

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, they often interpret strong inclinations toward a vocation as God’s calling. Although this inclination may be God’s calling you to something, God’s calling of individuals in the Bible 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, calling him to be his apostle (Acts 9:1-19; 1 Corinthians 1:1). Barnabas and Paul were chosen by 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 15:37-40; Acts 16:1-3). So we see that not everyone was called by God; but for those who were, God’s call involved more than some strong feeling in their hearts. One of the biblical proverbs says: “There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

Although the Lord may not have one specific vocation planned for you, he does care about what you do with your life. It is possible that there is more than one vocation for you, based on your God-given abilities through which the Lord can accomplish his purposes in your life. You should be determined 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 it is possible that God does have a special plan for the life of any one of us, I do not believe his plan involves every specific step we are to take. Just as a parent trusts a mature child to determine the details of how to do what he is told to do, our God trusts spiritually maturing Christians to serve him without detailed instructions from him. 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, nurse or business person may not be as important as the reason for choosing any of these. You can faithfully serve Jesus Christ through any of these vocations.

Instead of looking for a special calling from God to only one vocation, consider what I believe Jesus would suggest: (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” (Proverbs 15:22). (4) Walk through doors of opportunity as they may open before you 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. At least one time the apostle Paul attempted to go into two areas and was prevented by the Holy Spirit. However, at the right time an even greater opportunity was opened to him (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. Although 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.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881.] 2011/08/26