



Sensing

# God's Direction

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## *Sensing God's Direction*

Sensing God's direction; why does it cause such a brain pain, and so much worthless worry? Too often, we see it as an ultimate destination, not realizing it is a continuous journey. We erroneously envision ourselves being led through a huge maze and being plumped down and told, "The puzzle of your life is in 1,000 pieces. Put it together!" God is not messing with our minds. He is not playing hide-and-seek. We are not pawns or players in his mystery thriller. He longs to provide us the direction we need. He orders our footsteps. And He reveals His will in the increments that would be best suited for us. The process unfolds according to the Master's master plan. The will of God does not have to be a mystery. It reminds me of the winding road depicted in the letter "S." As you start out on the trip, you can only see as far as the headlights shine, or until you reach the bend in the road. Once you travel faithfully through the twist, and around it, you can see further.

"God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *NLT*).

Knowing the will of God is one thing. Doing it is entirely different. George Truett said, "To know the will of God is our greatest knowledge. To do the will of God is our greatest achievement." That is probably a good place for all of us to begin; with a commitment not only to sense God's will, but to satisfy God's will. Not just to know it, but to do it.

I remember a young missionary colleague who said that it was much easier dreaming about being a missionary than it was actually being one. Likely those called in any area of God's kingdom would readily testify, "Doing God's will is lots of plain old work!"

Leon Chambers concludes that the will of God is a term "most often used to refer to God's guidance." It isn't a matter of finding God's will. His will is never lost. It is revealed. That's it.

God reveals the will of God. We discover the will of God.

We prove the will of God (Romans 12:2).

Others confirm the will of God.

We obey the will of God.

An Italian proverb states, "What God wills, I will."

God says, "I have a plan for your life" (Jeremiah 29:11). You respond, "Great, Lord. What is it?"

## **A Personal Note from the Guru; I Mean the Author**

Hold on! We're moving fast. I better tell you a little about the author. That's me: Jim Poitras. I was converted in 1979, while in university, by a high school girl named Lynne. Now, she's a missionary in Guatemala. I was nurtured and cared for by the Fred Thompson family. Their son, Brad, is not only a close friend but also a missionary to Guatemala. My pastor was a mission's lover. So, I didn't have a chance. In 1983, after three years in the church, and at the ripe old age of twenty-two (well, one week before I turned twenty-three) I went on the AIM program to Nigeria, West Africa.

This booklet contains some of the things I've learned about sensing God's will over the past quarter century. It's hard to believe I've been doing the missions thing for twenty-five years. My wife, Linda, was the first Associates in Missions (endorsed in 1981) as part of the newly established AIM program from the Foreign Missions Division. Already, you've likely noted the inconsistency. He went into missions twenty-five years ago. She went twenty-seven years ago. What's the deal? I will leave that history for the 'call story' section below.

"Why is he telling us this? I thought this was a lesson booklet," you might be asking. The answer is simple. I wanted you to know the reason for this epistle. I give glory to God for selecting me to be part of His huge end-time harvest. I'm glad I sensed His direction—and obeyed it. I dedicate this writing to all of our Associates in Missions and young people embarking on the Next Step program. You are my heroes and I hope that something written in the next sixty pages or so will help as you not only sense God's direction but step out into it.

I admit it. I'm soft on missions! After twenty-five years of missionary service in Africa, tears still flow when I hear songs like "People Need the Lord" (Steve Green). A sense of mission still wells up when I see the parade of missionary flag-bearers march in during our general conference missions' service. Globes, and maps of the world serve as interior decorations in my office; signifying, as well, the interior décor of my heart. They constantly remind me of my destiny in life.

One disclaimer: It may seem like there is a lot of emphasis on missions. That is intentional. For this, I offer no apology. God can place you anywhere in His kingdom. I know. I know. If He is not directing you toward world missions, just use the principles. They work. And, no matter which way you're heading, I'm persuaded that the Lord of the Harvest is always directing His children toward winning the lost world! With that, ends most of my first person references. Now, we will be switching into third person mode, to make it easy for others to teach using this resource. Back to *Sensing God's Direction*. Enjoy the journey!

## *Sensing God's Direction*

*S*ouls:

Some may speculate that souls are a strange place to start a discourse about sensing God's direction. Not really. It make's God-sense. In fact, it was the final directions Jesus left. My dear friend and fearless, faithful leader, Brother Bruce Howell, said, "It's all about souls! Souls rescued. Souls readied."

We often hear people speak of the "fair market value" of a manufactured product or its "retail value." We also hear of "wholesale value" or "trade-in value." But, have you ever heard of "soul value"? Let me state my conviction up front: nothing is more valuable than a person's soul. Think about it. What is the most important and precious thing today? It is life itself!

Studies have been conducted to determine the monetary value of mineral and chemical elements found in the human body. Together, their value is less than one dollar. Our most valuable asset is our skin. Based on the selling price of cowhide, the value of an average person's skin is about \$3.50. Total monetary value per person equals \$4.50. But we are made up of more than oxygen, calcium, sodium, iron, zinc, copper, and about fourteen other minerals and chemicals. We are body, soul, and spirit. Simply put, we have eternal value. We are priceless. We are not for sale. We have already been bought by the precious blood of the crucified Lamb.

There are three things that will last for eternity.

- ▶ God
- ▶ Word of God
- ▶ Souls of men

We need to invest our lives with eternity in view. God places great value on a lost soul (John 3:16). It was for this reason that Jesus came into the world. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In one short sentence Jesus described His purpose—"to seek and to save." He also explained His target group—the lost. We remain on the earth to finish the task. Before He left, He said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). There are two things you can do on earth that cannot be done in heaven: sin and win the lost. I think we both know which we are supposed to be doing. Right?

"Today...people will go to heaven, and people will go to hell. The percentage of people going to heaven and the percentage of people going to hell today is determined by how well

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you did your job yesterday. If you remember heaven today, it will help someone avoid hell tomorrow" (*Primary Purpose*).

### **"What are You Going to Do?"**

By

Bruce A. Howell

Night after night, our missionaries stand in pulpits wrestling to find the words to communicate their burden for over six billion people in our lost world. We've often heard that every 4.1 seconds another soul is born on this planet. There are 138,000 more lost people in the world today than yesterday. Statistics have a way of falling short of imparting vision and impacting precious saints on comfortable pews.

Facing a sleepless night? Instead of counting sheep, count souls. One lost soul. Two lost souls. Three lost souls. Four lost souls. Five lost souls. Six lost souls. Seven lost souls. Eventually you would fall asleep or spend months counting lost souls. Sound reasonable? No, that illustration still falls short of reality.

William Booth, the founder of Salvation Army, once remarked, "Most Christian ministries would like to send their recruits to Bible College for four or five years. I would like to send our recruits to hell for five minutes. That would do more than anything else to prepare them for a lifetime of compassionate ministry." It is not possible to take a five-minute excursion to hell, but it is possible to visit the local mortuary and/or cemetery. Give me a choice between a visit to a cemetery, mortuary, or a restaurant, the food place wins hands down.

So, let's go with a trip to the restaurant—an after church favorite event. One of our UPCI missionary families, traveling on deputation, accompanied a pastor and his wife to a local restaurant. Finding a seat they passed a man who called out, "Are you Christians?" The missionary quickly confirmed that he was indeed a Christian. The man responded, "I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?" He reemphasized his point, "I see you are here with friends, and probably have come for a good time. Just remember. I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?" The missionary put hunger on hold, sat down with the man, listening intently as he rehearsed his life, and then unfolded the gospel to him.

Stop! Now, that brings things to reality. Statistics bore us. Counting souls put us to sleep. Quotations or a trip to the cemetery fall short of imparting vision. The restaurant rendezvous articulates it best. "I am lost. I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?" That testimony is shared throughout our world—across the street at a local restaurant, or across the seas in our developing world. The helpless beggar on the streets of Calcutta, India or the entrepreneur in Los

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Angeles, California share the same testimony, "I am lost. I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?" They also share the same fate, unless we are willing to answer the question.

I will strive to reach them with our life-changing message of hope and salvation. I will pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send forth workers to evangelize our world (and do my part to see it happen). I will faithfully give to world missions. I will go and do as the Lord leads. I've answered the question. Now it's your turn. Outside the doors of your church and/or home there is a world. They are lost. They are sinners. "What are you going to do about it?"



"Only for souls my life's work shall be,  
Only for souls till death shall set us free,  
I'll strive as those striving after earth's goals,  
Only for souls, only for souls" (Author Unknown)

### *Solitude:*

It's easier to hear the voice of God in solitude. Here we can give our undivided, undistracted, full attention. Some hear God best in their prayer closet. Others at the church altar. Others hear His voice loudest with the backdrop of crashing waves, or in the silence of sitting beside a still lake. Others hear best observing from the pinnacle of a mountain.

"For this reason we also, from the day we heard of it, have not ceased to pray and make [special] request for you, [asking] that you may be filled with the full (deep and clear) knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [in comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God] and in understanding and discernment of spiritual things (Colossians 1:9, AMP).

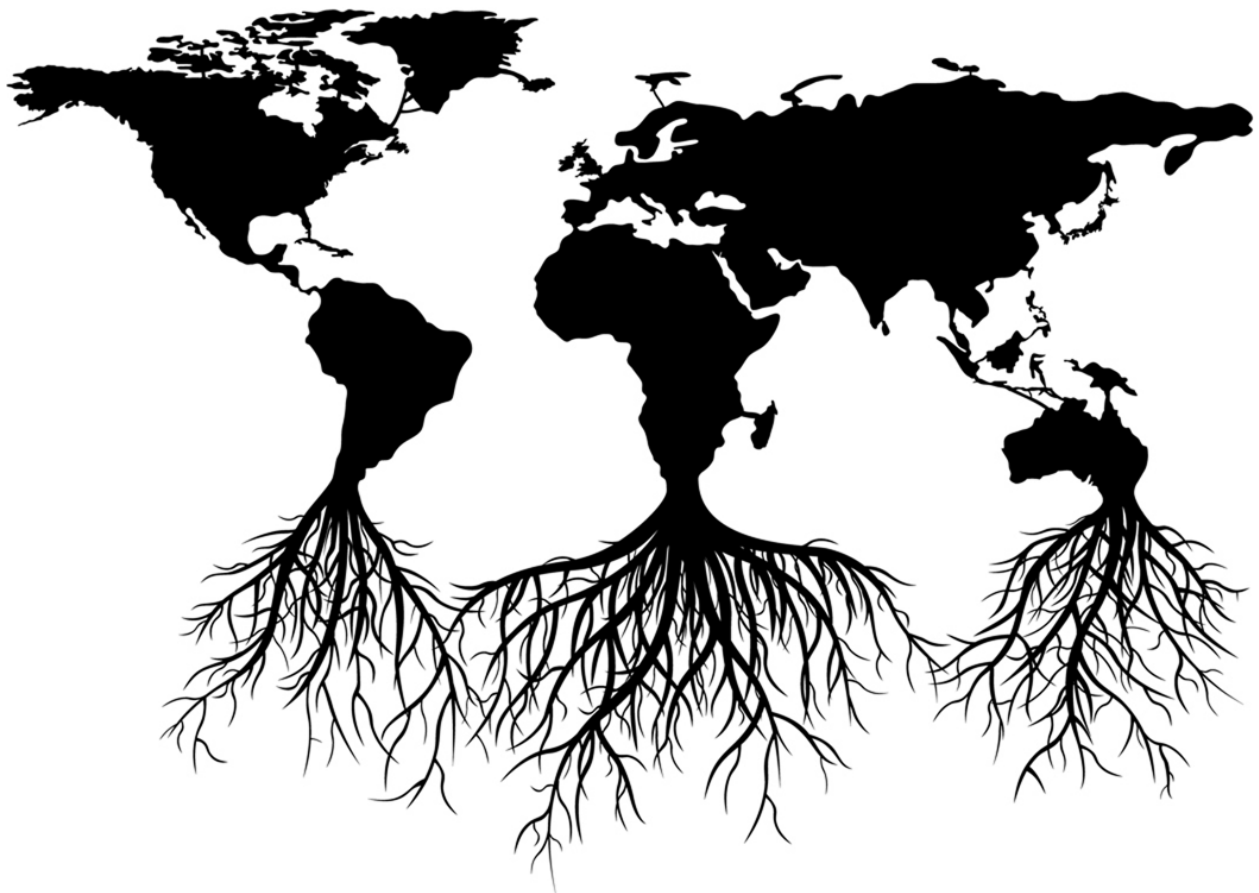
How do we find out what God wants? Simple! Talk to Him. Ask for the mind of Christ; "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways

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my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Jesus set the example for all of us; "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). He also taught us the way: "But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father secretly" (Matthew 6:6, *NLT*).

There is an old song that says, "Shut in with God in a secret place." When Jesus approached important decisions, He prayed. When tempted, He prayed (Matthew 4). When selecting His disciples, He prayed the entire night: "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). When He was about to be betrayed, He prayed; "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt'" (Matthew 26:39).



## Are You Connected?

By  
Laurissa Wolfram

I work at a computer help desk, and over the past few years, I have heard some pretty crazy things. A friend of mine told me about a time when he suggested that a client “warm-boot” their computer, which basically means forcing the computer to restart without actually turning it off. Well, the lady took him literally, and put her computer in the oven. Then there was the person who came in wondering why his computer wasn’t working. When we took it apart, we were surprised to see it was inhabited by a nice little colony of ants, who had set up camp beneath his keyboard. Brings a whole new meaning to “my computer has a bug,” doesn’t it?

But my *favorite* (and one of the most frequent) is when someone calls in a panic, requesting someone to come to their office immediately because their computer won’t turn on. Of course, when the analyst we send out comes back smiling and shaking his head we always know: they didn’t have the machine plugged in.

Sometimes our lives can be like that. We try and we try, but we become frustrated when things don’t work out. We *think* we’re doing all the right things and can’t understand why all our efforts seem to be in vain! But after sitting there, dejected and discouraged, we realize we’re not plugged into the power source. We can push all the right buttons and flip all the switches, but none of that will matter unless there is power flowing!

God is like our power source. His strength and life gives us what we need to function and survive. Without him, we’re just going through the motions. So the next time you feel like things just aren’t working out the way they should, step back and think: are you connected to the source?

There is something else one should do in secret. Fasting gets us out of the way so we can clearly hear God. “For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:5).

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:16).

Fasting expresses our seriousness in knowing God’s will. It is advisable to fast before any major change in your life or ministry. The Early Church did; “As they ministered to the



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Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

Fasting strengthens prayers: "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (Acts 10:3-31).

Fasting is important when one needs to seek the Lord: "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3).

"And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord" (2 Chronicles 20:3-4).

Elmer Towns suggests that if there is a place where God has met with you in the past, then that's a good place for you to go to pray and fast.

There are three measured steps to fasting:

- ▶ Vow to God that you will fast.
- ▶ Prepare for the fast.
- ▶ Fulfill your resolution.

William Carey is considered to be the father of modern missions. He had an immense burden for the lost. As a young man, he worked in a shoe cobbler's shop. He saved discarded bits and pieces of shoe leather and made a makeshift globe. He sketched in ink the outlines of the continents and various countries on his crude leather globe.

It is said that Carey's tears of intercession for the world literally blurred the outlines of the nations on his handmade globe. He became a missionary to India and changed the course of mission's history throughout the world.

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### Sensitivity:

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, and the Holy Ghost said..." (Acts 13:2).

How do you know when God is speaking to you? Roger Barrier in *Listening to the Voice of God* explains, "Ever had an experience where deep down inside you just knew what to do; where God gave you impressions, encouragement, and advice?" He calls that place his "knower." "Deep down in my 'knower,' I knew what God wanted." Barrier defines his 'knower' as "this place deep inside where I know God speaks...it is there that I have heard the voice of God."

D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, "Then God sometimes answers directly in our spirit. The prophet said, 'I will wait and see what he will say in me.' God speaks to me by speaking in me....He can impress something upon our spirits in an unmistakable manner. We find ourselves unable to get away from an impression that is on our mind and heart." Perhaps this is what Elijah experienced when God spoke in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). Some call it an inner compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16); inner peace (Isaiah 26:3); inner voice; inner feeling; inner impression; inner aspiration (1 Timothy 3:1); and/or inner desire (Psalms 37:4).

The early preachers cultivated sensitivity to the Spirit. The Spirit spoke to them, and through them many times. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (Acts 8:29). "And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house" (Acts 11:12). Who is leading you? It is important to be led by the Spirit; "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

The Bible is the authority. What we sense from the Spirit should be in conformity with the Word of God: "It is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path" (Psalms 119:105).

We hear from the Spirit when we concentrate on the things of the Spirit. We bring our thoughts into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5). Did you hear from God? How can you tell? Four things usually speak to our minds:

- ▶ Spirit
- ▶ Self

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- ▶ Satan
- ▶ World

Which one are you listening to? God's voice is not the only voice that speaks to us. How can we distinguish between His voice and Satan's? Again Roger Barrier comes to the rescue. He suggests that God speaks to our innermost spirit. Satan and the flesh speak to the mind.

God speaks with a gentle leading. He does not push, drive, or dominate. Satan places people in bondage. God's voice provides freedom. God tends to speak when you are seeking Him (Jeremiah 29:12-13). He gives specific directions.

When the flesh and Satan speak it feels as if things are out of control. When God speaks, you feel everything is under control. God speaks with 100% truth that can be tested by the Word of God. Satan brings confusion. God's voice leads to deep peace (Philippians 4:7).

We need to be sensitive to the Spirit: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Paul testified, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

The key to knowing God's will is in knowing God, and His voice: "And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:3-5).



## **The Baby!**

By

Linda Revell Poitras

I was the baby . . . and they treated me that way. With a sister thirteen years older and a brother seven years my senior, I became their live baby doll. My sister took me into her room to take care of me in the night. (She was getting ready for motherhood a few short years ahead of time. Her first baby came when I was nine years old.)

My brother came home from school and taught his two-year-old sister what he had already mastered at school. He taught me to spell and write my name, write my ABCs, count to ten and write that down, the night before my second birthday. (He was practicing early for his lifelong teaching career.) After all, I was the baby . . .

Any and everything needed was mine. Daddy (my pastor) and Mama (my best friend, confidant, Sunday school teacher, and dress designer) were quick to see to that. I loved them both so much. They taught me to love God's Word, and that His will was the most important thing I could seek for my life. But I was still the baby . . .

Growing up in one small town and attending the same schools . . . never traveling further than Florida for vacation and family outings, I was not very adventurous. Graduating from university with a bachelor's degree in music education, I worked in schools near my home giving private voice and piano lessons. . . being the baby was still me.

Church was a major part of life. . . and finding God's will for ME was paramount. The summer after college graduation, I attended senior youth camp where God began dealing with me about going. . . somewhere.

After a miraculous provision of needed funds, I flew . . . for the very first time. That trip (International Youth Corps 1978 [to Alaska] – currently called Youth on Mission) changed my life. It taught me God does have a plan for each of us, and when He speaks, He always provides. . . especially for His babies.

That was the start of a four-year struggle. Change . . . and giving up my pampered life . . . was something I dreaded. Stop being the baby . . . do I want to? Where was God leading me? When God calls, He not only provides, He gives clear direction.

When direction came, God confirmed His will with my parents, family, church leaders, and just about everyone I knew. He spoke loud and clear . . . no mistaking that voice. . . "You are going to



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Nigeria.” Where? I knew it was in Africa, but that was about all I understood when I boarded that plane in July 1981. . . still the baby. . . but a chosen one for a specific purpose. God was leading, and I had made up my mind to listen and follow . . . the baby was growing up . . . finally.

When I left Nigeria after three months in the bush (literally) it wasn't the pretty scenery or beautiful beaches that pulled on my heartstrings. . . because there weren't any. It wasn't the pleasant climate or comfortable living conditions that brought the throat-strangling tears. Nigeria was hot, humid, and dusty. But God's love . . . reaching out to souls who had never heard His name . . . through my hands and heart . . . those had a strangle-hold on my life . . . and they still do. So, I returned, again and again. That same desire and purpose led our family from Nigeria to Ghana.

What did I find by following God's call? A whole new way of living, a different view of life with new priorities, thinner blood (living in this tropical heat for so long – ha!) . . . and a husband! Yep, God sent a young man to Nigeria . . . all the way from Canada. . . time for this baby to really grow up. . . so I did.

More than thirty years after following that first leading away from all that security . . . (remember I was the baby?) . . . I am still listening for His call. During the time while I waited for approval and all the red tape of my AIM application, God gave me a song. It still means a lot to me . . . baby or not . . . because “My Soul Heard God's Call!”

For my soul heard God's call, and I remembered His voice;  
It was a call for my heart, and my life and my time, and it gave me a choice.  
I could listen and heed, or merrily go my own way;  
I'm so glad I did choose, my life for Jesus to use, each and every day!

*Surrender:*

An old Nigerian chorus goes like this: “Jesus surrendered His life for me. What have I done for Him?” You must first make yourself available. Be open for God to reveal His will.

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## What Can I Give Him?

By  
Bruce A. Howell

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

There is a villain in almost every good story. In the Christmas narrative the scoundrel is the calloused, cruel innkeeper. He turns the needy couple away. *Hello! She is about to have a baby.* How could he be so heartless? He deserves the rap for his nonchalant attitude. He is inconsiderate, insensible, and insensitive. He is responsible for the King of Kings being born in a stable (or so the traditional story goes).

Wait a minute. First of all, let us not forget God's plan. He was in control (then and now) of every circumstance. And perhaps the Innkeeper wasn't so thoughtless after all. He never was the rascal. Instead of sending the young couple away, he offered the only available space in his inn—the stable. *He gave the best he had to offer.*

“What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet what can I give Him?  
Give Him my heart!”  
(C. Rossetti)

God never requires anything more from us than we are able to give. You may sometimes feel you have little to offer. In the face of huge financial needs, you lament your meager means. You may struggle with the language or stumble through cultural expectations. Gripped with feelings of being

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ill-equipped and inadequate, you may wonder, "Why am I here?" Occasionally you may even sigh, "What can I give Him?"

God has placed you in His vineyard. He has a master plan for your life. You are right where He wants you. His strength is made perfect in your weakness. He is making you into the Christian you need to be. Give Him the best gift of all—*yourself*.

Your heart must be right before Him:

- ▶ "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when you search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).
- ▶ "Search me, O God, know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psalm 139:23).
- ▶ "Not with eye service, as men pleasers: but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:6-7).
- ▶ "And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us" (Hebrews 12:1, *NLT*).

The race is "set before us." It has already been decided. The path, the race, that God has set has been selected. Stay in your lane!

Charles Swindoll said, "Prayer is connecting with God in order to transfer His will into your life. It is collaborating with God to accomplish His goals." He also added, "God never hides His will. If we seek direction, He delights in providing it." It's time to surrender by pulling yourself on to the altar. You'll slide off, once in a while. Drag yourself back on.

### *Sacrifice:*

We are called upon to present ourselves as living sacrifices. Give up your life as you continue living it; "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

## Death Just Wouldn't Matter!

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Another General Conference Foreign Mission's service has come and gone. This year our theme was "More." We asked men and women to give more of themselves; not merely their money. We need more sacrifice and passion for the mission so we can reach more people! Like most foreign mission's services at General Conference I walked away touched, stirred, challenged, and hopefully changed. I know that you missionaries have sacrificed so much, yet share the same response when attending such meetings. What is the reward of your great sacrifice?

Brother Billy Cole preached a message at School of Missions one year, "The Reward of Sacrifice" and it has made it into his book *Teachings by Billy Cole*. His text was 1 Samuel 6: 7 – 14. Two cows were tied to a cart, to carry the Ark of the Covenant. Their calves were kept at home. The two cows lowed as they went on their way. That was their initial sacrifice. Reaching their destination, the cart was destroyed, and the cows paid the ultimate sacrifice—their lives as a burnt offering. I remember Brother Cole saying, "The reward for sacrifice is another, bigger sacrifice!" We are always called upon for MORE!

I want to share the writing of one of our precious missionary kids, Melinda Poitras, the editor of our *CultureShock* missionary kid magazine: The book is *American Literature*. It rests in the second drawer of my desk. It has been laughed at; highlighted; written in; and on one or more occasions, thrown across the room. I discovered Ben Hur and Moby Dick in this book. The Fireside Poets; the Knickerbocker writers; and the painters of the Hudson River School dwell in its pages. Rip Van Winkle sleeps there. Emily Dickinson lives her reclusive life there and even Negro Spirituals resound from its chapters. There are lives in this book and there are deaths in this book. It is one such death that leaves me sobbing into my notebook, frantically searching for tissues like the idiot I often am. The selection is "Shadow of the Almighty." The author is Elizabeth Elliot. The characters are real. The story is earth shaking in its simple truth.

Jim Elliot, and his wife Elizabeth were missionaries in Ecuador. They were called to minister to the Auca Indians. ("That's nice," you might say. "So what?" you might ask.) Here's the thing. The Aucas were a bit...antisocial with the exception of one thing. They did play a game with all white men and Indians alike. We'll call it... "You Come and We'll Kill You!" (The Aucas generally won this game, by the way.) Jim Elliot had, of course, heard of this game but it didn't bother him that much. See, God made the players and he knew that God could change the game—if He wanted.

Jim and some other missionary friends hopped into Nate Saint's plane and began making 'deliveries' to the Aucas every week. They would fly above their camp shouting phrases like "Trade



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you a lance for a machete" and "We like you!" in the Aucan language and dropping gifts to the ground. This went on for awhile until they decided that it was time to dive in and test the waters of their faith. Jim knew he might never come back but he was "willing to die if that's what God wants." He sent his wife a message after arrival telling her of the beach and closing with the information that they were leaving at that moment to go straight to the Aucan village. He did meet an Aucan after all. Jim Elliot fulfilled his life's goal and took an Aucan by the hand.

"Two days later, on Sunday, January 8, 1956, the men for whom Jim Elliot had prayed for six years killed him and his four companions."

The power in that sentence is heart wrenching. The faith in that story is beautiful. I've heard this Jim Elliot quote all my life: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." And as I read it now, I realize it is not his death that is making me cry. It is the knowledge that if I could live like that, really live like that; death wouldn't matter!

Elizabeth Elliot, in *Through Gates of Splendor* said, "Letters from many countries have told of God's dealings with hundreds of men and women, through the examples of five who believed literally that 'the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.'"

Mr. A. W. Tozer, in *The Pursuit of God* said: "We are often hindered from giving up our treasures to the Lord out of fear for their safety. This is especially true when our treasures are loved ones, relatives, and friends. But we need have no such fears. Our Lord came not to destroy but to save. Everything is safe which we commit to Him..."

"Not my will, but your will be done!" (Matthew 13:12). Alex Redpath said, "Don't expect God to reveal His will for you next week until you practice it for today."

Roy Lessin in "As Unto Me" said, "There may be times when you do your very best but still see your labors fail. You may even sacrifice time or money to help someone and receive no words of appreciation. Do it anyway, as unto me, for I am your reward."

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:20-37). Jim George (*God's Man of Influence*) suggests five areas of sacrificial service.

- ▶ Sacrifice of time (he stopped and helped the wounded man).
- ▶ Sacrifice of resources (he gave his bandage and dressing for the wounds.)
- ▶ Sacrifice of personal transportation (he carried the man to the inn).
- ▶ Sacrifice of life (he personally took care of the man).

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- Sacrifice of money (he gave money and promised to pay for the wounded man's continued care).

He closes his study on sacrifice by saying, "The greater the level of your service to others, the greater the level of your influence on others."

"If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all" (David Livingstone).

"Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. If the minister's life is without a measure of pain and sacrifice, his ministry will be without blessing" (Warren and David Wiersbe).

### Never Count the Cost

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Leonard Ravenhill in *Meat for Men* wrote, "Recently, we visited an elaborate and opulent temple in the Far East. This experience reminded me of one Christian visitor who, overwhelmed with the ornate place and its static wealth, asked a heathen worshipper, 'What is the actual cost of erecting a temple like this?' The startled devotee replied in pained surprise, 'What is the cost? This temple is for our god, and for him we never count the cost.'"

Ravenhill then quoted this ancient prayer:

Teach us, good Lord,  
To serve Thee more faithfully;  
To give and not to count the cost;  
To fight and not to heed the wounds;  
To toil and not to seek for rest;  
To labor and not to ask for any reward  
Save that of knowing that we do Thy will.

As I scan the list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, I notice these men and women of vision had one thing in common. When it came to serving their God, they never counted the cost. They willingly gave all. It's been years since I've heard that little song, "Take it all...What this world can offer me, take it all. For one hundred years from now, it won't matter anyhow." Oh, for a resurgence of that attitude!

## Sensing God's Direction

How much is biblically expected when it comes to contributing to the kingdom of heaven; making a kingdom investment? The answer contains three simple letters: ALL.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he...sellet **all** that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold **all** that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:44-46).

### *Submission:*

Submission is willingly giving up your own desires in favor of God's desires. A prerequisite to knowing the will of God is the willingness to submit and obey. Jesus asked, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not what I say?” (Luke 6:46-47, *NIV*).

“His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

It's one thing to know. It's quite another to do. Are you teachable? Will you follow God's will once you know it?

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake” (Psalms 23:1-3). An old song by E. W. Brandy says, “Where He leads me, I will follow. I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.”

“Show me the way I should go; for to you I lift up my soul. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good spirit lead me on level ground” (Psalm 143:8, 10, *NIV*).

Submission is the willingness to do things God's way; “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded” (James 4:7-8).

Possess a submissive and teachable spirit: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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Adam and Eve failed to submit to God's Word. They didn't believe that He meant what He said. Submission is bringing yourself under the protection of another.

### **Global Impact is the Least We Can Do**

By  
Bruce A. Howell

I recently had the privilege of co-chairing the Executive Global Council with our general superintendent. Brother Kenneth Haney reminded us we need to pay the price for revival. He called us back to the preaching and way of the cross. Self-denial is the way to the heart of this world. He told a story of a communist boy, standing on a street corner, with tattered clothes, propagating communism. Someone walked by and said, "You're paying a big price for communism!" The boy responded, "When you're changing the world, no cost is too great."

Brother Haney later told us, "Don't live one more day without a dream." He asked that we adopt the attitude that each of us has ten years. Imagine that at the end of that time the trumpet will sound. He asked, "How would we live? What would be our vision? What would we do?" He ended with a solemn thought, "The reality is we may have less than ten years. Global impact is the least we can do!"

### *Spiritual Transformation:*

God's will begins with being born again. "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8, *NIV*). In Christ, we have become new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17) and as such we are being transformed into the image of our Creator (Colossians 3:10). Since we refuse to be conformed to the pattern of the world, or squeezed into its mold, we are able to sense the will of God (Romans 12:2). Doing what we ought to do (God's sovereign will) comes first. It is already revealed throughout Scripture. Then, as we digest the solid food of His Word, our powers of discernment are trained by constant practice so that we can discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). Then, we can take part in what God plans to do (in us and through us).

Romans 12: 1-2 are very important verses in the process of spiritual transformation. It tells us how we can move from "My life is my own. I will do whatever I please" to "My life is not



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my own. It belongs to God. I will do what He pleases." That is where true commitment begins.

Ray Stedman in his article "Discovering the Will of God" states there are four things to be learned about commitment in Romans 12:1-2.

First of all, "present your bodies." If you move your body into action, you have really given yourself. It is more than presenting the good intentions of your mind. Stedman says, "Our minds may be committed, our spirits may be available, but, yet, not our bodies....The first test of your commitment to Christ is this: Is it active involvement?"

Second, Paul admonishes us to become "a living sacrifice." We die daily to the flesh. It has been mentioned elsewhere that we pull ourselves unto the altar of sacrifice. It's not for a day. It's for as long as you are "living."

Third, we must be "holy and acceptable to God." Jesus needs to be living in us. The flesh cannot please God. We cannot improve the flesh. It must be crucified. Stedman goes on to say, "God has put all that I am to death—my plans, my programs, my desires—all are tainted with self, and are worthless." This must be replaced with "Christ, who lives in me, to begin to work out His plans, His programs, His ideals, His desires."

Last, it is our "reasonable service." We yield to God, what we were made to be, and do what we were made to do. It is only reasonable.

In doing those four things, and refusing to conform to the thinking of the world, we are able to sense, prove, and discern the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. God's will is "good." Or, should I say that all things work together for good, to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). It isn't always easy. It wasn't necessarily meant to be fun. However, it is always "good." As we walk on with God, we find it "acceptable," even when it includes trials, sufferings, and hardships. We also recognize it (usually in hindsight) as being "perfect." Given the opportunity, we probably would live it in exactly the same way again.

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Scars:

Being used of God doesn't mean we have to be perfect. Someone has said, "God never wastes a hurt!"

Let the weak say, "I am strong!" (Joel 3:10). "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).

The ingredients of a cake are not necessarily good. But all things working together makes a good cake (Romans 8:28). All pass through the "School of Hard Knocks." This is the school of difficult life experiences. It breaks, shapes, and makes us. Someone once said, "He who bears no cross deserves no crown." No cross; no crown. No battle; no victory. Our experiences help us to be profitable to others, and God's kingdom, throughout life. One man referred to our role as being a "wounded healer." Because we have felt the sting of wounds ourselves, we are in the best position to adequately minister to others who are wounded or hurting.

Warren and David Wiersebe in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service* said, "The nature of Christian ministry is such that it presents us with daily opportunities that can become either tests to build us up or temptations to tear us down." Life's experiences can make us better or bitter.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). I'm sometimes cautious of praying for patience or to be more patient. Why? The Scripture makes it plain that tribulations, trials, tests, and suffering brings about patience. However, it also leads to experience and provides hope.

"Moreover [let us also be full of joy now!] let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character (approved faith and tried integrity). And character [of this sort] produces [the habit of] joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation" (Romans 5:3-4, *AMP*).

Tim Hansel in *Holy Sweat* tells of a revealing research done concerning 413 famous and gifted people. Two researchers spent years trying to discover the source of their greatness. The common thread that ran through most (392) of their lives was that they had to triumph over difficult obstacles in order to become who they were. Obstacles became opportunities.

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Nancy Shirley in her lesson “Addicted to the Ministry” wonders what might have been said of Jesus in His day:

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Heritage           | Joseph isn't your father!   |
| Birthplace         | A barn  |
| Birth announcement | By shepherds, not too well known for their integrity in those days.       |
| Name               | One of the most common in the land.                                       |
| Looks              | No beauty in Him, that we should desire Him.                              |
| Neighborhood       | Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?                                  |
| Wealth             | A pair of turtle doves at His circumcision; a borrowed tomb at His death. |
| Status             | Servant of all.   |
| Possessions        | Not a place to lay His head.  |
| Goal in life       | Born to die.  |
| Temperament        | A Man of sorrows; acquainted with grief.                                  |
| Popularity         | Despised and rejected of men.   |
| Companions         | A friend of prostitutes and sinners.                                      |

Supposed “scars” did not stop Jesus from effective ministry. Neither should you allow yours to hold you back. Scars can be stumbling blocks or stepping stones. Step into a bright future.

*Sanctified:*

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

Sanctification is to set apart for a purpose, separated unto God. Too often we connect the will of God with:

- ▶ Location: Where should I go?
- ▶ Vocation: What should I do?

But the most important question is, “What should I be?” God is interested in our character; in what we are becoming. It is pivotal for each of us to live a life of holiness and purity, and

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abstaining from sin. John Wesley once wrote to his mother, Susanna, and asked for a list of sins to avoid. She wisely responded: "Whatever weakens your reason, whatever impairs the tenderness of your conscience, whatever obscures your sense of God, whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind, whatever takes away from your relish for spiritual things, that to you is sin, no matter how innocent it is in itself."

"Your task...to build a better world,' God said. I answered, 'How? The world is such a large, vast place, and there's nothing I can do,' But God in all His wisdom said, 'Just build a better you'" (Author Unknown).

### *Seek and Search:*

Seek the lost, "For the Son on man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).





## The Wait of the Harvest

By  
Bruce A. Howell

News flash! Something incredible has taken place on earth. Population has surpassed 6.4 billion. Our world now boasts of 440 megacities with more than 1,000,000 inhabitants each. What an awesome opportunity! With such impressive prospects, why am I experiencing sleepless nights? Why this nervous awareness that the waiting harvest is slipping through our hands? Why the haunting dreams of untouched cities? Why do images of lost souls pass through my mind like power point presentations?

The weight of the world lingers inescapable every minute of my day. I can't get away from it! I am consumed with reaching the world. This is the day of the church. God wants to give us revival that we cannot imagine. But, He expects wise and proper stewardship of our time, talent, and treasure. We need more workers in the field so we can facilitate the end-time outpouring the Lord has promised.

What's the big deal? Jesus identified it. There is a gigantic crop, but few reapers (Luke 10:2). No workers. No reaped harvest. It's as simple as that! The solution is as obvious. We need more people to carry the truth to the waiting billions. Will you carry the weight of the harvest!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). I once tried to teach this verse to my little girl. She kept getting hung up on "begotten." She would say, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only *forgotten* Son..." Really, it was good theology. God loved us so much that He forgot Himself, robed Himself in flesh, and came and dwelled among us (John 1:1-14). Jesus paid the price on Calvary for our redemption. "For God bought you with a high price" (1 Corinthians 6:20, *NLT*). The songwriter said, "He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. I needed someone to wash my sins away." If God was willing to pay such an enormous cost imagine how valuable a lost soul must be in His sight.

Evangelism is our main concern. Proclaim the gospel. Win the lost to Christ. Bringing someone to Him requires time, effort, and financial investment. Is it worth it? Jesus thought so. I refer to Luke 15 as "The Lost Chapter." Notice it follows the "God of the Full House" account. "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and

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compel them, to come in that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). Luke 15 tells three short stories of things lost. The discerning reader will even find a fourth. The chart that follows reveals things lost and the value they represented.

| Things Lost | Things Represented:             |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Lost Lamb   | Livelihood                      |
| Lost Coin   | Life's Savings                  |
| Lost Son    | A family's investment in a life |

Jesus gave these parables in response to sharp criticism from scribes and Pharisees. They were shocked that Jesus spent so much time with sinners and ate with them. They gave Him a tough time. They reasoned, “You can tell the character of a man by looking at the company he keeps!” “You show me your friends and I’ll show you what type of person you are.” This chapter highlights our invitation to rejoice with God as sinners are reached; and to follow the Master’s example in aggressively seeking for the lost. The religious leaders had missed the point because of their maintenance mindset: *Sinners were those Jesus came to reach*. He recognized their soul value and sought to reclaim them for the kingdom. They embodied His purpose in dropping into our world. He came for those that needed help.

Jesus set his listeners up. “Wouldn't you leave...and *go* after the lost one *until* you found it?” (Luke 15:4, *MSG, Emphasis Mine*). The answer was obvious to the spectators. In each of the three stories someone searched non-stop for the lost. We give up too easily. God, give us a spirit of endurance and diligence. Some of us are naïve enough to think that the lost should find their own way into the church. That has never been the biblical imperative. We are repeatedly admonished to, “Go!”

Each of the three stories has the following in common:

- ▶ Something lost.
- ▶ Something sought.
- ▶ Something found.
- ▶ Something celebrated.

Dr. Neil Chadwick in his sermon “Lost and Found” said, “The value of a particular item can be determined according to the amount of effort invested in finding it, if and when it

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becomes lost.” The emphasis in each story is not on the time it takes to find the lost, but on the value of it.

Just like the Shepherd going out into the night searching for the lost sheep, Jesus vigorously and tirelessly seeks lost souls. He expects more than our silent witness.

The lady looking thoroughly for her lost coin reminds us our search is for something valuable and costly. She used what she had. We often think we need special equipment or resources to be evangelistic. Just use what you’ve got. The woman took a candle, providing light, to increase her chances of seeing. She also used her broom to carefully sweep the vicinity. She continued to “seek diligently” until she found her valued possession (Luke 15:8).

The third story refers to the prodigal son. The *NIV* is more specific when it calls him the “lost son.” He takes his inheritance, spends it on worldly living, comes to himself, and returns home. In him we clearly see the basic state of mankind: rebellious and disobedient. “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son” (Luke 15:21, *NIV*). The lost son thought his value had decreased because of his sinful actions. The loving father is God and is depicted as waiting, watching, running, embracing, kissing, and rejoicing. Christianity is the only world religion that has such a loving Father who enthusiastically seeks men. The elder brother, out of touch with his father’s heartbeat, is compared to the Pharisees. His father reasoned, “But it was fitting to make merry, to revel and feast and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!” (Luke 15:32, *AMP*). We can hear His heart beating throughout Scripture as we read about Him saving lost souls. He is moved to compassion as He looks over a gone astray world. Evangelism is the heartbeat of God. His desire is that none of His children be lost.

“Rejoice with me...I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10, *NIV*). He didn’t specifically say angels are partying, but there is rejoicing “in the presence of the angels.” Conceivably, you have read these verses and imagined the angels breaking into a praise dance. Maybe they are. But, if the angels are not the ones rejoicing, who is? It is our caring, heavenly Father. Add to this the possibility of a wider crowd—the saints that have gone before and the great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). One thing for sure, God celebrates when a lost soul repents; turning from the wrong path to the right one. And anything that makes God happy makes me happy too. Every service should be a celebration when we see someone repent, being baptized in Jesus

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name, or being filled with the Holy Ghost. Heaven is standing by. God is ready for a divine party. All that is needed is for a lost soul to be found.

Below is a summary of the conditions found in each of the narratives:

|       |  |  |
|-------|--|--|
| Sheep | Lost through ignorance                         | Lost, knew it was lost; didn't know its way home.        |
| Coin  | Lost through carelessness or neglect of others | Lost, didn't know it was lost; didn't know its way home. |
| Son   | Lost through his own willfulness               | Lost, knew he was lost; knew his way home.               |

Reading through Luke 15 have you determined how you fit into the stories? Here's how.

- ▶ Become the shepherd searching for the frightened lost lamb.
- ▶ Become the woman, lighting the candle of the gospel, searching for the coin insignificant to others.
- ▶ Become like the loving father anxiously praying, waiting and watching for the lost son's return home. Get in touch with your Dad's heartbeat!

Vance Havner wrote of the Titanic that sank in 1912. Remember, it was reputed to be unsinkable. "The only thing it ever did was sink." Departing from England it had all sorts of passengers aboard. There were millionaires, celebrities, middle income earners, and even poor folks. There were people from all walks of life. But a few hours after the historical disaster, when they published a list in New York, it carried only two categories—lost and saved. In the end all distinctions are set aside. It all comes down to—lost or saved. Or, I should say, lost or found.

Seek God's will. The principle in God's Word is, "If you don't seek, you won't find." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

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"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

### **The Fire Still Falls**

By

Melinda Poitras

We say, "People don't want God  
People don't care  
We try and we try  
They don't notice we're there!"

We stand fast in God's compassion  
And the love He came to prove.  
Yet fall short of believing  
That He can still move.

Arise, oh believer!  
Lift up your head  
The voice of truth calls you  
God is not dead!  
People are searching  
Won't you show the way?  
Remember to love them  
Remember to pray.

For across the great distance  
God still softly calls  
The war is still raging  
The fire still falls.



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### *Spotlight*

Jim Sleeve said, "Exposure breeds a burden." Several years ago, a young person, on the Next Step program in the Baltic Republics, expressed, "My calling is reinforced when missionaries visit our church." Obviously this is one of the many reasons for face-to-face contact with missionaries as they travel on deputation.



## Seeing Challenges, Solutions, and Horizons

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Seems almost everyone is looking for a hero. Some wildly imagine super heroes, equipped with mega-powers, dressed in capes and tights, battling in the forces of good and evil, only brought down by kryptonite or some other outlandish phenomena. Others celebrate and idolize sports heroes struggling to make yard-line progress, chasing or catching pigskin, pursued by hefty opponents. They relish in the adrenalin rush of victory, and shrink under the drain of defeat. In missions, we honor and appreciate spiritual heroes. By faith, they walk into the world of the unknown; unknown languages, unknown cultures, unknown resources, and unknown circumstances. They do not walk by sight. They walk by promise. "I have set before you an open door" (Revelation 3:8). "Every place that the sole of your feet will tread upon, I have given to you" (Joshua 1:3, *ESV*). "I will be with you!"

Admittedly, I wasn't feeling I fit into any category of heroes the early morning I rolled out of bed in Manila, Philippines. Yes, I jubilated in the fiftieth year of the United Pentecostal Church in these islands, praised God for His faithfulness and supernatural empowerment, and nostalgically recalled the sacrifices of multiple missionaries and hundreds of Filipino leaders who provided the nourishment of blood, sweat, and tears ensuring the progress of the church to this stage. Yet, my mind was tortured by the millions in Manila still needing truth, dozens of countries waiting for the Gospel light, and struggles of circumstances faced by several of our missionary front-liners. I needed to get out for a bit of exercise. I considered jogging, but lacked zeal, or the needed strength or speed. A walk would suffice. I launched into Ayala Street; Manila's Wall Street equivalent. I quickly admired the stunning structures awed by how they painted such a dramatic contrast to what is found in the ghetto areas of every metropolis. Walking briskly through a tunnel I noticed a bank sign. I was captivated by the words, **"See challenges, not barriers; see solutions, not differences; and see horizons, not borders."** There I stood gazing at the sign quietly memorizing the motto written there. People detoured around me, giving me a suspicious glance. I had found a gem; a bit of signboard theology. It's amazing, a nugget for a sermon by merely paying attention to the world around you. I knew I had to preach using that phrase, and have done so several times. Here, this treasured phrase suitably depicts the heroes of foreign missions: our veterans.

My heart makes a slow journey into my throat, and tears ripple down my cheeks as I survey the sacrifices missionaries made (and make) to bring us to where we are today. Daniel Scott said it right, our veteran missionaries are "like seeds, which, planted in the earth, burst forth to yield much fruit." How do you count from one to nearly two million? Sacrifice equals souls gained. It all began when our organization saw their mission as taking "the whole Gospel to the whole world, by the whole church. " Missionaries stepped forward armed with vision. They saw challenges as



opportunities, not barriers. They saw solutions when faced with problems, not differences. They envisioned horizons to be conquered, not borders to be restricted.

Here's a sampling of how the overseas church was planted, in the over six decades that have brought us to modern missions in the United Pentecostal Church International. I've stood beside the grave where missionary parents buried their beloved daughter killed in an accidental shooting. I've journeyed to areas where missionaries started their labors in a leprosy colony, or stood on street corners holding an English tract asking, "Can you read this?" I've visited three nations where missionaries lost their lives in automobile accidents. I've visited churches destroyed by civil war, and wept as I walked with missionary giants who stood strong and with their saints, through it all. I've stood helplessly by the caskets of veteran missionaries who came home from their fields, stricken in health, and died months or a few short years later. I've been there, trying to get the release of a missionary who died, so the body could be shipped home to a waiting family. I've hugged the necks of missionaries as they sent their kids from their homes to North America. I've written countless e-mails, prayed numerous prayers, to and for missionaries going through struggles, yet remaining faithful.

I've read of a missionary hero that died of a stroke, at the age of eighty-three, and was buried on the field; of a husband who built a wooden casket for his late wife; a small son buried overseas; and a missionary lady, dreaming of winning the world, dead within six months of arriving on location, and a missionary colleague doing the burial.

I'm amazed at the sacrifice of a missionary, pioneering works in several nations; preaching one last message, collapsing into a coma, dying, to be buried on his field. I've wondered how strong I would be, lost in the fog in a little plane or in a plane wreck where missionaries miraculously walked away. I'm awed with missionaries, lifers, who waited seventeen long years for registration and resident permits in the country they longed to go. I'm overwhelmed with the courage of a missionary lady that was the last foreigner to board a plane after a coup d'état.

I've day-dreamed of how I would have stood or withstood being placed in a concentration camp for seven months, or how I would have managed a funeral a day after a plane crashed into the mighty Amazon claiming one of my missionaries and nationals. In the four years after that crash over 4,000 were baptized in Jesus name. Multitudes still gather on the beach close to the crash site for regular baptismal services. Entire villages are United Pentecostal.

In each case of sacrifice, revival has ensued, and the church has surged forth in growth. Every advancement was a result of seeing possibilities in impossibilities. Each saw challenges, not barriers; solutions, not differences; and horizons, not borders. Each surrendered a life, went to a land, and left a legacy.

**Missionary Cathy Lynn Killoren  
She Was in the Soul-Saving Business**

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Cathy Lynn Killoren was born April 29, 1955. She was converted in her last year of high school, graduated from Jackson College of Ministries in 1976, went to El Salvador on the Associates in Missions program in 1989, and received missionary appointment in 1995. She labored devotedly in this tiny, revival nation even though she experienced health setbacks which, despite excellent medical care, culminated in her passing. Her faithfulness under difficult circumstances is a testimony to all. Her prayer was if God did not see fit to restore her health that He should take her. God saw best to call her to rest.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

On behalf of the leadership, pastors, and over 100,000 constituents in the United Pentecostal Church of El Salvador, I mention these words concerning our departed, much loved, and long to be remembered Sister Cathy Killoren: “For God is not unrighteous to forget or overlook your labor and the love which you have shown for His name's sake in ministering to the needs of the saints...” (Hebrews 6:10, *AMP*). Because of Cathy's commitment, burden, love, and ministry one day multiplied thousands of Salvadorians will rejoice and reunite with her in heaven.

Cathy was respectfully known from the President's Office to the humblest and poorest areas in this Central American nation. She loved to work with children in orphanages, encourage the ladies, and assist in preaching points. She was instrumental in the successful ministry of the mobile medical clinic. As a result, a church was established in San Juan La Ceiba. Thousands of Bible studies were taught as people awaited treatment.

Cathy's life reminds me of the initial thinking of a group, started over three hundred years ago, concerned with lives lost in the Atlantic Ocean, within a mile from land. This little cluster couldn't stand to think of people going down so close to their shores, so went into the life-saving business. They built little huts of refuge along the shoreline. Their motto was, “You have to go out, but you don't have to come back!” They took their task seriously, and risked all, because they prized human life. Over time the US Coast Guard took over the job and adopted the same values. Souls are lost on the seas and in the storms of life. Our commission has not altered. Cathy went out, realizing that she did not have to come back. She was in the soul-saving business!



## Sensing God's Direction

**S**tory:

Everyone has a call story. Gordon MacDonald in *God's Calling Plan* said, "A 'call story' is a history of whispering words and events that capture the soul and make us aware God is speaking."

Some call stories are dramatic. Others are audible. Some are like continual dropping until you respond, "Okay, Lord!" David Livingstone could never get away from, "I have sometimes seen in the morning sun the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been." The idea keeps coming back.

Crown Financial Ministries in an article entitled "Knowing God's Will" said, "God doesn't use burning bushes much anymore to communicate with His people, but He does communicate through burning hearts—hearts that are in tune to His Word and hearts that love and worship their Lord Jesus Christ."

### **Missionary James Burton, Our Faithful Friend**

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Four generations of Burtons have either lived or ministered on Venezuelan soil. Other members of the family have served God in the homeland. They knew James Burton as husband, father, and grandfather. I knew him as a dear friend. When I was a young missionary in El Salvador, Venezuela was one of the first countries outside of Central America that I visited. Brother Burton, as the field superintendent, had me come there several times and I was privileged to have him with us in El Salvador. He was quiet, possessed a peaceful spirit; was always cheerful, smiling, and kind. When encountering Brother James Burton, one quickly felt overshadowed in the presence of a gentle giant.

**Faithful:** Brother James Burton sensed the call to distant South America when he was sixteen years of age. Brother and Sister Burton attended Bible school, developed their ministries, and were appointed as foreign missionaries in 1961. A year later they boarded a boat, and headed for Venezuela, never once looking back, always faithful to the call. Upon arrival to their new ministerial home they met three small churches and one preaching point. The foundation had been faithfully laid by others, and he immediately started to build on it. In those days of my "youth meetings" I quickly saw that Venezuela was one of the best kept secrets of the UPCI. Brother Burton was a strong administrator but also dedicated his time to establishing a Bible school. The work was

## *Sensing God's Direction*

formed through teaching and the UPC in that nation became well organized and strong in the apostolic doctrine. Today, we can count over 180,000 constituents, over 800 churches and preaching points, and over 1,000 active ministers of the gospel. In 2007 we celebrated fifty years of the UPC reaching and winning lost souls in Venezuela. Founding missionaries: Lewis Morley, Ernesto Martinez, and James Burton families were honored. I was awed to look out over the 20,000 plus Venezuelans in attendance. Regional Director, Darry Crossley later reported, "It was an amazing sight—the floor of the arena packed with standing crowds for over three hours! The crowds in the bleachers had to be told to quit jumping for fear the whole structure would collapse!" When Brother Burton sensed it was God's direction to turn the church over to national leadership, he left behind one of the strongest churches we have in the world. Building that church wasn't always easy. In fact, reaching souls and a nation is never easy. It is accomplished through faith, and through men and women who are faithful. Today, the church in Venezuela continues to thrive, growing rapidly each year, and is our largest work in all of South America.

Twenty-seven years after Brother Burton's arrival in Venezuela the government took special notice of his faithfulness to their nation. A declaration was made and the President presented him with a beautiful silver medal, the second highest award given for outstanding achievement. Of special note, no Protestant missionary had ever been honored for laboring among the Venezuelans.

Two years later, Brother Burton accepted the challenge of becoming the regional field supervisor (now identified as regional director) of South America. For six years, he faithfully executed his duties in this responsibility and provided leadership and encouragement, to both missionaries and national leaders, throughout South America. When many would have been happy to retire Brother and Sister Burton stepped out of being the RFS and into a new role as missionaries to Uruguay. He served until his health would allow him to serve no longer, and returned to North America. The Burtons had served under appointment for thirty-eight years.

Not only will Brother Burton now hear his Master pronounce, "Well done, good and faithful servant" but he will receive the crown of life. Venezuela honored this faithful man with a silver medal and a declaration, but heaven holds greater commendations. Brother Burton faithfully gave his life, went to a land, and left an undying legacy. The race has been run. The victory has been won. The champion, our faithful friend, has gone home.



# Sensing God's Direction



## Put Your Heart Into It!

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Put your heart into it! That, in a nutshell, summarizes the attitude I have—and advocate for others—concerning work and ministry. When it comes to both, I wholeheartedly want to give it my best shot. I don't ever want to lose heart, become faint-hearted, half-hearted, or cold-hearted about our world that is lost. I will either be whole-hearted or go into prayer and fasting until I have a change of heart.

There is an old chorus that adequately portrays the type of heart we should have when it comes to reaching souls. "Take it all. Take it all. What this world can offer me, take it all. For one hundred years from now it won't matter anyhow. What this world can offer me, take it all."

In Foreign Missions, we often promote faith promise. It involves two parts: faith-giving, and faith-going. Brother John Leaman has often said, "Some give by going. Others go by giving. Without both there are no missions." We give and go because there is a big harvest; a gigantic need. Someone is born every 4.1 seconds. That translates to 15,000 people per hour; 354,000 per day; 10,782,000 per month; and 129,384,000 each year. And they must be reached!

How much should one give to missions? In one developing country when settling for the amount to be paid for services rendered, you will hear, "Give whatever your heart tells you. Give from your heart." Faith promise and partnership in missions is just that: **heart-giving**. God's Word agrees, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give" (2 Corinthians 9:7, *NIV*). Or as the *Amplified Bible* puts it: "Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") giver [whose heart is in his giving]" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

However, I believe that we can do more, and do better, as we put our heart into it.

Our faithful missionaries go across North America presenting their burden nightly for an average of thirteen months or more. What is their message? It's simple. The task cannot be accomplished alone. The missionary is saying, "I need you, for me, to be able to accomplish the call. You need me, for you, to be able to accomplish the call. I will sacrifice by going if you will sacrifice by giving." It is a partnership made up of faith-giving and faith-going.

My heart is full of admiration and thankfulness for thousands of missionaries, AIMers, and ministers that pour their hearts into God's kingdom around the globe. Else Lund served as a missionary for over forty-two years. She writes, "These have been the happiest years of my life. If it were possible I would be happy to do it over and over again except the part...when I broke my hip." Sister Lund went to Africa at a time when the only other mission work on the continent was in South Africa. She put her heart into the cause and never looked back. Literally over a thousand preachers have been trained by Sister Lund. "We have been lost in the fog in our UPC mission plane...and a couple of years later had a plane wreck on the way to the mission air strip at Bomi Hills...The plane was totaled but we all walked away...I have been in coups, attempted coups, an accident, a break-in, several attempted break-ins, civil war, malaria untold times, and on and on."

As I'm working on this article I received word that 1,298 were filled with the Holy Ghost at the National Conference in Madagascar. The Chris Richardson family had already reported 1,493 receiving the Holy Ghost in regional conferences just a couple of months ago. Richardson is a household name in UPCI missions and a very familiar one in Madagascar. Four generations have worked in Madagascar, and in the other islands of the Indian Ocean. Five sets of Richardson's have served or are serving under missionary appointment with the UPCI.

The stories could go on and on of missionaries who tirelessly put their hearts into the mission. The results of their labors, and your support, speak loudly. We are now reaching 186 nations, and have over 24,083 churches and preaching points overseas. Just last year, 101,084 were baptized in Jesus name and 115,030 received the glorious baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Bill Bright once said, "None of us has a long time here on planet earth. It's our split second in eternity when we have an opportunity to invest our lives to help fulfill what our Lord came into this world to do." That is an investment worth making, so put your heart into it!

Young David Livingstone listened intently to a seasoned missionary, "There is a vast plain to the North, where I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been." Those words, "The smoke of a thousand villages" found a resting place deep in David's heart. He arrived in Cape Town at the age of twenty-seven and spent over half his life in Africa. He explored more than a third of African soil believing that he should

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keep on the move instead of staying in one place preaching to a few people. He was convinced that the known world could be reached and there was, and is, no such thing as a closed country to the gospel. He unreservedly proclaimed, "I will open a way to the interior or perish." Popularity and position could not soften his resolve, "I had rather be in the heart of Africa in the will of God than on the throne of England out of the will of God."

Late one night, Chuma and Susi, Livingstone's faithful African companions, entered his hut and found him kneeling at his bedside, his head buried in his hands on the pillow. Looking closer, they were shocked to find he had died in prayer.

These African men carried David Livingstone's body for eleven months across Africa to the Indian Ocean. Months later his remains arrived in Europe and were buried in Westminster Abbey in London. However, his two friends buried his heart at the foot of a nearby tree in Zambia. They said his heart did not belong in England, for he had a heart for Africa. My heart leaps and tears spill just thinking about it. So, you can count on me to put my heart into reaching my world. Can I count on you?

Paul, in Acts 26:12-19 remembers his dramatic call story. Check it out! Personally, I wouldn't like to be knocked down in order to hear God's voice.

*Seasons:*

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven," (Ecclesiastes 3:1, *NIV*). God puts the right person, with the right ministry, in the right place, at the right time.

### And Their Works Follow Them

By  
Bruce A. Howell

Recently, I was in Ecuador for the second Spanish Summit. I heard Brother Elias Limones speak about former missionary, Sister Lucille Farmer. Brother Limones was born in Ecuador and his father was a pastor. He remembers going with his Dad to the airport to meet Sister Farmer. He had never seen a white lady with such blue eyes. He thought she was an angel. There was no money for a hotel, so the Limones family kept her until she could find a place of her own. She stayed in a little room in the back of their house with a concrete floor. She slept on a cot. She used dictionaries and sign language to communicate with the family.

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Years later, after Brother Limones moved to the United States, and was pastoring, he went to Oregon to see her. She directed him to pull out a cardboard box of pictures kept in her humble room. They enjoyed looking through the pictures of his family when he was a child. Sister Farmer was poor and didn't have much more than a cardboard box of memories. But, oh what rich treasures she left behind in Ecuador. While in Quito, I saw over 1,500 ministers and wives representing Spanish-speaking nations in attendance. Just in one church in Quito, Brother Leonardo Becerra pastors some 2,000 saints. How did this happen? Because a missionary was willing to make a great sacrifice. Sacrifice has eternal dividends, and is a smart investment. I am reminded of this Scripture: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; *and their works do follow them*" (Revelation 14:13). The seeds planted by Sister Farmer continue to bear fruit. Her works continue to follow her!

I recently visited Liberia where Sister Pauline Gruise and others labored for many years. She even had to bury one of her missionary colleagues by herself. Our dear Sister Else Lund worked in Liberia and other parts of West Africa for forty-two years. Today, in Liberia alone, 323 pastors, ministers, and Gospel workers lead 154 churches and preaching points with 24, 334 constituents.

Sister Margaret Calhoun paid the ultimate sacrifice, yielding her life to the mighty Amazon River in a plane accident. She worked side-by-side with the Bennie DeMerchant family (who arrived in Brazil in October 1965). Today, just in the Amazon drainage area there are about 650 churches, over 500 ministers, and 45, 000 constituents. There are 125 churches in the city of Manaus alone. There are places along the Amazon where the entire village is part of the United Pentecostal Church. What happened? And their works followed them! "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matthew 6:25).

In the midst of all the modern conveniences designed to ease living in the twenty-first century God still calls on men and women to sacrificially take the gospel to the ends of the earth. They are sacrificing today so that multiplied thousands can have a better tomorrow. From every tribe, kindred, and tongue they will be rejoicing around the throne in heaven. Max Lucado said, "It's what we do for Christ in the here and now that will make a difference in the then and there."

What can I say? And their works do follow them!

Timing is important:

"When the fullness of the time was come" (*KJV*).

"When the right time came" (*NLT*).

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"When the proper time had fully come" (*AMP*).

"When the time had fully come" (*RSV*).

"When the right time finally came" (*TEV*).

(Galatians 4:4)



God takes us through various seasons in our lives.

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Plowing           | Preparing   |
| Seedtime/Planting | Sowing      |
| Growth            | Persevering |
| Harvest           |             |

A call includes a call to preparation: "Praise be the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons" (Daniel 2:20-21, *NIV*). Do what God has already told you to do until He tells you to do something else.

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Warren Wiersbe said, "God prepares the person for the work and the work for the person, and, if we permit Him, He brings them together in His providence." Wiersbe also said in *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching* that, "He is always preparing us for what He has already prepared for us." Rufus Parker in *A Reflection of the Man in the Mirror* adds, "The reason there are few laborers is not because God is not sending, but because we are not developing."

There are three types of time in the Bible:

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Chronos | Chronological time; governed by the clock.   |
| Kairos  | Right time or strategic time. This is time measured by special moments; God-moments. |
| Pleroo  | Fullness of time.  |

This can be aptly compared to life.

|         |                                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Chronos | Conception/pregnancy/development. |
| Kairos  | Labor/delivery.                   |
| Pleroo  | Birth.                            |

The same thing happens with the transition of the cocoon to a butterfly.

We also could look at the life of Jesus.

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Chronos | Birth, growth, and ministry of Jesus Christ.         |
| Kairos  | The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. |
| Pleroo  | Pentecost.   |

Myles Monroe asserts, "You only become what you are becoming right now." In his book *The Principles and Power of Vision*, he speaks of three stages of life:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Birth and dependency | Rely totally on outside help to survive.         |
| Independence         | Capturing what we were born to do.               |
| Interdependence      | Pass dream and vision on to the next generation. |



## *Sensing God's Direction*

Monroe, in *Seasons of Change* says that seasons denote transition of time—the point of convergence when two seasons meet. Inherent in the seasons are the concepts of:

- ▶ Change.
- ▶ Transition.
- ▶ Difference (replacing one season with another).
- ▶ Temporary conditions (seasons are not permanent).
- ▶ Time periods (present conditions are subject to time).

### *Situations:*

The experiences we go through are not accidents. They are appointments. Many times the will of God is sensed more effectively as hindsight rather than foresight. We look back over situations in our past and see that God's hand and will were evident throughout the process. Let the will of God unfold for you. Be careful not to make life decisions when you are angry, confused, or frustrated. The same applies when you are in the valley. Rest and climb. Make decisions on the peak, when you are on top of things emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

The only survivor of a shipwreck swam to a small island. He prayed that the Lord would rescue him. Every day he searched over the ocean to see if help was close. It seemed that no help was coming so he built a tiny hut on the island made out of wood that he found and palm fronds.

One day he returned home after looking for food. He was shocked to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up into the sky. He was devastated. The worst had happened. His heart was filled with misery. He yelled, "God how could you allow this to happen to me."

Early the next morning he was awakened to the sound of a boat approaching the island. It had come to rescue him.

"How did you know that I was here?" asked the man.

They replied, "We saw your smoke signal rising into the sky."

God had answered. Just not in the expected way. Like the smoke that rose from the little island your prayers go up to the Lord.

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Money will not be an obstacle if the person is called. When you focus on His agenda, God assumes responsibilities for your needs.

"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met" (Matthew 6:30-33, *MSG*).

*Seer:*

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18).





## **View from the Summit**

By

Bruce A. Howell

A village chief lay dying. He called his three sons and told them, "I know I'll soon die. I must first choose one of you to be the next chief of this village. I want you to go to the mountain, climb it, and bring me something from there. Hurry!"

The three boys hurried off to the mountain. After a couple of days the first came and stood before the aged chief. "Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and I have brought you a tree limb." The chief asked him to wait for the return of the other two sons. Several days passed and the second son returned to the father. "Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and have gone above where the trees are. I have brought you a rock from the mountain."

After a long time the final son came before his father. "Father," he began, "I have climbed high on the mountain. I have gone above where the trees are, and have climbed to the top. From the summit I could see far into the distance. I could see the river flowing, and smoke rising from distant huts. I saw the beauty of God's creation. However, I have nothing in my hand to bring you." The old chief whispered, "You, my third son will lead my people because even though you have nothing in your hand to bring me, you do have something in your heart."

I can relate to that. God has placed a desire in my heart—and yours too—to reach our lost world. From the summit, we refocus our attention on the need, envisioning what can be done to make an impact for eternity.

Recently, I looked carefully at my heart (and preached on the subject too). God does not usually work through us, unless He first does His work in us. I looked at dozens of heart types in God's Word. I'll spare you the agony of dragging you through 830 references to the heart found there. I want to keep my readers! The question comes down to, "What type of heart do I have?" The heart of the church is missions. It is reaching the lost. That is the view from the summit!

Vision casting experts tell us that one should be able to state his vision in twenty-one words or less. God does it in five. That's right. In the English language, the Bible reveals five words of vision that has affected over two thousand years of church planting and growth. These words announced the Lord's purpose in coming to the earth, His death on the cross, His powerful resurrection from the grave, and His ascension into Heaven. He left His throne in glory, robed Himself in flesh, because of five words of vision. Everything He did was

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focused on and measured through five words of vision. Does this advance the cause—the vision? False accusations could not stop him. Betrayal could not stop him. Beatings could not stop him. A crown of thorns could not stop him. The load of the cross could not stop him. Every step to Calvary, the place of the skull, could not stop him.

Why? Because of five words of vision. He was driven by five mere words of vision. They were words of power, of potential, of purpose of productivity. What were the words of vision? And what do they have to do with us today? What do they have to do with the United Pentecostal Church International?

Our existence as a church is announced in five words of vision. Our existence as a Christian is contingent on it. Except for five words of vision we would have no need of remaining on the earth. The same five words should be the reason for all that we do as a church today. They are, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

In every English translation of the Bible those five words remain the same, “I will build My church!” The words were simple, the vision was clear. They were not hidden in verbosity—many words that mean nothing.

Building requires:

- ▶ A plan (a vision): You must sit down and count the cost.
- ▶ A foundation (the apostle's doctrine): It is unshakable. A solid rock, and not built upon the sands. Jesus is our chief cornerstone.
- ▶ Walls: Do not stop with the foundation. Continue....in the apostle's doctrine.
- ▶ Financial investment: tithes, offerings. Count the cost, and be determined to pay it.
- ▶ Work, and determination: Give it your all—your best.
- ▶ Completion: Keep sowing until church growth happens and until the world is reached.
- ▶ Maintenance: Having begun in the Spirit, living godly in this evil world, prayer, fasting.

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Isaiah 6 reveals three types of vision:

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Upward Vision  | Isaiah 6:1-3. |
| Inward Vision  | Isaiah 6:5.   |
| Outward Vision | Isaiah 6:8.   |

Wayne Cordeiro in *Doing Church as a Team* writes, "Vision is the ability to see what others may not. It is the capacity to see potential—what things could be. Vision is the ability to see what God sees and the God-given motivation to bring what you see to pass!"

One of my favorite "vision" quotes is, "For those who dream, the road of life glistens with a million golden promises. To journey along that road, all that is needed is the strength to hold on to those dreams and the vision to see them through" (Caroline Gray).

Vision is faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Each of us needs a vision in five areas:

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Vision of Heaven                                       | John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11. |
| Vision of the Value of a Lost Eternal Soul             | 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.    |
| Vision of Hell   | Jude 23; Luke 16:19-31. |
| Vision of a Lost and Dying World                       | Mark 8:23-25.           |
| Vision of the Lord of the Harvest saying, "Well done!" | Matthew 25:21.          |

After Adam and Eve transgressed in the Garden of Eden, God asked, "Adam, where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). The same question could be asked of you, "Where are you?"

- ▶ What is your ministry?
- ▶ What is your vision?
- ▶ What is the will of God for your life?

Regardless of where we are from, and our age, or our gender we each have three things in common. We have a past, present, and Lord willing, a future.

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|         |                      |
|---------|----------------------|
| Past    | Where have you been? |
| Present | Where are you now?   |
| Future  | Where are you going? |

We need to make sure that our routine conversation is more focused on where we are going rather than where we have been; more centered on our tomorrows rather than our yesterdays.

T. D. Jakes tells us that everyone has a date of entry (starting) in this world (birth date) and a date of departure (finishing) from this world (death date). All that is between the two is the – (blank). What are you putting in the blank between the time of your entry into this world and departure? On November 22, 1963 an assassin killed President John F. Kennedy. His simple tombstone reads: 1917 – 1963.

Kennedy cast a vision for putting a rocket on the moon. On July 20, 1969, the United States launched a space rocket, landed it on the moon, and brought the crew back home safely. This, like all compelling visions, requires four distinct qualities, according to James Davis:

- ▶ Purpose: Why should the vision be activated?
- ▶ Projection: When will the vision be achieved?
- ▶ Plan: How will the vision be accomplished?
- ▶ Promise: Who will benefit from the vision?

Jesus told Saul, "...for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose" (Acts 26:26). He had an understanding of his purpose in life and ministry. Later, Paul was able to conclude, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

How did Paul get this vision? He asked. After asking, "Who art thou, Lord" (Acts 9:5) he then asked, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). The Apostle Paul received his heavenly vision by asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Throughout his lifetime (as we should also do) he continued to ask this same question.

God spoke to Habakkuk and said, "Write the vision, and make it plain" (Habakkuk 2:2). Writing down the vision will help you to remember what God originally said to you. Writing also brings about clarity. I especially like this translation of God's order to His prophet; "Then the Lord said to me, 'Write my answer in large, clear letters on a tablet, so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else. But these things I plan won't happen right



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away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed" (Habakkuk 2:2-3, *NLT*).

In Luke 1 a virgin named Mary was given a vision for her life. She would bring forth the Messiah and call His name Jesus. Naturally, the first thing that came to Mary's mind was, "How shall this be?" The angel gives a brief explanation and says, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." It is important to know the "what" and leave the "how" up to God. Mary's attitude was pure. She said, "Be it unto me according to thy word." She was determined to step into a place of obedience regardless of the outcome.

In conversation I've noticed Brother Bruce Howell saying, "Perhaps not in my lifetime." Vision is the ability to see beyond your lifetime. A God-given vision will outlive you. God gave David a dream. However, into his son's hands was committed the destiny. Both were in alignment with God's design. Together, through the generations, a house was built for God. Vision can be passed from one generation to the next. During the time of harvest, it is not uncommon to see three generations working the field. Like the words of prophecy that came forward at Because of the Times one year, "Meet you in the field!"

### *Sensibility:*

God has given us tremendous evaluation and investigative aids and tools. Common sense is the capacity to reflect on different courses of action and to predict the likely implications of each. "But he must be...sober-minded (sensible, discreet), upright and fair-minded..." (Titus 1:8, *AMP*).

Strange thing about tools: Sometimes they work and sometimes they do not. You need the right tool for the occasion or task at hand. Warning: sensing the will of God is not based entirely on "common sense;" evidence that is based on, "tradition, conventional wisdom, someone's philosophy or perspective." God told Philip to leave a mighty revival in Samaria to go to the desert. It didn't make logical sense but it was the right thing to do. Discovering the will of God requires more than "brain power." Still, there are certain aspects of life and God's will which should be easily discernable.

"Trust in the Lord with all you heart: do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom" (Proverbs 3:5-7, *NLT*).

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Dawson Trotman said, "God gave you an awful lot of leading when He gave you your mind." Do not expect divine guidance where/when common sense or simply reading God's Word would be enough.

Here's how you can use your brain:

- ▶ List options or alternatives.
- ▶ List benefits and advantages of each option (pros).
- ▶ List the consequences or disadvantages of each option (cons).
- ▶ List talents, abilities, and gifts you have to fulfill each option (Luke 14:31-32).
- ▶ List weaknesses, lack of skills, etc. you have in meeting the demands of each option.
- ▶ List the circumstances involved.

Let's take an example from the Book of Acts. Go to Acts 6.

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| They encountered a problem.  | "Greek...widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food" (Acts 6:1-2, <i>NLT</i> ).  |
| They considered the options. | "We...should spend our time preaching and teaching the word of God, not administering a good program" (Acts 6:2, <i>NLT</i> ).  |
| They explained the benefits. | "Then we can spend our time in prayer and preaching and teaching the word" (Acts 6:4, <i>NLT</i> ).   |
| They made a decision.        | "Select seven men...We will put them in charge of this business" (Acts 6:3-4, <i>NLT</i> ).   |
| They reaped the results.     | "God's message was preached in ever-widening circles. The number of believers were greatly increased...and many...Jewish priests were converted" (Acts 6:7, <i>NLT</i> ). |

## *Sensing God's Direction*

### *S*atisfaction:

Doing God's will brings satisfaction and energy: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish the work" (John 4:34).

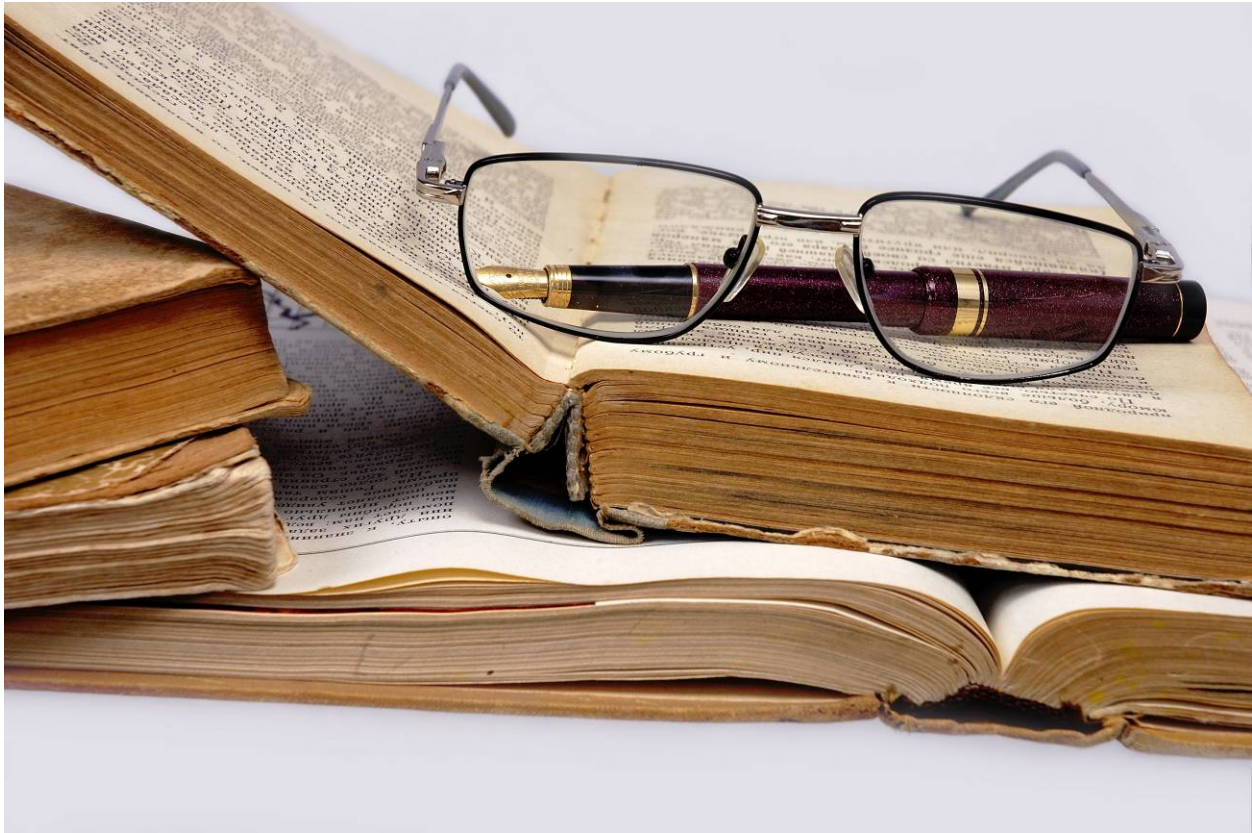
What drowns your thoughts night and day? That is likely the will of God for you (if you are walking in the Spirit, and putting away the lust of the flesh). There is peace being in the perfect will of God. You just want to cry out, "Yes! I was born to do this!"

David Livingstone said, "If you knew the satisfaction of performing a duty, as well as the gratitude to God which the missionary must always feel in being chosen for so noble and sacred a calling, you would feel no hesitation in embracing it. For my own part I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay?"

### *S*tudy:

Someone has said, "Time spent sharpening the sickle is never time that is wasted."

## *Sensing God's Direction*



“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Andy Stanley in his DVD series “Discovering God’s Will” explains why it is so pivotal to study God’s Word when seeking His will:

- ▶ We study His Word to find the big picture: God’s plan for everything that happens.
- ▶ We study His Word to find the commands and law He gives for all to obey.
- ▶ The more we study and learn about God, the closer we get to Him. The closer we get to the understanding of who and what He is, the easier it is to make a decision about God’s plan for our lives.

Howard Hendricks said, “The will of God is found in the Word of God. The more a person grows, the more he begins to think instructively and habitually from a divine perspective.” “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17).

## *Sensing God's Direction*

God will never provide guidance, or ask you to do anything that is contrary to His Word; “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psalm 32:8).

Do not go beyond what is written, “And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that he might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another” (1 Corinthians 4:6).

Stay in the Word! Saturate yourself in the Word! As the hub keeps the wheel centered on the axle, so the Word of God keeps us centered on truth. The Bible is primarily and essentially the written will of God for our lives. Examine the Scriptures. The Bible is our guidebook in all things. He also provides certain unwritten directives. Obey God's written Word first (Psalms 1:2-3). Know God. Love God.

### **Remembering the Past; Promising the Future**

By

Bruce A. Howell

As I co-chaired the Global Council, in Bangkok, Thailand, I was awed by the tremendous fellowship and heritage we possess within the United Pentecostal Church International. Directly in front of me sat Brother Lee Sherry. Thirty-eight years ago, at the age of thirteen, he baptized me in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. To my left sat Brother Robert Rodenbush. At fifteen, I preached my first message in his church. My parents divorced when I was three, and my father died when I was ten. My mother, although familiar with the church as a young lady, fought against my being part of it. Before Mother's death, she received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. My wife, Diane, grew up in the church, and her grandfather was a minister. Together, we have a made up mind, have never looked back, and we are firmly committed and unwavering with the faith once delivered to the saints.

Given the opportunity, you have your own story to tell. I encourage you to take a moment and reflect on it, the battles fought, the victories won, and your steadfast loyalty to apostolic doctrine and right living. It is through upholding truth and uncompromisingly preaching it that we will evangelize our world

I walked away from that meeting rejoicing in my heritage, thankful for what God is doing globally, with a fresh commitment to lift high the banner of truth, and to world evangelism. I trust you will do the same!

## *Sensing God's Direction*

God guides us as we search the Scriptures: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

John Wesley said, “It’s how God teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains us for the journey so we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

### *Stewardship:*

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). Hold on! It’s easy to skip through that verse and move on. Let’s not miss the point. God expects—no requires—us to be faithful. He asks that we be faithful in the small things. Interestingly, those that God selects to do great things for Him were usually found being faithful at small tasks. David was a shepherd boy. Nehemiah was a cupbearer. When you are faithful with the small things, trust is built, and God gives you bigger things to do. If you do your work well, God will give you something else to do. If you do not do your job well, do not be surprised when He takes the task from you, and gives it to someone else to do. Do what you already know to be God’s will.

Colleen Carter, in her lesson entitled “An Extra Set of hands” lists the top twenty things she feels every faithful steward should have:

- ▶ Open mind
- ▶ Obedience
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Honesty
- ▶ Trustworthiness
- ▶ Determination
- ▶ Adjustability
- ▶ Sharp/attentive eyes
- ▶ Patience



## Sensing God's Direction

- ▶ Redeemer of time
- ▶ Industrious
- ▶ Teachable Spirit
- ▶ Diligence
- ▶ Passion
- ▶ Submission
- ▶ Cooperation and Support
- ▶ Willing whenever
- ▶ Servant's heart
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Willing whatever

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Kent Crockett in *Making Today Count for Eternity* provides the following explanation concerning faithfulness:

- ▶ Faithfulness means excellence: doing one's best in every situation.
- ▶ Faithfulness means integrity: being above moral reproach.
- ▶ Faithfulness means dependability: fulfilling commitments.
- ▶ Faithfulness means perseverance: enduring to the finish line.

God expects us to be faithful in every area of life. Here are some specifics:

|        |  |  |
|--------|--|--|
| Time   | What is the priority for our time, and who gives us every second? Each of us has a short life span. When our time is over, we will be judged by what we did for God. | "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength, labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom" (Psalm 90:10, 11). |
| Talent | How do we use the gifts God has given  | "And he said unto them, Take   |

## *Sensing God's Direction*

|           |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|
|           | (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27)? Jesus uses a parable to remind us that our place and service in heaven will depend on the faithfulness of our lives and service on earth. | heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath" (Mark 4:24-25).     |
| Treasure  | Where does God fit into our plan of giving? The first of our increase given to God proves we know and appreciate where everything comes from.                                | "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:33-34). |
| Testimony | How can we show others God's greatness (1 Corinthians 1:5-6)? The way we live is a testimony of God's power and grace to keep us from sin.                                   | "That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:" (1 Corinthians 1:5-6).   |
| Tongue    | How can we claim to love God if we do not talk of Him (Psalm 34:13; 39:1; James 3)? What we say can bless or curse, and needs to be given to God first.                      | "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Psalm 34:13).<br><br>"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me" (Psalm 39:1).                  |
| Temple    | Who needs our bodies presented as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1; 1   | "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of  |

## *Sensing God's Direction*

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <p>Corinthians 6:19-20)? God lives in our hearts, and He wants our bodies to reflect his dwelling place in our lives.</p> | <p>God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).</p> |
|--|---|---|

David J. Hesselgrove in *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* quotes Ralph Martin, the author of *Worship in the Early Church*:

- ▶ The basis of stewardship is God has given abundantly to His children.
- ▶ The most important offering is committing one's life to God.
- ▶ All Christian giving should be voluntary and cheerful.
- ▶ Stewardship is offered in accordance to one's ability and the needs of others.
- ▶ God is no man's debtor.
- ▶ Churches and people should be open in providing accountability in all areas of stewardship.
- ▶ Concern for the welfare of others creates a bond of love between the giver and the recipient.

Ask yourself these questions taken from the *Daily Walk Study Bible*:

- ▶ Are you faithful in little things? Little responsibilities? Little promises? Small amounts of time, or talents (Luke 16:10)?

## *Sensing God's Direction*

- ▶ Are you faithful with money (Luke 16:11)?
- ▶ Are you faithful with the associations of others (Luke 16:12)? Are you as careful of the properties and reputation of others as you are with your own?

Accomplishing a vision will require faithful stewardship of time, talents, and treasures. These are the prices on the road to success. Like the DaVinci Awards ad says, "Honoring those who have a will and have found a way." There is a divine will to be accomplished in the right way, and that requires stewardship.

Dear Brother and Sister Rodenbush:

Today, we were at the Community Eight assembly. Through the years you have been instrumental in opening nations to the truth. Only eternity will reveal how many souls have been reached, challenged, and changed. Let me take a moment and highlight a couple.

Your little family stepped on Ghana's soil over forty years ago. One of the saints that stood by your side was Sister J. Monnie. Did you ever know that generations later her twin granddaughters would be standing in a Pentecostal altar? Both their grandmother and mother have stepped into eternity. The girls stood dressed the same, hair fixed nearly the same, and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit simultaneously. Did you ever know that your obedience to a call would have a domino effect on succeeding generations?

Did you know that over twenty-five years ago, in the midst of office details as the Coordinator of Overseas Ministries, as you took time to write a sensitive note, or make a kind comment, you would challenge my life toward continued mission's commitment.

When we get over there, one by one, from West African nations, from Europe to the Middle East, and the many nations where you've ministered, precious souls will greet you with a question, "Did you ever know?"

*S*ervice/Servanthood:

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). The Greek word used means "to run an errand, to be an attendant, to wait upon a host, teacher, friend."

Arthur Ashe said, "True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve at whatever the cost."

# *Sensing God's Direction*



## **My Constant Prayer**

Lord,  
I am your servant.  
Place me wherever I can be of most service to you,  
With the talents and ministry you have given to me.

I am your living sacrifice.  
You alone are the Boss.  
You are in control of my life...  
Let me see clearly the vision,  
Hear and sense your will,  
And walk uprightly in the footsteps you have for me.

I want to know you...  
And be in constant touch with you.  
Help me keep my priorities correct:

Love you,  
Love my family,  
Love my world...

I'm reaching for you.  
Reaching for your constant will.  
Reaching my family,  
Sojourners on the road of life,  
Reaching the lost...  
Reaching!

## Sensing God's Direction

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve" (Albert Schweitzer).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the salvation plan provided to mankind. It does not stop at our salvation, but empowers us to be of service in God's kingdom.

| Dimension | Purpose  | Bless            | Kingdom                | Who?              | Results                   | Scripture     |
|-----------|----------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Salvation | To save. | I am blessed.    | Adding to the Kingdom. | This is for me.   | I am part of the harvest. | Acts 2:38; 47 |
| Service   | To send. | I am a blessing. | Advancing the Kingdom. | This is for them. | I help.                   | Acts 1:8      |

"But you shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends (the very bounds) of the earth" (Acts 1:8, *AMP*).



Jim George in *God's Man of Influence* offers nine insights on establishing a servant ministry. They include:



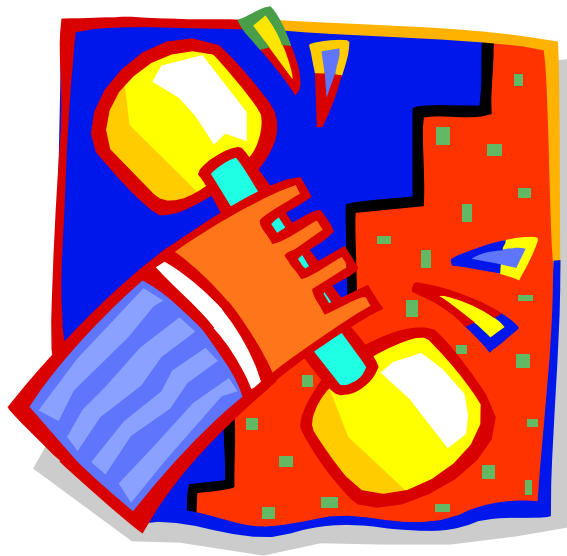
## *Sensing God's Direction*

- ▶ Serve for a higher purpose (1 Thessalonians 2:1).
- ▶ Serve in spite of your situation (1 Thessalonians 2:2).
- ▶ Serve with integrity (1 Thessalonians 2:3).
- ▶ Serve to please God (1 Thessalonians 2:4).
- ▶ Serve with pure motives (1 Thessalonians 2: 5-6).
- ▶ Serve with love (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).
- ▶ Serve sacrificially (1 Thessalonians 2:9).
- ▶ Serve blamelessly (1 Thessalonians 2:10).
- ▶ Serve to nurture (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Understanding that we are servants is simple. To actually serve; that is a problem. It does not fit into the world's view of leadership nor does it please the desires of the flesh. We must constantly strive to be the servant that God wants us to be.

### *Strengths:*

We each are given talents, gifts of the Spirit, to be of service in God's kingdom. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. The tendency is to spend time developing weaknesses. That will only enable you to be mediocre. Spend time developing your talents and you will excel. God will provide a place for you to use your unique gifting in His kingdom.



"And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

## *Sensing God's Direction*

Lisa Jefferson, the phone supervisor who took Todd Beamer's call on Flight 93 said, "I believe that God used me as a messenger for the Beamer family and to deliver God's message the way he wanted it to be delivered, and I'm pretty sure God used me for that reason. You know, God has an assignment for you that only you can fulfill. And I think God uses us as we are with our unique gifts, abilities, and experiences. And I wasn't prepared for my test on September 11<sup>th</sup>. I went on faith and made myself available. God is not concerned about your ability, but your availability."

Know your ministry.

The Lord usually uses us in our area of giftedness (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11-13).

What you enjoy best could be indicative of God's will for your life.

### *Suffering:*

Bad things happening to us do not mean that we are out of the will of God (Romans 8:28). Ask Job. Suffering doesn't mean that we are out of the will of God (1 Peter 3:17; 1 Peter 4:19). Ask Paul. Bad things make us what and who we are. When we suffer we become more sensitive to the needs of others, and what they are going through. Jesus understands what we are passing through. He was tempted, and overcame (Hebrews 4:15; Luke 4). Sometimes, the little nuisances and difficulties that cause us to want to give up. They become like sand in our shoes. Bad situations change. No condition is permanent. This too shall pass!

"[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]" (Philippians 3:10, *AMP*).

God's call, will and vision may require suffering. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

## Sensing God's Direction

Warren and David Wiersbe in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service* advise the following:

- ▶ Expect it (1 Peter 4:12; John 15:18, 20).
- ▶ Accept it as God's gift (Philippians 1:29).
- ▶ Evaluate it and yield to God's purposes (Job 23:10).
- ▶ Learn to live a day at a time and give your cares to God (Psalms 69:19; 1 Peter 5:7).
- ▶ Trust God to turn suffering into eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).



### From Here to There

By  
Bruce A. Howell

**Forewarning: These words may not be for you; yet.** I address a select group of people; those, around the world, who feel they are taking three steps forward and two steps back. At heart missionaries are conquerors, ever ready to respond to the challenge of reaching nations for Christ. But, at times the conqueror feels conquered. I'm not whining or complaining; just facing reality. We work in environments we did not create, and find difficult to change. What do we do in such cases?

## Sensing God's Direction

1. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). That's the bottom line. It's His Church and not ours; an apt reminder in good times and consoling in not-so-good times.
2. Three steps forward and two steps back is progress. Change is seldom at the lightning speed we prefer. The organizational structure we work with may have a unique characteristic. One man cannot swiftly destroy it. One man cannot hastily revolutionize it. At times, "church evolution" takes place. Things gradually improve as we strive for perfection. It is essential to assemble a team of change agents, cast the vision, and work toward it; despite the hurricanes of resistance. Sound the alarm when you see the church isn't moving forward. However, even setbacks may be development in disguise or may lead to progress.
3. The strength of a man consists in finding out the way God is going and going in that direction. How do we move from where we are to where we want to go? Keep your eyes fixed on the destination. Have a travel plan.
4. It is difficult to see progress during a single day, but obvious when looking back over the long haul. Keep a diary or list of victories. Count your blessings. Name them one by one. It will surprise you what the Lord has done.
5. Encourage fellow sojourners who may be struggling. Our place on this earth is not to see through others, but to see others through.

Dan Southerland in *Transitioning* explains four factors for consideration in moving (churches) from here to there.

- **The distance you must go.** The farther you are going the slower you must move. Turnarounds require time.
- **The size of the ship.** The bigger the church or change, the slower you must go. It takes thirteen miles to turn an oil tanker around.
- **The age of the ship.** The older the church is, the slower change should be implemented.
- **The toughness of the leaders.** The tougher the leaders are who are implementing the change the faster you can go. Leaders should be tough enough to lead but gentle enough to care. Never lose your vision. Don't give up. You can make it. Remember, I'm on the sidelines cheering you on!

## Sensing God's Direction

Suffering or trouble can be for our benefit because they strengthen us as Christians. "It takes a world with trouble in it to train men and women for their high calling as children of God. Faced with trouble, some people (like Joseph) grow wings; others buy crutches. Which kind are you?" (*Daily Walk Bible*).

*Specific:*

God's will can be general or specific. His general will is clearly revealed throughout Scripture. It is in sensing His specific will that most people have difficulty. The general will of God encompasses the things He desires for all of us. Basically, it is referring to obeying His commandments. They apply to everybody. Repent, be baptized in Jesus name, and receive the Holy Spirit. Do not lie, cheat or steal. Pray without ceasing. Have exemplary ethics, morals, and lifestyle. Need I go on? His specific will applies to specific people in specific ways. Every decision should be compatible with God's Word. Those in contradiction to His Word should be discarded. God never leads us to violate His commands.

"So then do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).

This is one of the reasons it is important to read the Bible daily. It becomes our anchor, guidepost, and lens which better enables us to sense the specific will of God. Search the Scriptures and you will find God's general will. He primarily speaks to us through His Word. It's an "open book" test. "I have come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). Remember, that the word "testament" means "will." God's will is God's Word. It unveils His purposes, intentions, and desires.

So, start with the will you already know, do that, and move on to the specific will of God. One of the best indicators as to whether a person is willing to follow God's will, is whether or not he is now following the part he already knows, as it is revealed in the Bible.

Many focus on the specific will more than the general will. That is backwards, the proverbial cart before the horse.

Some advocate the "open door" policy of finding God's will. Walk through the doors that open to you, and do not break down the ones that are closed. This can also become the "open mine shaft" philosophy. Satan also opens doors. Many of these lead to destruction. Additionally, as your ministerial gifts make room for you, and you become more identified

## Sensing God's Direction

in the body of Christ, you will find many doors—good doors—will open to you. Which one should you take advantage of?

Ryan Shaw in *Momentum* said, “Too many wait around for some extra ordinary demonstration to confirm God’s will for their lives. Instead we should begin moving in the direction Scripture confirms is His general will, and as we do, He will confirm the specifics for us.” He went on to say, “The Great Commandment and the Great Commission illustrate the supreme purposes of God. In seeking the will of God we will not go wrong in committing ourselves to these two purposes.”



### Pierced Hearts

By

Bruce A. Howell

Global Nomads bear the marks of their cross-cultural experiences—mostly positive and occasionally negative—throughout life. The marks are seldom visible, but they are there just the same. Anyone involved in the sights and sounds of another culture and reaching the lost is never quite the same again. It is as if an arrow has pierced our hearts. We’ve been marked—heart, mind, and soul. As you can probably tell, I’ve been thinking about pierced hearts today. I’m writing this close to Valentine’s Day. At this time of year, I often picture an arrow shooting a gigantic heart. I also think of my list of loved ones which include my precious wife, Diane; my kids; grandkids (Did I tell you I have another grandbaby on the way?); and my Global Nomad friends. Hi, ya’ll! Oh yeah, there is one more group on my list—our lost world.

Remember it was Love (1 John 4:7-8) that brought salvation to us (John 3:16; 15:13); and love that took us to the mission field to start with. It is only through love (and God’s grace) that we manage to cope and remain on the field. Jesus said the first commandment was to love the Lord. The second, to love others (Mark 12:29-31). It is by this mark that all know that we are true disciples (John 13:34-35). Love is not merely a word; it is action (1 John 3:16-19). The world doesn’t fully understand true love, only lust which is self-seeking, self-centered, and self-satisfying.



## *Sensing God's Direction*

Lust asks, "What can I get?" Love asks, "What can I give?" Oops! Sounds like I'm preachin' so I better get back on track here.

Steve Green sings, "To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission. The spring from which our service overflows; across the street or around the world the mission's still the same. Proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name."

Interestingly, Steve not only captivates our mission, but reflects someone that has been marked for life. He is a Global Nomad, raised by missionary parents in South America until he was eighteen. He recently commented, "I have spent my life trying to safeguard myself, building walls of security, independence and provision, but God has spent my life undoing me. The reason He dismantles these walls is because I'm prone to trust what I know, and God is committed to keeping me weak, looking to Him." Marks in life keep us fragile and our eyes fixed on Jesus. One of Green's newer songs says, "When I reach the end, you are just beginning. In you alone I soar on borrowed wings."

What marks did Steve Green's missionary encounters leave on his heart? Years ago he sang and made popular, "People Need the Lord." His words still move me as I type, "Everyday they pass me by. I can see it in their eye. Empty people filled with care. Headed who knows where? People need the Lord... At the end of broken dreams, He's the open door. People need the Lord. When will we realize—people need the Lord?" Yes, I recognize I may be dating myself; that the song may be before your time, but it still has a powerful message. It puts it all into perspective, from a pierced heart to pierced hearts. The song continues, "Through His love our hearts can feel all the grief they bear!"

Another group of Christian artists you may be familiar with is "Selah"—three gifted musicians that include a brother and sister brought up in the heartland of Africa. They can't get away from their roots, and do an African song or two on each project. A recent article released by Curb Records explained that Jim Smith, following in his own father's footsteps, took his family to a life of missionary work in the Congo. Todd, Nicol, and two other children grew "to see the world as a place of trees—mango, palm, and coconut—many planted by their grandmother...They came to know the Congolese people, to speak their Kituba language and love their music." Nicol expresses her heart, "When you need to be comforted, there is nothing like these hymns, because so many of them were written from a place of suffering." Perhaps, you can relate to this experience: "Our dad drove a seven-ton army truck, the only kind that would make it on those muddy roads in the rainy season. We'd have to cross these bridges made of six planks, forty feet above the river, and we'd always pray that the planks wouldn't break under the truck. That's what life was like there. You had to pray—just to survive."

## Sensing God's Direction

I may not agree with their doctrinal slant—or even be aware of it—and I'm not promoting their music, or starting the Howell Record Company. I'm not even sure I always like their style. What attracts me to them is they are missionary kids; Global Nomads. They are marked for life and it shows through in their lyrics, musical expression; in their interviews and articles. They have found a way to express their pierced hearts and to bless others. I pray that each of our Global Nomads, throughout the United Pentecostal Church International, will do the same. Many of you are equally talented and can, and will, impact our church and our world.

Here's my advice:

Love the Lord your God.  
Love others. It's the heartbeat of our mission.  
You are marked for life. Thank God for it!  
Your heart has been pierced. It is for a purpose.  
You cannot lead others, where you have never been.  
Your pain is the seed of healing for the hurting.  
Find outlets for your experiences and bless your world. People need the Lord!

"How can we understand the road we travel? It is the Lord who directs our steps" (Proverbs 20:24, *NLT*).

Steadfast:

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Henry T. and Richard Blackaby in their *Experiencing God Day-by-Day* Devotional quotes:

"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

They go on to say: "It is easy to become distracted in the Christian life! The moment you understand what God wants you to do, it will seem as though everyone around you requires your time and attention! When the time came for Jesus to go to the cross, He "set His face" toward Jerusalem, so that nothing would prevent Him from accomplishing His Father's will. So obvious was His resolve to go to Jerusalem that the Samaritans, who hated the Jews, rejected Him because they recognized that He was a Jew traveling through their village to the hated city of Jerusalem.

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Jesus determined not to digress from His mission, but He took time to minister to many people along His way. He sent out seventy disciples into the surrounding towns (Luke 10:1). He healed lepers (Luke 17:11-19). He cured a man of dropsy (Luke 19:1-10). He continued to teach His disciples (Luke 15:1-32). Jesus did not refuse to minister to others as He went to Calvary, but ultimately He refused to be deterred from His Father's will.

If you know what God wants you to do, set your sights resolutely toward that goal with full determination to accomplish it (Proverbs 4:25). Your resolve to go where God is leading ought to be evident to those around you. Beware of becoming so sidetracked by the opportunities around you that you lose sight of God's ultimate goal for you. Do not succumb to the temptation to delay your obedience or to discard it altogether. Once you have received a clear assignment from God, your response should be unwavering obedience."

### **They Continued...**

By

Bruce A. Howell

After the dynamic, initial blastoff of the New Testament Church in Acts 2 there are four words that have brought us from then and there to here and now. They are simple but directional: "And they continued steadfastly..." (Acts 2:42). Need it simpler than that? "They continued!" The advancing church did not stop in Acts 2. It started there. It continues from there.

I did a Microsoft Word synonym check on "steadfastly." I like the treasures I found: persistently, consistently, with conviction, unwaveringly, unfalteringly, loyally, and faithfully. Dr. Luke's placement of two twin words in rapid fire is strategic. "Continued" means sustained, constant, continual, continuous, nonstop, unrelenting, unremitting, and persistent.

Acts-missionaries and Christians were men and women of perseverance. They refused to quit. They would not retreat. Forward ever, backward never. They held high the banner of truth with unwavering, unfaltering, unrelenting, unremitting conviction.

It wasn't that they didn't have reason to turn back. One overarching reason caused them to press forward in the face of persecution, sacrifice, and alienation from their family and society. They unyieldingly believed that the promise (Acts 1:8) extended "to all that afar off" (Acts 2:39). They had one goal in mind. They were forever pressing to the ends of the earth. I trust the "whole Gospel to the whole world" never becomes a well worn cliché but remains our undying passion. I unflinchingly assert; it is your only reason for continuation in your field of service. It's the only thing that will keep you focused as you navigate the interstates and back roads after prolonged months on the deputation trail. Lose the focus—whether at home or abroad—and you will begin to waver, flounder, falter and be tempted to pull out the white handkerchief of defeat and surrender.

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So, what do you do when the guts to continue diminishes in the daily drudgery of difficulties? What do you do when passion is depleted? Paul said it best: "Stir it up!" (2 Timothy 1:6). Fan it into flame! The spark of excitement and enthusiasm will be reignited. Peter added, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10). Prayer changes things. Prayer changes you! God will establish you through restoring your vision and giving you renewed direction. You will not waver. You will be steadfast! He will strengthen you; placing you on a firm foundation, and will securely ground you. He will settle you; support you and confirm your calling. You'll be perfect; nothing defective will be in you. He will set right what has gone wrong. He will put things in order for you. He'll give you the needed courage regardless of what happens. Harvesters, remember: "So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit" (Galatians 6:9, *MSG*).

"O may all who come behind us find us faithful, may the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe, and the lives we live inspire them to obey. O may all who come behind us find us faithful"(Jon Mohr).

Avoid doctrinal perversion, like the plague it really is. Allow God's Word to serve as your anchor. Don't be moved away from the truth. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1).

Don't let the storms coming your way deter you from doing the Lord's will: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Ecclesiastes 11:4-6).

### **Devoted for Life**

By  
Bruce A. Howell

While in Burma, pioneer missionary, Adoniram Judson suffered the death of his wife and child; then the death of his second wife, was imprisoned and was in poor health. Yet he wrote, "*The*

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*motto of every missionary...ought to be 'Devoted for life.'*" He endured so much but still kept running the mission's race.

Sister Else Lund's recent letter recalls one night at Fassama, Liberia. "A group of us were returning from a village service at Bella Balma about an hour and a half walk one way. We were walking single file as the path was very narrow and some were talking as loudly as possible probably to scare any wild animal around. Some were carrying lanterns and some of us flashlights. Then I thought to myself, I could spend the rest of my life here. It was so satisfying carrying the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth." Thanks, Sister Lund for over forty-two years of running the mission's race.

I have a friend with a unique collection—old shoes. That's right. He has several treasured shoes received from seasoned missionaries. His array of tattered shoes is a reminder that we can run the race, finish strong, and hear "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Bill Taylor, in *Send Me!* has an article titled, "Those Old Shoes Still Do It for Me!" He keeps a pair of old shoes on his desk. They remind him of an old runner now in his final lap of years well lived. When asking for the old shoes Bill commented, "I want tangible shoe-leather evidence of how to finish well after all your years of life."

Taylor's faithful friend, his Dad, served as a missionary in Latin America, then twelve years as CEO of his mission's agency in the States, and then met their foreign missions board to ask for an appointment to Spain. The chairman of the stunned board retorted, "Sir, no president of a bank ever returns to become a teller." His Dad quietly answered, "I do not work in a bank!" They spent five years in Spain, and then returned to Atlanta to start seven Spanish-speaking churches.

My hat is off to the "lifers" in the United Pentecostal Church International. You are a rare breed, and leave a tremendous heritage to us, shoes well-worn, and difficult to fill. I want to run the race, finish the course, and receive this testimony, "Devoted for life!"

# Stickability:

## Seeing the Roses through the Thorns

By  
Bruce A. Howell

My target is clearly in focus. You are there, in our vast global harvest field, feeling the frustration, irritation, and pain of a spiritual thorn in your side or splinter in your finger. I have prayed for you and desperately want to encourage you. Thorns and splinters are a barbed branch of our personal, spiritual, and ministerial growth process.

Like any field, thorns come with the territory. So, what will we do with these prickly problems? It's basic. Identify the problem for what it is. Turn to the Word. Turn to prayer. Look to God. His grace is sufficient.

Another missionary—Paul—experienced what we often feel. He contentedly stated, “There was given me a thorn (a splinter) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to rack and buffet and harass me...” (2 Corinthians 12:10, *AMP*). Another translation said, “Since I know it is all for Christ’s good, I am quite content with my weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (*NLT*).

Paul’s thorn—a messenger of Satan—was designed to discourage, derail, and destroy him. Its intent was to hinder his work, annihilate his influence, and stunt the growth of the church. He prayed God would remove this impediment. Satan does his best to pull us down. But, we are not ignorant of his tactics (2 Corinthians 2:11). The ironic thing is, he succeeds yet fails: he pushes us to our knees. Prayer is the best remedy for any trouble. It gives us fresh perspective. It puts the proverbial ball in God’s court. Paul accepted his thorn as a gift. Great success causes great retaliation. Opposition to the gospel is reason for encouragement and evidence that the Spirit of God is at work. The devil fights feverishly to preserve his falling and failing kingdom.

What are your thorns? The list could be lengthy. Unfortunately, some thorns are not just things, but people. I’ll leave it to you to fill in the blank: My thorn in the flesh is: \_\_\_\_\_.



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Paul recognized problems for what they were and also saw his own shortcomings. He proceeded despite both disclosures. It takes God's grace to deal with sharp situations without becoming cynical, negative, fearful, vindictive or revengeful. His limitations cut him down to size and built him up to deeper dependence on our able God. Under the pinch of pain, before yelling, "Ouch!" look for the positive. Accept problems as gifts that make you better; instead of curses that make you bitter. Thorns strengthen, stretch, perfect, clarify motives, and check our commitment level. So please don't be tempted to pull out your white handkerchief and start waving it while shouting, "I surrender. I give up. Send me somewhere else!"

Faced with trouble, some grow wings; others buy crutches. Some see lemonade; others a lemon. Some see roses; others only thorns.

May the Lord help us to see the roses through the thorns.



"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing" (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

Keep doing what you are doing:

- ▶ Read your Bible.
- ▶ Study.
- ▶ Pray.
- ▶ Fast.
- ▶ Obey.

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Stick with the vision. Do not allow it to be aborted or for a miscarriage to take place.

Don't ever give up.

### **I Had a Dream!**

By

Bruce A. Howell

A sprawled slogan on the back of a taxi in an overseas major metropolis caught my attention and stirred thinking. It boldly proclaimed, "I Had a Dream." Surely it was a mistake. Everyone knows the famous words from Martin Luther King's renowned speech "I Have a Dream." On second thought, maybe the taxi owner meant just that. He had a dream: and the rag-tag vehicle was the prize. Not much of a dream. Wonder how many of us, as we embark into 2008, would be brave enough to admit, we *had* a dream. We left it behind in the lost and found department. What ever happened that faded, sidelined, or shipwrecked our God-given dream. Check out conversations with ministerial friends. If most of the discussion is on past accomplishments rather than future projections it is time to wake up...your dream! H. Dale Burke in *Less is More Leadership* stated, "When your memories are more exciting than your dreams, you've begun to die." Charles Hedges in *Getting the Right Things Right* said, "a dream is not something that you wake up from, but something that wakes you up." Impossible things begin with extreme dreamers. Consider King's dream of a colorblind civilization. We have high aspirations—global impact, a reached world, pace-setting evangelism techniques that break through closed doors, churches abounding, and millions transformed.

Walt Kallestad in *Wake Up Your Dreams* said, "Great dreams require digging beyond surface limitations or past failures or easy-way-out distractions....Dreams can help us see the invisible, believe the incredible, and achieve the impossible." He went on to say, "The only waste of time is to live a lifetime and never take the time to dream—to focus it, to plan for it, to live it."

Achieving dreams is tough business. It is much easier to live in mediocrity. But, you never accomplish much in the stagnant, safe sector. Kallestad advises, "Every great dream involves tough climbing, but every great dream outlasts the tough climb." So, get up, pick up your dream, and start climbing!

Mission Possible: I challenge you to write down your ministry and personal dreams on three-by-five cards, or display them on a laminated sheet; read often, and work toward accomplishment daily.

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*Step:*

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way"  
(Psalm 37:23).



The will of God is a continual step in the right direction. Being out of the will of God, pulls you downward and further away from God. Jonah was called to the city of Ninevah. Instead of making steps toward it, he ran from it. Instead of running to God; he was running away from Him. This took Jonah down. It was in the belly of a big fish that Jonah started praying for the will of God to be done. God is able to put us in situations where we will be delighted to do His will. The will of God is progressive, and moves you closer to God. Being out of the will of God pulls you downward and further away from God.

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Note Jonah's downward plunge:

- ▶ Down to Joppa (Jonah 1:3).
- ▶ Down into the Ship (Jonah 1:5).
- ▶ Down into the Sea (Jonah 1:15).
- ▶ Down into the belly of the Big Fish (Jonah 1:17).

David Livingstone said, "Without Christ, not one step, with Him, anywhere!"

### *S*trategy:

The idea of a strategy is borrowed from the military. It refers to moving troops into position before engaging the enemy.

Strategy is:

- ▶ A plan of action to get a person from here to there.
- ▶ Concerned with how you will achieve or accomplish the vision.
- ▶ Important in realizing God's direction.
- ▶ A scheme or systematic plan of action.
- ▶ Includes setting measurable and achievable goals.
- ▶ Asks, "How can we get this done?"

The following table is adapted from material taught by Dr. S. L. Poe, with the Global Training Institute. It essentially shows that God provides the mission and the vision, and the strategy for its fulfillment is left largely in the hands of the recipient. The Lord of the Harvest is also interested in the strategy we use in fulfilling the vision.

|            |                     |                           |  |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Step One   | God.                | Spiritual Transformation. | Paul was knocked down on the Road to Damascus. |
| Step Two   | God reveals to man  | Receives God's Mission.   |  |
| Step Three | God assigns to man. | God provides vision.      | Told him he would be an apostle to the         |

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|           |                           |                           |  |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
|           |                           |                           | Gentiles.  |
| Step Four | Man decides the approach. | Man decides the strategy. |  |
| Step Five | Continuing the approach.  |                           | His personality and talents came into the picture when looking at the program.             |
| Step Six  | Action.                   |                           | Required interaction with people. Action almost always brings us into contact with others. |

Different tools are used for different tasks. Lloyd Shirley, the Director of Education/AIM for the Foreign Missions Division wrote this in his annual report one year, "We've come to realize that the importance of a mission is determined by the ultimate impact it will have on the lost...In retracing the years since 1972, it is clear that much has changed. It is also clear that the most important things remain the same. The task of balancing the changing and the changeless has always been a slippery slope to travel. John Stott said, 'It's easy to be contemporary if you don't care about being faithful. It is also easy to be faithful if you don't care about being contemporary.' In Foreign Missions we strive to hold on to unchanging truths." The point is: truth remains constant. God's principles remain timeless. Methods change. We all need to be conservative enough to hold on to the truth, not neglecting it, or straying from it. Our efforts should never be in vain. We should be liberal or flexible enough to come up with new ways of presenting the Gospel and God's Word to those in our generation, in a way they will be attracted to it. We can change the strategy.

### *Seasoned Supervision:*

The will of God will stand up to the examination of spiritual men of God. They will be able to give wise and godly counsel. Go to men that are seasoned in the ministry and are mature. Private revelation will stand the test of public scrutiny.

The Bible has much to say about counsel.

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- ▶ “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22, *AMP*).
- ▶ “Where no wise guidance is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14, *AMP*).
- ▶ “Purposes and plans are established by counsel” (Proverbs 20:18, *AMP*).

Who should you receive counsel from?

- ▶ Those that have made the journey before.
- ▶ Those that have our best interest at heart.
- ▶ Those that are spiritually-minded and can give good advice (Psalms 1:1-2).
- ▶ Those that are in spiritual leadership or authority over us.
- ▶ Those we trust and have confidence in.

What are the benefits of receiving counsel?

- ▶ Wise advice.
- ▶ Confirmation.
- ▶ Affirmation.
- ▶ Mentorship.
- ▶ Discerning questions.
- ▶ Clarity.
- ▶ Focus on the right path.

Everyone needs three men in their lives:

|          |                            |
|----------|----------------------------|
| Paul     | Someone to lead you.       |
| Barnabas | Someone to encourage you.  |
| Timothy  | Someone for you to mentor. |

When Samuel heard God's voice: He heard it in the voice of his pastor, Eli. He went to his pastor for confirmation. His pastor gave him the right counsel.

Avoid people who:



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- ▶ Tell you exactly what you want to hear.
- ▶ Always see it your way.

Watch out for ear-ticklers: "Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth" (2 Timothy 4:3-4, *NIV*).

*Stand Still:*

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou has kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8).

Do nothing impulsively: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew you today" (Exodus 14:13).

### **Wait!**

By  
Bruce A. Howell

We are born with an innate distaste and disgust for waiting. Perhaps, it's an allergy. Babies enter the world insistently crying when they want to be fed, "I refuse to wait. I want food. Now!" We wait on our kids. We wait on our spouses. We wait in traffic. We wait in airports. We wait for church services to begin. We wait on latecomers for appointments. We wait!

Studies have determined how many hours or years of life we spend sleeping, eating, working; but I wonder how many hours or years, accumulated over a lifetime, that we spend waiting. Even now as I'm typing, my left foot is tapping the floor, as my toes wait for my fingers to catch up with my brain.

With overcrowded schedules and an endless list of things to do...TODAY...we rush through the day. Occasionally revelation grips us. If only we had waited on the Lord in morning prayer, He

would have ordered our footsteps. The day would have turned from fruitless and futile into fruitful and fulfilling. We sprint through life, in such a hurry to live in the future, that we fail to wait for it.

Reading through the Psalms, it was as if a light bulb was turned on, illuminating the word "Wait." Noticing it first in Psalms 27:14, it kept cropping up over the next dozen or so chapters. Could it be a sign? Probably not! More like a gargantuan thump on the side of the head.

"Wait for the LORD! Be strong, and let your heart take courage: wait for the LORD!" (Psalms 27:14). "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!" (Psalms 31:24). "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him" (Psalms 37:7). "But those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land" (Psalms 37:9). "Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land" (Psalms 37:34). "But for you, O LORD, do I wait!" (Psalms 38:15). "And now, O LORD, for what do I wait?" (Psalms 39:7)

I've waited on a lot of things. Sometimes; patiently. More than sometimes; impatiently. Regardless, Scripture shouts, "Wait!" "Wait on the Lord!" For what do I wait? Sounds like a reasonable question that longs for an answer.

1. As we wait, we stop all activity, focusing our undivided, undistracted, total concentration and attention on God. He is bigger than all of our problems and circumstances. He comes with His still, small, voice and speaks into our situation.
2. Isaiah tells us when we wait on the Lord, we renew our strength (Isaiah 40:31). I don't know about you. I get tired. I get tired of being tired. I reach the end of my rope and my abilities. It's there that I stop, and wait on Him to renew my strength.
3. Become united-in-heart with God (Psalms 25:21). The Hebrew word for "wait" means to bind together, as in twisting the strands of a rope. We become stronger when we wait on Him and incorporate His divine resources and power into our lives. When we refuse to wait, we run out of patience. It is there that we sadly lose trust in Him.
4. David confessed He waited upon the Lord for deliverance to come. A couple of times in the past week, meditating on this Scripture, e-mail advertisements have come through, with the following words in the subject line, "The Battle is Not Yours! It Belongs to the Lord!" I've started getting the point! Especially when my name is inserted right before those words. To wait is to fix one's hope on God and anticipate His aid.
5. "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning" (Psalms 130:5-6). I like that. God's Word is jam-packed with

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promises. You could claim one promise per day, for each day of your entire next term of missionary service, and not exhaust the long list of God's promises.

6. Waiting is part of every missionary's or minister's ministry. We all are longing to **"inherit the land."** Don't be weary! Be faithful. You will reap a harvest. Faint not! To wait is defined as staying in a place of hope until something expected takes place.

Today I want my testimony to be, "I waited patiently for the LORD!" (Psalms 40:1).

Watch carefully the doors that begin to open. Open doors give guidance. We should approach an open door prayerfully. Not every door that opens to us is the will of God for us.



### **What's Your Destination?**

By  
Melinda Poitras

I was in a conference room not too far from here, on the floor. A group of MK's had gathered together for the weekend, Philip Vannoy had just finished speaking about ministry, and I was feeling that feeling again. I think you know the one, the mind-numbing, heart-wrenching, soul-breaking burden for souls. It wasn't the first time I felt it, and it won't be the last, but, this day was different than the rest. The usual pictures began to flash through my head and my heart over-

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flowed with love for the dark faces and dusty roads of my heartbeat - Africa. The only destination I thought I could ever care to visit, the place I had left indefinitely, the week before.

What now? I should have known a moment like that was coming. I had spent the year before working the best job I could hope for - it basically involved hugging little necks and reading deep educational material such as this:

You will come to a place where the streets are not marked.  
Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked.  
A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin!  
Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in?  
How much can you lose? How much can you win?  
And IF you go in, should you turn left or right...  
or right-and-three-quarters? Or, maybe, not quite?  
Or go around back and sneak in from behind?  
Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find,  
for a mind-maker-upper to make up his mind.  
(Dr. Seuss)

I made up my mind, and shortly after arrived at Destination IBC, where I learned something about destinations in general. God doesn't promise that it will be easy, or fun, or that things will automatically go smoothly just because you're in His will. But you can rest assured that whatever the journey, when He picks your destination, it is always worth it.

I sat down with our fellow missionary's daughter before I left Ghana, to try and explain what was going on. Five-year-old Allanah looked up at me with her big brown eyes welling up with tears and said, "I don't understand, why would you leave?" And I told her that there comes a time when everyone has to do something, and everyone has to go somewhere. That there are other places than this.

Someone once defined missions as "Joyfully advancing God's kingdom." That is exactly what each and every one of us is called to do. There is a big world out there full of people and places that need to hear about Jesus. Your world needs you.

So...  
be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray  
or Mordecai Ali Van Allen O'Shea,  
you're off to Great Places!  
Today is your day!  
Your mountain is waiting.  
So...get on your way!

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(Dr. Seuss)

There are other places than this. Whatever the destination, Africa, Asia, Europe, or the United States - we all have to go somewhere. We all have to do something. What's your destination?

My theme song throughout the past years: "God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way for me. He will be my guide. Draw me closely to His side. With love and strength for each new day, He will make a way. He will make a way" (Don Moen).

### **In God We Trust**

By

Bruce A. Howell

Flip a coin or turn over an American dollar bill and it is a comfort to find the words "IN GOD WE TRUST." When all is said and done, and we look for the bottom line; that line will be that God is our hope, and He always comes through for His people.

We trust God that He is big enough to save our world that exceeds 6.4 billion people. I have seen Him at work in 186 nations where the United Pentecostal Church International is represented. The UPCI reaches many cultures, with one hope. Like someone said, "I've read the back of the Book and I know who wins." Revelation unfolds our anticipation: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb"" (Revelation 7:9, *NIV*). Jesus came. He died. He rose again. He is our hope (Colossians 1:27). He is coming back for a triumphant universal church. That's a promise! The Gospel *will* be preached in the entire world before He comes (Matthew 24:14). You can bank on that. In God we trust!