

PREFACE

Mark Batterson, a young pastor of National Community Church, Washington, D.C., in his book entitled, "In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day", tells about a mission's trip he and others took to Ethiopia. They helped plant a church in the capitol city, Addis Ababa. They were subjected to political unrest and a variety of third-world diseases.

One team members named Sarah was extremely fearful, especially, when she learned they would camp out in Awash National Park. Armed guards keeping watch all night didn't ease her fears. Crocodiles were seen in the river and the roar of lions could be heard from around the campfire.

She pushed through her fears and trusted God and she experienced some amazing events. Later, she could reflect upon her life with stories worth telling.

She said, "There were a million reasons why I shouldn't go; I'm not an evangelist, I don't have any special skills. I don't have three thousand dollars lying around. I've never been west of the Mississippi River, much less out of the Western Hemisphere. I am not a physically ambitious person. I can't servive without electricity and running water, but, I only needed one reason to go – I was called."

Call to Ministry

I. Does God Call Individuals into Vocational Ministry?

- To say YES, is to give testimony to the existence of God who is involved in the affairs of our everyday lives.
- To say YES, is to recognize the sovereignty of God, who has a divine right to direct the affairs of His creation, universe.
- To say YES, is to recognize that God, the Creator has a specific plan for each of us. His plans are as diverse as His nature.
- To say YES, is to recognize the hearts desire of a loving God, is to reconcile mankind to himself.
- To say YES, authenticates the plan of Salvation, incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- To say YES, authenticates the teachings and commission of Jesus. (Matt. 28:18-20)
- To say YES, is to see the age old struggle of good and evil culminate in the defeat of Satan and victory for God and good.
- To say NO, would be to repudiate all of these.

The Assemblies of God recognizes these things and proclaims this: we believe a divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the church in:

- (1) Evangelism of the world (Mark 16:15-20)
- (2) Worship of God (John 4:23-24)
- (3) Building a body of Saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16)

II. How does the Call to Ministry come?

The manner in which the Call comes is often as unique as the individual who is called.

- God called Abraham from a heathenistic culture. (Gen. 12:1-3)
- God called Moses from a flaming bush in the desert. (Ex. 3:1-10)
- God called Joshua upon the death of Moses. (Joshua 1:1-9)
- God called Samuel during a time of spiritual and evil darkness. (ISam. 3)
- God called Isaiah during a time of sorrow. (Isa. 6)
- Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John from nets. (Mark 2)
- Jesus called Paul on the Damascus Road. (Acts (9)

- God called Abraham from a pagan culture.
- God called Moses from a flaming bush.
- God called Joshua in a time of sorrow.
- God called Samuel in a time of spiritual darkness (when but a child).
- God called Isaiah by a vision of God.
- Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John from occupation.
- Jesus called Paul by a light from heaven.

The Call of God comes in different ways to different people. Most all ministers will tell you the Call to ministry was two-fold:

- I. A repeated prompting and influence of the Holy Spirit upon the mind and heart.
- II. A definite spiritual encounter.

To understand how God may deal with us and call us today, is to recognize we live in this Holy Spirit dispensation – which is different from those above mentioned, except for Paul. Example: My personal experience more than 50 years ago.

How does He Call? Do not have to experience a flaming bush or a vision of God or a light from Heaven, but, the Call may come:

- At the alter in church
- In some spiritual setting, i.e., camp retreat, prayer meeting, etc.
- As people pray for you
- While you are alone communing with God – no loud voice, no light, no vision – only a still voice!

III. How Do I Know God is Calling Me?

- Recognize first, you are not calling yourself. You love God, desire to work for Him in His church, every believer should. But, a specific all is not from self, but, God.
- Definitely, the Call to Ministry does not come from the devil; he will do all he can to discourage and squelch the Call.
- The Call does not come from parents or peers. Often well meaning people will tell us, "Oh, I believe God has called you to vocational ministry." Or they may say, "I don't believe you can make it as a minister." But, they do not call, God does. Example: Rabbit and Fox.

IV. What Do I Do if I Feel God has Called Me?

- Don't ignore it; don't run from it, but, RESPOND. Example: Samuel – "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." The divinely lit spark in your spirit must be "fanned" by the wind of the Holy Spirit within you.

- Don't let the fire go out! Once the Holy Spirit has ignited a spark of divine call in your heart, don't allow "second thoughts", "influence of peers", "spiritually cold surroundings" to extinguish what was "lit" in your heart. Example: Often when one shares the Call with family-friends, there is discouragement. Example: My personal experience, Dad; Judy's mom.

V. How Should I Prepare Myself for Ministry?

- Place a priority on personal prayer – saturate the soul.
- Spend as much time as possible in the Word of God.
- Begin to share the message of the Gospel with others.
- Study to prepare your self for ministry.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to exercise your Call.
- Confide in a person(s) you trust regarding your Call.
Example: A confirmation of your Call will come as doors of ministry are available to you. (youth rally)

VI. When Should I Seek a Ministerial Credential? Now – Do not wait.

- Plan your Biblical Studies around the studies required to obtain a Credential.
- Contact the District Office for information.
- Go to the general Council website, www.ag.org to learn about this fellowship.
- Share your Call with your pastor and make yourself available for ministry – seek his counsel.
- If you feel a need for formal education, seek information from an A/G College or University.
- Have an understanding as to the particular ministry to which you feel called and prepare with that in mind, i.e., pastor, evangelist, missionary, associate pastor, etc. Your studies should reflect this.
- As quickly as you meet the requirements for the entry credential, meet the Credentials Committee.

VII. What is the Procedure for Obtaining a Credential?

- First step is to contact the District Office and request a ministerial credential application.
- Secondly, return the form as quickly as possible. The office of Secretary-Treasurer will respond with guidance regarding the next step(s).
- During this process time, complete all of the course requirements for the level of credential you seek.
- Prepare to meet the Credential Committee at the scheduled time and take the written exam and be interviewed by the Committee.

If all goes well, you will be recommended for a credential by the District Credentials Committee to the General Council Credentials Committee and if approved, will be issued a credential by the General Secretary of the General Council.

The District recognizes it does not issue a Call to ministry; however, receiving a credential with our fellowship is a recognition by your peers and brethren that God has called and ordained you to vocational ministry.