (in 000s) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Contributions/International Programs | \$5,060 |
| Tuition/College Revenue | \$2,736 |
| Other | \$822 |
| Total Revenue | \$8618 |

ANALYSIS OF OPERATING EXPENSES

| Program Expenses | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Missions and International Partners | \$3,840 |
| Bethany Global University | \$2,786 |
| Publish4All | \$833 |
| Supporting Services | |
| Fundraising | \$280 |
| General & Administrative | \$844 |
| Total Expenses | \$8,583 |



PASSING THE TORCH IN INDIA

HOW TWO GENERATIONS
PARTNERED FOR THE SAKE
OF THE UNREACHED

By Sushil Tyagi & Dan Brokke



THE MISSION AGENCY OF BETHANY INTERNATIONAL CHANGES NAME TO BETTER REFLECT LONG-TERM STRATEGY

The mission agency has been known as Bethany International Ministries (BIM) and prior to that Bethany Fellowship Missions (BFF). As we have been examining our foundations and our future, we have seen a critical importance of opening new gateways for mission impact, especially to unreached people groups.

We are happy to now introduce our mission to you as Bethany Gateways, which focuses on our commitment to gaining and providing access to the unreached people groups around the world through the creation of multiple gateway access platforms nearest these peoples.

Through these Gateways, life will be brought to otherwise lifeless places. To this end we are committed, and all that we do is focused on this purpose.

My parents met Joe and Barb Finsaas, Bethany missionaries in North India and Nepal, when they were studying at a seminary in the city of Bareilly, where Joe served as visiting faculty. My father had a great evangelistic zeal and Joe realized it. They started traveling together to many cities of North India preaching the gospel, especially cities on the Nepal-India border. In 1965, my father joined an indigenous missionary society and on his first assignment he was sent to Nepal.

One night my father was arrested by the Nepali police for preaching the gospel and was sent to prison. However, for his release God had already sent Dr. Joe to the city of Kathmandu. When he learned about the arrest of my father, through his close friendship with the king, he got my father released from the prison and immediately sent him to India. This all happened before I was born.

Though in my childhood I never meet Joe and Barb Finsaas, my father always told me about his time with them as one of his memorable life stories. These stories deeply impacted me to make the most important decision of my life either to serve the Lord instead of the world.

After finishing my schooling in 1987, I joined Operation Mobilization's ship ministry. Then, from 1991 to 1998 I ministered in Central Uttar Pradesh, going into towns and villages preaching the gospel. In 1998, I attended a mission-oriented Bible school called SAIACS in Bangalore and graduated in 2000.

In 2005, following the Lord's call, my wife Sara and I started Nicodemus, an organization dedicated to reaching the most unreached Urdu speaking Muslim people groups in 25 cities of North India where there is hardly any Christian presence. Today Nicodemus seeks to share the love of Jesus through educational and medical projects, business as missions, holistic child development and survival programs, skill development and income generation projects, training and leadership development, and women empowerment.

CLOSING THE GENERATIONAL LOOP

In 2014, Sushil attended a mission's conference in Minneapolis and visited Barb Finsaas at Bethany. After more than 45 years, the Tyagi family reconnected with Barb Finsaas, the wife of his father's friend and ministry partner, and opened up a new generation of ministry relationships.

SUSHIL TYAGI is serving as the CEO of Nicodemus ministry with his wife, Sara, and two daughters, Grace and Sharon. They live in Delhi, India.



WE CAN DO MORE TOGETHER

COLLABORATING TO FINISH THE TASK OF WORLD MISSIONS

By Doug Goodmundson

Surely, we can do more together than we can do on our own. As we met with Sam Dunya, a Bethany missionary on Bethany campus last fall, it was clear God was overlapping our lives to do something more than we could imagine again... something God has been doing in Sam's life in Ghana for 19 years now.

Sam, who grew up in Ghana, West Africa, shared with me his first experience of traveling with his father into a village with no church, who worshipped idols and offered sacrifices to false gods. He recalled his burden to share Christ, and his father interrupting him to say, "One day when you are older, you can return." And, he did.

After completing his undergraduate degree at Bethany Global University in 1997, and meeting and marrying his wonderful wife, Jonhild, they returned to Ghana with Bethany, and the church planting began. For years they led initiatives planting 34 churches in the south. However, after visiting the northern region, which is predominantly Muslim, and seeking God for an open door, they got one.

Sam recounts his encounter with a Muslim businessman in Northern Ghana two years ago. They were buying materials to build a church--nails, metal sheets for roofing, etc. In Sam's words, "The businessman was shocked, surprised; he asked me 'Guys, this is \$3000 of materials! What are you going to use all this for?' I replied, 'We are going to build a church in the town of Katekrachi in northern Volta.' The businessman stayed quiet for around five minute, then he said, 'Can I make a contribution?' He gave us \$10, and said he wanted to be a part of it. 'Would you come to my village to start a church for us?'" From here the news spread, and they have been building ever since. Last year alone their team planted over 100 churches. Today they have more than 50 invitations from Muslim chiefs to come and erect a church in their villages (some unreached).

Today, Sam is working with Bethany on employing the GAP Strategy, which stands for Gateway Access Platforms. The GAP strategy is intended to bring intentional collaboration and networking into strategic regions bordering or in the midst of unreached people groups, to work together with local churches for the cause of the unreached.

Over the coming year, Sam is preparing to consolidate much of his training from the six training bases in the south, which are today primarily Christian, into a single major training facility in the northern capital city, Tamale. Tamale provides a strategic position to reach out into Muslim tribes and unreached people groups, and is a place to bring Muslim background believers after conversion to be trained to go further with the gospel.

Their current goal is 400 new churches in the northern region. As Sam said so fondly when we were together collaborating on our partnership, "Surely we can do so much more together than we could do on our own." Without all of us working together, without you, none of this possible.

We all have a role to play: whether raising awareness, petitioning in the place of prayer, or financially partnering. Join us! If you would like more information on GAP Ghana or Engage 500, please visit us online at BethanyInternational.org/GAP.

DOUG GOODMUNDSON is the Director of Development for Bethany International, serving in Advancement. In addition, Doug coaches Bethany missionaries with their personal support raising needs.



PRAYER + MISSIONS = JESUS' RETURN

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE PRAYER & MISSIONS MOVEMENTS

By Eric Simmons

It started with a prayer meeting.

Just before Jesus returned to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, he told his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Later in the upper room, 120 men and women were filled with the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Out of that small prayer meeting, God created missionaries that have made Jesus the most famous name on the planet.

Through prayer, Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians learned that the secret of loving the souls of men was found in loving the Savior of men. Their 24/7 prayer meetings influenced John and Charles Wesley, as well as prompted William Carey's efforts to reach India. There have been many pockets of prayer movements throughout church history, but I believe that in this day the Holy Spirit is raising up prayer and worship on a global scale where incense is ascending to the Throne at a magnitude and frequency that has never been seen before.

In many places all over the earth, the

Lord is placing desires and plans for 24/7 prayer into the hearts of leaders, and they are weaving it into the fabric of their ministries. This has resulted in 24/7 houses of prayer, and prayer mountains being established on every continent.

There is much work ahead of us no doubt, but as we look upon the problems that we are facing in proclaiming Jesus to the harvest field, we must remember his remedy. He saw the problem himself with his own human eyes as he looked upon the multitudes that were like sheep without a shepherd—but he also knew the solution, and told the disciples how to fix it.

"Pray."

A missionary is born when an intercessor asks the Lord of the harvest to send a laborer. If you are a missionary, it is because someone asked the Lord to make you one—likely someone you don't even know. If you are a missionary, you are the answer to someone's prayer.

It's all about knowing Jesus and making him known. Only by encountering the deep love and knowledge of Jesus through prayer are we empowered by the

Holy Spirit to do the work of missions. When we get our heads around God's character, missions refrain from being a technique and become an instinct.

And the fruit of our labors? As we take the church to where it's not, Jesus begins to hear his name sung in a language that he has never heard before in heaven. The fruit is more love for Jesus. More people groups and more cultures that are set free to love and enjoy him forever.

The Holy Spirit is now awakening the hearts of young men and women all over the earth, and he is creating expectation. Expectation is necessary for Jesus to return. He is coming back for a bride that has made herself ready, and expectation is a part of the preparation.

Worship is what is ultimate. Missions will cease, but we will be praying to and worshipping our Savior forever. Let us make it our goal to partner with the Holy Spirit in prayer as he works to cover the earth with the glory of God.

ERIC SIMMONS serves as the prayer and worship coordinator for Bethany Global University.



JOIN THE 30 DAY GLOBAL PRAYER CHALLENGE

You can change the world no matter where you are. Join Bethany International in praying for the least reached people groups of the world for 30 days.

Get started by requesting a free prayer map and daily reminders at BethanyInternational.org/Prayer

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TAKE THE CHURCH TO WHERE IT'S NOT?

THE FUTURE OF BETHANY INTERNATIONAL

By Dan Brokke

The original vision to “train, send, and support 100 missionaries” captured the heart of Bethany’s founding generation. It was fulfilled in 1975. In 2010, Bethany embraced the mission to “take the church to where it is not...and help others do the same.”

“THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD WILL COVER THE EARTH AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA.”

Habakkuk 2:14

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is when the Israelites refused to enter Canaan because of fear. In Numbers 14:21, God passed judgment, “Truly, as I live, and all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs...shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers.” God’s heart was (and is) to reveal his glory through his people.

AN AUDACIOUS MISSION GOAL: ENGAGE500

In 1974, Ralph Winter introduced the concept of reaching every “ethne” or people group with the Gospel—16,000 people groups. In recent years this has focused on “finishing the task” of sending workers to the remaining people groups with no known workers.

In 2015, Bethany embraced the Engage500 mission goal of systematically engaging 231 new unreached people groups along with the 269 people groups with whom we currently work. This is research driven. Unreached people groups are identified, adopted, and plans are implemented to evangelize, establish gatherings of believers (the church), and disciple them to be Great Commission Christians. Pursuing our mission and this goal is shaping Bethany for decades to come.

BUILDING A GLOBAL MISSION FORCE

The first strategy is to train and send thousands of Kingdom workers worldwide to impact the least reached people groups for Christ.

Bethany Global University students do missions while they train for missions in places such as Kenya, France, Indonesia,

“ASK THE LORD OF THE HARVEST, THEREFORE, TO SEND OUT WORKERS INTO HIS HARVEST FIELD.”

Matthew 9:37-38

Thailand, China, and other countries being opened up. They encounter God, gain frontline missions experience, along with academic intercultural knowledge (and an accredited degree), and serve to reach unreached peoples.

In addition, our dream is that God’s people everywhere in the world have access to mission training relative to their culture. A global network of 300 mission training schools in many countries effectively equips and sends cross-cultural missionaries. From these schools more than 10,000 workers have been fielded, helping mission fields become mission forces!

Thousands of churches among unreached people groups have been planted in 67 countries. Just this past week I learned that 70 MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) completed their mission training in Ethiopia. And, that in the last two months 870 Muslims came to Christ. These MBB students have taken responsibility to serve the Lord in Muslim dominated areas of Ethiopia.

Bethany’s missionaries facilitate leadership development; support the distribution of Scripture, evangelism, and discipleship resources; empower those with whom they work; and promote partnership. The western missionary’s role is similar to that of Barnabas in the book of Acts—he gave from his resources, advocated the Apostle Paul to the leaders in Jerusalem, led out with Paul on the first missionary journey, recognized Paul’s leadership, and then invested in another young leader, John Mark. He was catalytic in promoting new leaders.

BUILDING GATEWAY PLATFORMS FOR ACCESS

We are developing 15-20 Gateway Access Platforms (GAP sites) to serve as strategically placed regional “basecamps” for launching workers from many nations to many nations. Most unengaged peoples cannot be reached by a westerner. But we can (and must) help. These GAP sites build shared vision, recognize diverse

gifting, and encourage collaborative action. They are incubators for accelerating training leaders and cross-cultural workers.

Gateway Access Platforms become ongoing support and supply depots for workers. We bring mission training, 24/7 intercessory prayer, and ongoing spiritual encouragement. As individuals, churches and organizations are awakened to the need, see what God is doing, and hear his call, we help them thrive.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Bethany is already known to effectively partner worldwide. We seek to accelerate the spread of the gospel to the entire world. We identify specific challenges and opportunities that warrant collaborative efforts, and address root causes rather than just symptoms. Workers deployed by Bethany bring great value to international partners and facilitate collaboration in strategic regions.

We are developing new business initiatives that foster sustainable enterprise, and have direct kingdom impact. Publish4All is one example as ministry partners in 57 countries are now printing their own books through the print on demand equipment developed and supported by Bethany. These partnerships take hard work and a willingness to “lose our lives” for the sake of the Gospel.

Finally, we love and work with the church and the church knows it. The extended Bethany family provides encouragement, God-sized vision and motivation, serving and empowering the church globally and locally. The church is mobilized to strategically reach where the church is not.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

DAN BROKKE serves as the president of Bethany International



GROWING THE MISSIONS WORKFORCE THE FUTURE IMPACT OF BETHANY GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

By Dr. Paul Hartford

Beginning last fall, Bethany Global University began to experience some significant growth in the student body. Our school enrollment has tripled in the last two years. Looking forward to the spring when seniors return from internship and new January students start, we could have a total on-campus student body of 250! We believe that this growth positions Bethany for even greater things in the future as we pursue our mission to take the church to where it is not.

This growth means change, not just for BGU but for all of the Bethany. On campus, of course, there are many logistical changes: arranging dorm space, changing the flow of the cafeteria line, adding new personnel, working out office space, and many others. It means doubling up of classes to keep student/teacher ratios manageable, with some students taking class in the mornings and others in the afternoons. This impacts every portion of Bethany as now some students participate in their practical training in the morning.

Beyond all of those kinds of changes, we believe that this increase positions Bethany for even greater things in the future as we continue to pursue our vision to take the Church to where it is not. Higher enrollment and greater retention means that more students than ever will participate in the Global Internship portion of the BA program starting in 2017. Global Internship directly fulfills the vision of Bethany by placing students strategically in Gateway Access Platforms—centers of key access to the least reached peoples of the world.

The Gateway Access strategy has now become the focal strategy of our mission, so much so that our sending agency, Bethany International Ministries, has now become Bethany Gateways. The concept is simple: establish core centers we

call Gateways in proximity to the least reached peoples of the world; work in partnership with other ministries; and bring the Church to where it is not, through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. All of this serves Bethany’s larger vision we call Engage500—together with our global partnerships to engage at least 231 unreached people groups in addition to the 269 people groups we are already working among, totaling at least 500 people groups by the year 2020.

Students as Global Interns serve directly as missionaries of Bethany, alongside long-term missionaries and global partners, to fulfill the unique vision of each Gateway and the larger vision of Engage 500. Because they enter their junior year and Global Internship as Bethany Gateways missionaries, they are able to retain their status as missionaries after graduation from the university. Currently there are 16 recent graduates in process to return to the field: a number that we expect to grow significantly as the larger classes form larger teams at more Gateway sites. Bethany Gateways is currently establishing new Gateway sites to welcome the growth. In the fall of 2017 we will add another country in Asia and the Caucasus region to the list.

DR. PAUL HARTFORD serves as the vice president of academic affairs at Bethany Global University.



REACHING BEYOND OUR CULTURE THE VALUE OF AN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION FOR ALL

By Dr. Jim Raymo

A few years ago while attending a conference in South Korea, I was asked to preach in a local church. This, of course, required a translator since my Korean is less than fluent! Afterward, I was introduced to the elders of the church, who thanked me for the message and then very formally presented me with an honorarium. I informally said thank you and pocketed the gift. A deafening silence followed. Later I discovered that my casual response was culturally completely inappropriate. I had heard of “high” and “low” context cultures (formal events treated with a high degree of respect for the moment versus informal, relaxed unceremonious demeanor), but I failed to discern on this important occasion that my informality was perceived as disrespect which, in the end, undermined my earlier message.

My experience is one example of the need to learn and apply cross-cultural education. Most of us have a much more deeply-rooted ethnocentric (our own culture is central and obviously most appropriate), culturally bound, and often unrecognized outlook than we would prefer to admit.

In many contexts our increasingly global world requires knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. Whether simply in daily interaction with neighbors or our interactions during work or ministry, we need to understand why people behave and react the way they do. Many of us too quickly misjudge a person of a different culture because we do not

Many of us too quickly misjudge a person of a different culture because we do not understand what is behind actions and reactions.

understand what is behind actions and reactions. To be effective communicators in this international world, we must be able to detect cultural differences. This requires not political correctness, but cultural sensitivity and respect.

Here at Bethany Global University we provide an online accredited and affordable Master’s degree program in Intercultural Education. Some of our graduates have found that with this accredited degree they qualify for jobs teaching overseas in International Schools and mission and NGO settings.

Christian schools in the USA have also been pleased to accept our graduates for teaching positions. Secular schools in some states may require an additional teaching certificate, but have expressed appreciation for the cultural awareness our graduates bring, particularly in schools with students from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

A recent graduate, Liz Stubbs, said, “Completing a Master’s Degree in Intercultural Education at Bethany Global University has revolutionized my approach to teaching, and the classes about the Kingdom of God changed my worldview, affecting my attitudes and behaviors in daily life. As a working adult, the online classes were well paced and easily managed; and it gave me an opportunity to be ‘in class’ with people all over the world, which enriched my educational experience even more.”

DR. JIM RAYMO serves as the director of graduate studies at Bethany Global University.



HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE CALLED TO WORLD MISSIONS

THE TWO PERSPECTIVES ON HEARING GOD'S CALL

By Kerry Olson

One of the most frequent questions asked related to missions is, *how do I know that I am called?* While there are many ways in which God leads and guides his people into world missions, there have been two classic answers that people tend to give; “You don’t need a call because He has already called you” and “You better know God has called you before you go.” I believe a combination of **both** is necessary.

THE “EVERY IS CALLED” PERSPECTIVE

On one side of the coin, you have the often quoted line from the late singer Keith Green, who stated that “You don’t need a call, you’re already called!” Another person has stated that “You don’t need a call when you have a verse” referring to the multitude of Bible verses in the Old and New Testament that form part of God’s revealed will (the Great Commission) that we go to all nations and preach the gospel.

In another song, Keith Green wrote “Jesus commands us to go, it should be the exception if we stay.” Keith Green had to go to the extreme end of the spectrum to balance out the Church that emphasized a need for a special revelation or manifestation to go to the mission field.

Think for a minute, what the world would look like today if every Christian literally embraced God’s command to “go” and sincerely said to God, “I am going to the nations to preach the gospel. If it’s not your will for me to go, stop me!” I can hear many of you saying, “That’s too radical and extreme!” Yet to be truthful, we have gone to the other extreme, not bearing the spiritual fruit I believe the Holy Spirit desires.

As we get to know God’s character and study his Word, it becomes impossible NOT to know his will! We cannot be moved by a message that does not move us first; therefore, it is vital and necessary to understand God’s global plan and what he desires for his Church. Understanding where we fit in this plan is another thing all together, and the best way to describe this, in my opinion, is that it is a process.

THE “SPECIFIC CALL” PERSPECTIVE

During the 30-plus years I have served as a missionary, there have been circumstances and difficulties during which the only thing that kept me on the mission field was that I knew God sent me. The prophet Jeremiah arrived at one of these cross roads in his ministry where he wanted to throw in the towel and call it quits. Jeremiah was thinking about returning home to normal life when he cried out to God saying, “But if I say I’ll never mention the Lord or speak in his name again, his word burns in my heart like a fire. It’s like a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold on to it. I can’t do it!”

As it was with Jeremiah, the call of God on your life is something you cannot escape. We obviously have free will and can choose to serve him or not, but if we are in a right relationship with God and walking with him, we will learn to be in tune with his desires and plans for us.

FIVE TIPS FOR HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR CALLING

Finding God’s direction for our lives is very personal and often subjective; yet, here are a few basic principles that have helped me:

1. *Be in movement*

God uses those who are actively serving him and step out in faith, testing the waters to discover what he has. Be in movement. Start knocking on doors to see which one he might be opening.

2. *Be willing to do anything*

If you really have a servant’s heart, you will be willing to serve in any capacity. God will place specific desires in your heart, but don’t rush to push open the door yourself. Serve, and in the process of serving, God will open the door for you—he does a much better job of it!

3. *Start by serving at home*

We must be faithful in the little before we can be released to serve in greater areas. It is vital to understand the ministry and local church before you can be sent by them to the uttermost parts of the world.

4. *Be involved in short-term missions*

Before thinking about going out full time, get some short-term cross-cultural experiences under your belt, and better yet, mission training. Where you serve short term may or may not be an indicator of where God wants to send you long term. Be open to his leading.

5. *The call of God is something that grows on you.*

Many missionaries testify that when they began sensing God calling them to Thailand, for example, that everywhere they turned they saw something relating to Thailand. They turned on the TV: Thailand! They opened the newspaper: Thailand! They attended a conference and sat next to someone from Thailand! God specializes in this and we need to be in tune with how he is leading.

Perhaps you have not yet identified God’s will for your life. Get closer to him, ask him what he has for you, and search your own heart to make sure you have correct motives. Put into practice the steps listed above and don’t forget it’s all about being connected to him.

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”
—John 10:27

KERRY OLSON serves with Bethany International as an international project coordinator. He also trains, mobilizes, and sends out Latin American servant-leaders to the worlds, least reached peoples.

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