

Question: Does God have a specific plan for my life's vocation and will he call me to that vocation?

How can I know what my calling in life is?

Many Christian people speak of their chosen vocation in life and one which they feel enables them to serve others as their “calling.” Desiring to do what God wants them to do in their lives, they often interpret strong inclinations toward a vocation as God’s calling. However, in the Bible, God’s calling individuals to specific tasks or life work seems to be the exception instead of the general rule. God did call the prophets by special revelations to do certain tasks that he required. Jesus appeared to Paul in a bright light and spoke to him so that all around heard, calling him to be his apostle (Acts 9:1-19; 1 Corinthians 1:1). Barnabas and Paul were called in words from the Holy Spirit to be the first missionaries (Acts 13:1-3). But John Mark, Silas and Timothy were chosen by Paul and Barnabas to go along also as missionaries because of their qualifications rather than being called by God to this work (Acts 13:5; cf. 12:25; Acts 15:40; Acts 16:1-3). So we see that not everyone was “called of God;” but for those who were, God’s call was very clear and involved more than some strong feeling in their hearts. In fact, we are warned, “The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15).

In addition, the Lord may not have only one specific vocation planned for you. It is possible that there is more than one vocation based on your God-given abilities through which the Lord can accomplish his purpose in your life. However, you should determine that “whatever you do, whether in word or deed, [you will] do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17). While God may have a plan for each life, I do not believe his plan involves every specific step we are to take. He gives us the guidance of his general moral will through the teachings of the Bible and then gives us the freedom to make some choices based on prayer, counsel and wisdom. Whether you become a full-time church worker, a school teacher or a nurse may not be as important as the reason for choosing any of these. You may be able to serve Jesus Christ in a powerful way through any of these chosen vocations.

Instead of looking for a special calling from God to only one vocation, I believe Jesus would suggest the following: (1) Seek the moral will of God—as revealed in the Bible—for your life. You know that God does not want you to do anything in your life that is inconsistent with his word in scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). (2) Pray for wisdom to be able to discern what is best among the righteous options that may be before you (James 1:5). (3) Seek the counsel of those with wisdom and special knowledge about the choices before you. “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed,” said the wise man (Proverbs 15:22). (4) As doors of opportunity open before you, walk through them and see what the Lord blesses in your life. Do not interpret his failure to bless something as an indication of sin but as a sign that this is not where you can best function and serve the Lord. On his second missionary journey, the apostle Paul attempted to go to two different places without success. The door of opportunity was closed to him. However, he was permitted to go to the town of Troas where he received a vision in the night calling him to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). (5) Be patient if the way is not made clear quickly. Throughout the Bible, God’s people are often told to “wait on the Lord” (Isaiah 30:18; Galatians 6:10).

You are right to seek to do God’s will in your life. But if God has a special task for you like that of his prophets and apostles, you will have no doubt about what he wants, just as the prophets had no doubts. However, these are exceptions to the rule. Most of the time our Lord expects us to listen to his word and learn to exercise wisdom as we serve him in whatever way he opens up to us.

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