

# Understanding the Call of God

Read Judges 5, especially 6-9

In the days of Shamgar, in the days of Jael, the roads were abandoned; travellers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel. When they chose new gods, war came to the city gates, and not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.

Key issues for today: They chose new gods - war was the consequence. In a time of crisis the people of God did nothing to defend their nation (not a shield) or to go on the offensive (not a spear). Nevertheless the Lord said,

**"My heart is with Israel's princes,  
with the willing volunteers among the people."**

## **What is the call of God, how does it come?**

Hard to define but you know . . .

No two testimonies are the same . .

For Moses – all too much ! (Exodus 3 & 4)

For Samuel – an unknown voice in the bedroom of a child. ( 1 Samuel 3)

For Gideon – just couldn't believe God was interested ! (Judges 6)

For Amos - unwelcome intrusion (7.14)

For Mary – saying yes meant taking a great risk. (Luke 1.28)

For Paul – meant a hard fall from his donkey, and from religious favour. (Acts 9)

For the disciples - so exciting for them they left all to follow Jesus. (Matthew 4.18)

## **The Principles:**

### **1. Stay where you are.**

Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. (1 Cor. 7.20)

But in view of the fact that the harvest is plentiful . . (Read Matthew 9.36-10.5)

### **2. Jesus calls all to pray.**

### **3. It is Jesus who calls you to be with Him**

### **4. It is Jesus who calls you to be a disciple.**

There are not two different kinds of believers, one who is spiritual and obeys Jesus and another who feels he has permission to be worldly. Even the demons believe and they tremble. (James 2.19)

You were bought at a price; *do not become slaves of men.* (1 Cor 7.20,23)

**5. It is Jesus who calls you - by name.**

**6. It is Jesus who equips you** - with spiritual power and authority.

**7. It is Jesus who sends you with instructions** - for an hour, a day, a year, a life - as He says. Some are asked to sell up, give to the poor and follow Christ (Matt.19.21) Leaders can only confirm the calling of God and should not initiate it.

All I can say is "I am going, come with me and we will see where we get to, together."

### **Who does God call?**

**1. He calls the weak.** (1 Cor. 1, 26-29) Here I am with my gift of being useless

**2. He uses the weak.** (2 Cor. 12, 7-10)

**3. Changes the weak.** (Is. 40, 29-31)

### **Struggling with the call of God**

When the call comes you will inevitably find obstacles and resistance in your path, from:

**1. The Holy Spirit** – if you are off the path, or if your mind takes over, you **will** hear a voice behind you. (Isaiah 30.21, Acts 16.6) God cares for you so much that He does not want you going the wrong way and having negative experiences which will put you off when the real call comes.

**2. Evil Spirit** – (1 Thess. 2.18) because you are a threat to their dark kingdom.

**3. Human Spirit** – Abram, (Gen 12,1-2)

Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. Such insecurity, unfamiliarity and loss of control is daunting.

### **What happened . . .**

When the Lord called for His people to rise in a time of crisis in the days of Deborah:

(Back to Judges 5, 6-9)

Ephraim, Issachar & Benjamin **came**,

Zebulun & Naphtali **risked** their lives

In Reuben there was **much searching of heart** - by the **campfires**.

Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan - **safe**.

Dan lingered by his ships (**shops?**) - making money instead of serving the Lord?

Asher remained on the **coast and beach** ! At ease?

The people of the village of Meroz were **cursed bitterly** by God because they did not come to help.

### **Will that happen today if we don't come?**

Probably not in this age of grace – it does not have to because some people do

curse themselves with a regret and an anger felt deeply in later life for not having responded to the call of God in earlier years.

### **The questions for today . . .**

1. Who will deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Jesus - today? (Mark 8.34)
2. Has anyone run away from the call of God? The Lord called to Jonah a second time. (Jonah 3.1)
3. Has anyone put shoulder to plough and then looked back? Return while you yet can ! (Luke 9.62)
4. Fathers - will you give Me your son, daughter, baby for the service of the Lord? (Gen.22)
  
5. Like Elijah have you "had enough" and are weary and burned out in serving. Find God's solutions for renewal of body, soul and spirit after 1 Kings 19.4.

### **Prayers to help you find the words to respond to the Lord**

**The prayer of Hild, 614-680**, a great-niece of King Edwin of Northumbria, who was baptized at the age of 13. She became a nun 20 years later and later the Abbess of Hartlepool. Eventually she founded the great double monastery at Whitby, where she was sought out for her wise counsel by ordinary folk and rulers alike.

"Take me often from the tumult of things into Thy presence.  
There show me what I am, and what Thou hast purposed me to be.  
Then hide me from Thy tears.

O King and Saviour, what is Thy gift to me?  
And do I use it to Thy pleasing?  
Dear Lord, You alone know what my soul truly desires,  
and You alone can satisfy those desires.

I have prepared a place for you, says the Lord,  
a place that is for you, and only you, to fill.  
Approach My table, asking first that you might serve.  
Look even for the lowest tasks.  
Then, the work of service done,  
look for your own place at table.

But do not seek the most important seat  
which may be reserved for someone else.  
In the place of My appointing will be your joy.

Lord, show me the right seat;  
find me the fitting task; give me the willing heart.  
May I be equal to Your hope of me.  
If I am weak, I ask that You send only what I can bear.  
If I am strong, may I shrink from no testing

that shall yield increase of strength or win security for my spirit.

I trust in Thee, O Lord. I say, 'Thou art my God.  
My times are in Thy hand, my times are in Thy hand.'

**The prayer of Brendan the Navigator, 486-575 AD**

*A call to risky living*

Lord, I will trust You, help me to journey beyond the familiar  
and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You to be stronger than each storm in me?

Do I still yearn for Your glory to lighten on me?  
I will show others the care You've given me.  
I determine amidst all uncertainty always to trust.  
I choose to live beyond regret, and let You recreate my life.

I believe You will make a way for me and provide for me,  
if only I trust You and obey.  
I will trust in the darkness and know that my times  
are still in Your hand.

I will believe You for my future, chapter by chapter,  
until all the story is written.

Focus my mind and heart upon You,  
my attention always on You without alteration.  
Strengthen me with Your blessing and appoint to me the task.

Teach me to live with eternity in view.  
Tune my spirit to the music of heaven.  
Feed me, and, somehow, make my obedience count for You.

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