



A Course

In

**MISSIONS I,
STUDIES IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

Pineland, Florida 33945

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INTRODUCTION

Missions I, Studies In is the first of two courses on Missions.

Although our word “missionary” is not a biblical term, it is a biblical concept. This biblical concept is found in Bible terms such as “evangelist” and “preach;” both derived from the Greek word, *euaγγελizo* (one who announces the good news of Jesus Christ.). In the Old Testament the prophets were missionaries as they announced God’s good news.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist was a missionary, announcing the good news of the appearance of the Old Testament’s promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Great Commission, found in part in Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:46-48; John 17:19 and Acts 1:8. The Gospels are a record of Christ’s incarnate missionary work among men. The Book of Acts is the initial recorded fulfillment of Christ’s Great commission.

The story of the Christian Church is that of missionary work. Every soul ever saved is that of missionary work; and every church established is that of missionary work. Soul-winning is missionary work.

However, when the average Christian thinks of missionary work, he thinks of one going to a foreign country to present the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. It is this usage that Dr. J. Herbert Kane has written his book, *Life and Work on the Mission field*,

We wish to thank Baker Publishing for permission to use this textbook. The student is encouraged to purchase this book and other relevant books by Dr. Kane from Baker Books for a more comprehensive study. Likewise, you are encouraged to purchase other Baker Publications including their scholarly and Biblically centered textbooks.

Due to the publication date of 1980, some of the figures and data are out of date and need to be considered with our present conditions.

Being an “evangelical,” Dr. Kane’s doctrine is compatible with most fundamentalists. However, his views will differ in some practices and separation standards from most fundamental Baptists. Hence, the student will find some differences in personal preferences, practices and separation standards such as cooperative evangelism. Therefore, the student should notice these differences. Also, it will be observed that Dr. Kane gives a generalization of most evangelical missionary work which will help the student to grasp the overall missionary work in the world. His book is generally presented from an evangelical perspective rather than a Baptist. Thus, most of his statistics and compilations will be drawn from his

evangelical background. A major contribution of his book is his analysis of the failures in our missionary programs.

The A.B.C. being an independent Baptist college, is not supportive of cooperation with most other denominational agencies that differ widely in biblical practices and standards. With these considerations in mind, we are honored to use this textbook because of Dr. Kane’s spiritual insight and his full range in covering the “Life and Work on the Mission Field.” The student will be greatly impressed with Dr. Kane’s deep commitment to the Holy Spirit’s personal leadership and his strong insistence for biblical truth. We are confident that the student will find this book to be inspirational, spiritually challenging and informative of the missionary’s calling, needs and responsibilities. It is our prayer that our Lord will use Dr. Kane’s book as an instrument in calling others into the Lord’s mission field and prepare both pastors and laymen to encourage and support missionary efforts. Dr. Kane’s book is indeed a classic in the study of missionary work.

The Selected Bibliography for both Missions I and II is found at the end of Missions II syllabus.

Additional notes will be found in brackets, “[]” or footnotes.

Although the American Bible College uses the King James Version as the preserved Word of God, Dr. Kane quotes other versions in a reference sense. These quotes are left in tact to honor Dr Kane’s work and to be used in a commentary sense.

This should not be construed to imply that the A. B. C. is correcting God’s Word.

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ACNOWLEDGEMENT

The American Bible College wishes to thank Baker Books for their gracious permission to reproduce **Life and Work on the Mission Field** which is still in print. Baker Books has been gracious in granting permission to reproduce other textbooks in order to save our students financially. We encourage our students to consider purchasing this textbook in its complete form and other fine Baker Books publications.

FOREWORD.

In writing this book, J. Herbert Kane has drawn on his fifteen years of experience on the field and his extensive knowledge of current developments in the mission enterprise throughout the world. As a result, **Life and Work on the Mission Field**, although logically organized and factual in content, is not merely an academic study. It deals with a multitude of practical insights: how to raise financial support, how to keep in touch with the home church, how to brace for culture shock, how to maintain health on the mission field, how to educate children, how to cope with loneliness, how to adjust to primitive living conditions — and hundreds of other matters, some of major importance, others less consequential, yet helpful in meeting the challenges of everyday life on the mission field.

The underlying theme of this formative book is the importance of preparation for missionary life and work. It will enable the missionary to cope with almost every problem he might eventually encounter on the field. Emphasized is the fact that mistakes, however minor, often cause irreparable harm and slow the missionary advance. The in-depth discussion and analysis of a great variety of missionary problems provides much-needed guidance in avoiding numerous pitfalls.

A highly readable style and the inclusion of numerous anecdotes make this book suitable for almost any reader interested in missionary life. Those who provide financial and prayer support will gain from this book a deeper appreciation for the work of the Christian Missionary.

J. Herbert Kane is professor emeritus in the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. His other books include *The Making of a Missionary*, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, *Understanding Christian Missions*, *A Global view of Christian Missions*, and *The Christian World Mission: Today and Tomorrow*.

PART ONE

MISSIONARY PREPARATION

1

GETTING A CALL

No aspect of the Christian mission is more puzzling than the problem of a call. It is the biggest hang-up that young people encounter as they face the claims of the mission field. At every panel discussion on missions the questions fly thick and fast: "What exactly is a missionary call?" "How can I know that I have a call?" "Can I be a missionary without a call?" These questions are asked by dedicated Christians who take the Great Commission seriously and genuinely desire to know and do God's will. They are fair questions; they deserve honest answers.

In dealing with this most important subject we must avoid two extreme positions. On the one hand there are those who insist that everyone must have what is known as a "Macedonian call" such as Paul experienced at Troas (Acts 16: 9-10). This is usually associated with voices, visions, dreams, and other mysterious happenings whereby a clear knowledge of God's will is directly and infallibly imparted to the consciousness of the seeking soul. According to this viewpoint, without this esoteric experience it is impossible to receive a missionary call. Therefore everyone ought to seek such an experience and wait patiently until it comes.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who maintain that because all Christians are missionaries no call of any kind is required. Missionary work is no different from any other Christian service. Indeed, there is no essential difference between a missionary and a butcher or a baker or a candlestick maker. If you want to be a missionary, catch the next plane, go where you like, and do your own thing when you get there. Don't worry about such trivial matters as time, call, place, board, or ministry. Just hang loose and assume that the Lord will guide

Needless to say, both positions are wrong. Those who advocate the first frequently end up staying at home. Those who practice the second often do more harm than good on the mission field and come home with feelings of failure and frustration. The truth lies somewhere between the two extremes. This leads us to the first question.

IS A CALL NECESSARY?

Much depends on the kind of call one has in mind. The word *call* is used in many different ways in the New Testament. In

most instances it refers to Christian life, not service. There is a general call of God [for repentance unto salvation to become a Christian] (Ro 9: 24-26) which became articulate in Christ (Lk 5:32). All believers are called to be saints (Ro 1:7), and the ultimate purpose of such a call is that they might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Ro 8:30). In the meantime, *all* believers are called to grace (Ga 1:6), peace (1 Co 7:15), light (1 Pe 2:9), hope (Eph 4:4), glory (1 Th 2:12), holiness (1 Th 4:7), liberty (Ga 5:13), and suffering (1 Pe 2:20-21).

There is, however, a second kind of call—a call to Christian service. This is not addressed to all, but only to those who are called upon to leave their ordinary occupation and devote themselves full time to what Peter called "prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4, KJV). All are called to be saints (Ro 1:7); not all are called to be apostles (1 Co 12:29). Paul is careful to point out that he was a genuine apostle (1 Co 9). Moreover he insisted that he was an apostle by the will (1 Co 1:1) and calling (Ro 1:1) of God. He did not choose this high calling (1 Co 9:16-18), nor was it conferred on him by others (Ga 1:1).

He was an apostle "by the will of God," and he described himself as having been made a minister of the gospel (Eph 3:7). He was appointed to be a preacher, apostle, teacher (2 Ti 1:11) and prophet (1 Cor 13:2). It is true, of course, that he labored with his hands to support himself and his colleagues (Acts 20:34), but he did not regard tent-making as his vocation. He never referred to himself as "tent-maker by the will of God," though he certainly did not take himself out of the will of God by resorting now and then to his old trade. He was an apostle; he made tents simply to pay the bills. To his dying day Paul could never adequately express his utter amazement at the grace of God which made him a preacher and an apostle (1 Co 15:9-10; 1 Ti 1:12-14).

There is a call, a very definite call, to the service of God on a full-time basis. Jesus "called" Peter and Andrew to follow Him. "Immediately they left their nets and followed him" (Mt 4:20, RSV). Later He "called" James and John. "Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him" (Mt 4:22, RSV). When Luke describes the same event he says: ". And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him" (Lk 5:11, KJV).

It seems clear from the passage that this "call" involved a clean break from their work as fishermen and launched them into a brand new occupation, that of "fishers of men." Apparently it was not possible for them to be fishers of fish and fishers of men at the same time. This does not mean that there was anything wrong with their previous occupation or that their new positions were to be regarded as "higher" or "holier." It was a completely different work that would require all of their time and energy. In present-day parlance it would be "full-time Christian service." It is worth noting that these four men and the other apostles never went back to their old occupations.

This idea of a call to Christian service is further strengthened by our Lord's attitude toward those who took it

upon themselves to volunteer for His service. One fellow in a moment of enthusiasm said: "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Lk 9:57 -58, RSV). Apparently the man withdrew his offer at this point.

Another person volunteered, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus replied: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:61-62, RSV).

There are those who object to the terms *secular* and *sacred* as applied to the vocational life of the Christian. To the dedicated Christian, all vocations are sacred because whatever he does, he does it unto the Lord (Co 3:23). This does not, however, invalidate the distinction that the New Testament seems to make between secular and sacred ministries.

In several passages of his epistles Paul seems to make a distinction between the "spiritual" and the "secular" or "material" (Ro 15:27; I Co 9:11). In his own case Paul was conscious of having been appointed to a special ministry (I Ti 1:12), that of teaching and preaching the Word (2 Ti 1:11). Moreover, he recognized the possibility that he might fail in the ministry (I Co 9:27) and expressed the hope that he would be able to complete it (Acts 20:24), which he seems to have done (2 Ti 4:7).

He spoke of Epaphras as a "faithful minister of Christ" (Co 1:7; 4:12), a description he obviously did not apply to everyone. He reminded Timothy of his consecration to the gospel ministry when the elders laid their hands on him (I Ti 4:14). There is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that men in secular employment were ever set apart for their work by the laying on of hands. This seems to have been reserved for those whose lifework was directly connected with the preaching of the gospel and the life of the church. Apparently the apostles felt that there was something "sacred" or "special" about their ministry, for when the daily distribution of food threatened the unity of the church in Jerusalem they refused to get involved in "serving tables." They said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables" (Acts 6:2, RSV). Instead they decided that they would continue to devote themselves to "prayer and the ministry of the Word."

It is difficult to escape the conviction that the early church regarded "prayer and the ministry of the Word" as being the equivalent of what we now call "full-time Christian service." All Christians are expected to work and witness for Christ regardless of their vocation, but only a few are called to leave everything and follow Christ in order to give themselves unreservedly to prayer and the ministry of the Word. It is important to preserve this distinction in a day when egalitarianism threatens to do away with all distinctions between the clergy and the laity in the Christian church.

WHAT ABOUT THE MACEDONIAN CALL?

The so-called Macedonian call (Acts 16:9-10) was not a missionary call at all. Paul had been a missionary for years. His call to missionary service coincided with his conversion, when God said to Ananias, "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15, RSV). Paul's call was later confirmed by the Holy Spirit when He said to the leaders of the church in Antioch: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2, RSV).

What then was the nature of the Macedonian call? It was not a divine call; it was simply a human call for help. The call came not from God but from a "man of Macedonia." The plea was, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." This episode had nothing whatsoever to do with a missionary call. It was a matter of guidance to a man already in full-time missionary service. Paul had reached the extreme western end of the continent of Asia and there were several options open to him. Apparently he had not given any thought to crossing over into Europe. He attempted to turn eastward again, first into the Roman province of Asia and then into Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit prevented him in both instances. Where should he go? Obviously he was in need of special guidance if he were to take the gospel for the first time into Europe. The decision he was about to make was of such momentous importance that he required unusual guidance. This God gave him in the vision of the man from Macedonia. It is regrettable that this Macedonian call should have ever been equated with a missionary call.

The term *missionary call* should never have been coined. It is not scriptural and therefore can be harmful. Thousands of youths desiring to serve the Lord have waited for some mysterious "missionary call" that never came. After a time they became weary of waiting and gave up the idea of going to the mission field.

A clear distinction must be made between a call to full-time Christian service and guidance. We have already stated that the "Macedonian call" in Acts 16 was not a missionary call but simply a matter of guidance. The call comes once in a lifetime, and once it is understood and obeyed it need not be repeated. Guidance is something that is required throughout the whole of life.

Where does the Lord want His servant to serve: at home or overseas? A person can't be in both places at the same time, so guidance is necessary. And even when he knows he will be serving overseas he still needs guidance regarding the country to which he will go and the mission under which he will serve. These important considerations are not left to chance or even to the choice of the individual. God deploys His servants according to His own wisdom. He sent Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews (Ga 2:7 -8). He directed William Carey to India [a Baptist and America's first foreign missionary], David Livingstone to Africa, and Hudson Taylor to China.

The missionary is not the only one who needs guidance. Those who serve at home need it just as much. Does the Christian worker become a pastor, an evangelist, or a Christian

education director? Should he teach in a Bible college or a seminary? If he goes into the pastorate, where will he minister? In Maine or California or Colorado? And how long will he remain in anyone church? Five years? Ten years? Thirty years? In all these momentous decisions the Christian worker is dependent on God for guidance. This kind of guidance, however, should not be mistaken for a call.

FACTORS UNDERLYING A CALL

The call to full-time Christian service seldom occurs in a spiritual vacuum. It is based on certain well-defined principles laid down in the Word of God. As one walks with the Lord in the light of His Word, he discovers that step by step he is led to the place where he hears the still small voice behind him saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Is 30:21).

1, Acknowledgment of the claims of Christ. The first step in the process is the recognition of the lordship of Christ. "Jesus Christ is Lord" was the great affirmation of the early church. That one fact ought to settle everything. He created me for His glory. He redeemed me with His blood. He saved me by His grace. He keeps me by His power. Therefore He has first claim on my life. I am His personal property. Body, mind, and soul I belong to Him. I am His obedient servant. When He speaks, I listen. When He calls, I answer. When He commands, I obey. I have only one question to ask of Him: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" If He wants me in Christian service I have no option but to obey.

2, Understanding the will of God. God's will is twofold, general and specific. His general will embraces His plan and purpose for the whole creation. This is spelled out in broad outlines in the Scriptures. There is no mystery about it. It is plain for all to see. For instance, we know that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pe 3:9). When we pray for the salvation of our loved ones and add, "If it be Thy will," we weaken our prayer. God has already told us that it *is* His will. We know that it is His will that *all* of His children should be holy in character and conduct (1 Th 4:3). There can be no doubt about this.

God also has His specific will which differs with each individual Christian. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10, RSV). God has a tailor-made plan for the life of every believer. The details, of course, are not indicated in the Scriptures. To ascertain the specific will of God, the mind of the believer must be renewed day by day by an act of continual consecration (Ro 12:1-2). When discovered, that will prove to be "good and acceptable and perfect."

It is not easy, however, to ascertain God's specific will. It takes time and discipline. Moreover, it is impossible to know God's specific will unless we are willing to bring our lives into conformity with His general will. Only when we do His general will, which we do know, will He give us direction regarding His specific will, which we do not know. It is at this point that many Christians go wrong. They pay little attention

to what God has revealed regarding His general will but spend much time and thought trying to ascertain His specific will.

3. Susceptibility to the leading of the Holy Spirit. What constitutes a call to Christian service? It is easier to ask that question than to answer it. Indeed, it is probably impossible to answer it to the satisfaction of everyone, for the simple reason that the call is communicated to the soul by the Holy Spirit, who works in different ways with different people. Speaking of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (an 3:8, RSV). The same element of mystery accompanies the consecrating work of the Holy Spirit. He works, moves, directs, and controls in His own sovereign way, and no one can be sure just when, where, or what His next move will be. For this reason it is dangerous to compare one Christian's experience with another's.

No two Christians are alike, either in their conversation experience or in the matter of the guidance that comes later. The Holy Spirit deals with each believer in a manner best suited to his needs and interests, his attitudes and aptitudes. It is therefore difficult to tell another person how the Holy Spirit is likely to lead him.

To most serious-minded Christians Jesus Christ is a "living, bright reality." Not so the Holy Spirit. He seems to be so distant, so ethereal, so unreal, that many Christians aren't even on speaking terms with Him. John E. Skoglund calls Him "the missing person."¹ That is precisely what He is to many Christians. Some of them would have to confess with the believers in Ephesus: "We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2, RSV).

To the early church the Holy Spirit was not only a power to be employed but a person to be loved, trusted, consulted, and obeyed. When the first church council wrote up its final report, it said: "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28, RSV). Imagine any church council talking like that today!

The Holy Spirit was as real to the early church as Jesus was to His disciples in the days of His flesh. He was indeed the "other comforter" sent to take the place of the risen, ascended Lord (Jn 14:16). The early Christians had little difficulty in getting guidance. They lived on such a high spiritual plane that communion with the Holy Spirit was a matter of course. They confided in Him and He spoke to them. Their ears were attuned to the sound of His voice. When He spoke they listened and obeyed. One problem with present-day Christians is that we have failed to develop our spiritual faculties. We are so busy running here and there to get counsel and advice from pastors, teachers, and guidance counselors that we have neglected to listen for the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. He speaks, but we are not listening. And all the while we wonder why we don't get a call to Christian service.

¹ John E. Skoglund, *To the Whole Creation* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1962, chap. 5).

4. Confirmation by the local church. This is an aspect of the call to Christian service that is prominent in the New Testament but is almost completely missing in church life today. The classic example is the command of the Holy Spirit to the church in Antioch: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2, RSV). If the Holy Spirit has already called them, is that not enough? Why does the church have to get in on the act?

The reason is that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Ti 3:15). It is the channel through which God's saving grace flows out to a needy world (Acts 1:8). The evangelization of the world is not the work of a few individuals but the responsibility of the church as a whole. Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit *and* the local church, and when they returned they made their report to that church.

All of Paul's coworkers mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles were identified with local churches. Timothy was "well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium" (Acts 16:2, RSV). Epaphras hailed from Colossae (Co 1:7), Gaius from Derbe, and Sopater from Berea (Acts 20:4). When the fledgling church in Antioch was just getting underway, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to help the believers there to get established (Acts 11:22). In the early church there were no "independent" missionaries. Each one was a member of a local church, approved by that church, and sent out and supported by that church.

The call to Christian service can come only from the Holy Spirit, but there should be some kind of confirmation on the part of the local church of which the individual is a member. That church will know him best, and if its leadership is what it ought to be, it will be in a position to give its blessing to those going into full-time Christian service. If this were done it would greatly strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of young candidates for the Christian ministry. It would help to confirm the leading of the Lord.

PREREQUISITES FOR RECEIVING A CALL

God is sovereign in the choice of the servants who will serve Him. This does not mean that we sit down with folded hands and wait for some miraculous event to catapult us into the service of Jesus Christ. There must be on our part an attitude of receptivity and readiness so that when the call comes we will be in a position to hear and answer. The chances of our getting a call will be greatly enhanced if we meet certain conditions. Among these are the following:

1. An open mind. Everybody prides himself on having an open mind but few actually achieve it. Man's capacity for self-deception is enormous. We think we have an open mind while in fact we are the victims of our own prejudices and predilections. We have long ago decided that there are certain things we will not do. We wouldn't dare say it to God, but in our own minds we have decided, "Anything but Christian service," or "Anywhere but the foreign field." So long as we harbor preconceived negative notions about the will of God or the work of the church, we shall wait in vain for a call.

It is incumbent on every young Christian to be absolutely honest in his dealings with God, to keep his options open, and to allow the Holy Spirit to take full control of his mental faculties. This is by no means easy. J. B. Phillips expresses it well: "Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defense that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ" (2 Co 10:5).

2. An attentive ear. An open mind is a great achievement, but it may still fall short unless it is accompanied by an attentive ear. It is not enough to rid one's mind of all "deceptive fantasies." We must also have our ear open to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

We know all too well that the hearing faculty can be turned on or off almost at will. It doesn't take much practice to sharpen one's sense of hearing provided there is sufficient motivation. In the dead of night the young mother can hear the cry of her young child and is instantly on her feet to prepare the two o'clock feeding, while the father in the same room sleeps blissfully through the entire operation. What makes the difference? Do not both parents have the same hearing faculty? The maternal instinct in the mother sharpened her sense of hearing to the point where the slightest cry from the little one in the crib brought her out of bed. She slept, as we say, "with one ear open," while her husband slept with both ears closed.

The same thing can happen in the spiritual realm. With a little practice we can train ourselves to detect the slightest whisper of the Holy Spirit when He speaks to us. On the other hand we can turn a deaf ear to His entreaties. We need do this only two or three times and our hearing faculty will be so impaired that we will be beyond the reach of His voice.

Christians have been known to complain: "How is it that God speaks to others, but never to me?" It may be that God did speak, not once but many times, but they were not listening. Effective communication is possible only when the speaker and the listener are in direct contact. If only one is operating there can be no communication.

3. A pure heart. Understanding God's truth, or ascertaining God's will, is not a purely intellectual exercise. It has a moral dimension. God does not reveal Himself to every Tom, Dick, or Harry whose interest in His truth takes the form of intellectual curiosity. God reveals His truth not to those who want to *know* it but to those who are prepared to *do* it. The Jews of Jesus' day had difficulty in deciding the true origin of His teaching, whether it was from God or from man. Jesus said to them, "If any man's will is to *do* his [God's] will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (Jn 7:17, RSV).

In the Hall of Science at the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago in 1933-34, there was a huge motto which read: "Nature reveals her secrets only to those who obey her laws." Every scientist knows the truth of those words. This truth, however, is not confined to the physical realm of science. It is also true in the metaphysical realm of theology. God reveals His truths only to those who obey His laws. One

of His laws is that since He is holy (Ps 99:5) all who wish to have fellowship with Him must likewise be holy (He 12:14). King David asked: "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" And the answer came back: "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully" (Ps 24:3-4, RSV). A pure heart is absolutely essential to communication between God and man. The psalmist said: "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Ps 66:18, RSV).

The person with un-confessed sin in his life will wait in vain for any call from the Lord other than the call to repent (Is 55:7). For the Christian waiting for God's call it is not enough to have an open mind and an attentive ear; he must also have a pure heart.

4. Busy hands. There is a common saying that Satan is sure to find work for idle hands. Doubtless there is some truth in the statement. If Satan prefers idle hands, God certainly does not. If the Scriptures are any criterion, God's call comes to those who are busy, not those who are idle. Moses, David, Peter, Matthew, and Paul were all engaged in some demanding work when the call of God came. He wants workers, not loafers, in His vineyard. Jesus Himself was the great Worker. He said: "My Father is working still, and I am working" (Jn 5:17, RSV). Again He said: "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night comes when no man can work" (Jn 9:4, RSV).

Any person contemplating even the possibility of a call should begin by getting involved in some kind of work for the Lord. How is God going to call a person into full-time service if he has never engaged in any kind of Christian work? One could begin by teaching a Sunday school class, home visitation, tract distribution, or rescue mission work, or leading a youth group, helping in a vacation Bible school, or doing anyone of the many things that need to be done in the local church.

In this connection it is instructive to observe that the vast majority of missionary candidates come from the Bible colleges, not from the Christian liberal arts colleges or the secular universities. Why is this? Probably the most important reason is that the Bible colleges require all students to engage in practical Christian work during their four years. During that time they gain courage, experience, and expertise. As a result they acquire a taste for Christian service which they might never have received under different circumstances.

It is tragically possible for a student to spend four years in a Christian liberal arts college and never accept a single Christian service assignment, attend a single missionary prayer meeting, read a single missionary biography or periodical, or even give his testimony in a class meeting. It is fair to ask: How is the Holy Spirit to reach that student with a call to Christian service?

5. Ready feet. The psalmist said: "I will run in the way of thy commandments" (Ps 119:32, RSV). Isaiah said: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace" (Is 52:7, RSV). The time

is short (I Co 7:29, RSV) and the king's business requires haste (I Sa 21:8, RSV). Indecision and procrastination have more than once played havoc with a call to Christian service.

Young people facing Christian service encounter two temptations. One is to run before the Lord; the other is to lag behind. For every one who succumbs to the first temptation there are ten who fall before the second. There are people who can't bring themselves to make a major decision such as that required to enter full-time Christian service. They examine all aspects of the situation; they pray about it; they discuss it with others; they do everything but come to a conclusion.

One problem is that they don't understand the true nature of divine guidance; consequently, they are not prepared to step out in faith. They want to wait until their guidance is 100 percent certain, and that, of course, never happens. Guidance as granted by God is always perfect, but once it has filtered through the human mind it is no longer so. If one waits until he is *absolutely* sure of the Lord's leading, he will wait forever. Divine guidance is never 100 percent certain; if it were, where would faith come in? We must remember that the Christian walks by faith and not by sight (2 Co 5:7), which means that he must be willing to act on the guidance God has given and expect Him to take care of the consequences.

Even Paul, when giving instructions on Christian marriage, was obliged to say, "I *think* that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Co 7:40, RSV). And after he received the so-called Macedonian call, Paul says, "Immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, *concluding* that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10, RSV).

Somewhere along the line the individual must make up his mind to act. It is always easier to steer a moving vehicle than a stationary one. Some would-be missionaries give the impression that they are waiting for God to pack their trunks, buy their tickets, and see them off at the airport.

RECOGNIZING THE CALL

This is probably the most crucial question of all, at least as far as young people are concerned. Just how does a call come? What should I look for? Is it a matter of knowledge or feeling? Should I wait for a vision or a voice? Will I recognize it when I get it?

The truth of the matter is that the call to full-time Christian service seldom comes like a meteor out of the blue. The dramatic experience of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road is not to be considered the norm for present-day Christians.

Timothy, Titus, Silas and others did not share Paul's sensational call to the Lord's service. More often, a call is a developing process that may take months, even years, to come to full fruition, and along the way some rather well-defined stages can be traced.

The first step is *curiosity*. This may come about in a variety of ways—a casual remark by a friend, a letter from a missionary, a chapter in a book, a hymn in church on Sunday morning, a bull session in the college dorm, an article in the newspaper, or anyone of a hundred other ways. Nothing is more unpredictable than the moving of the Holy Spirit. Under

His leadership the first step is often taken and the person involved remains completely unaware of it.

In no time at all curiosity leads to *interest*. The person will find himself turning again and again to the subject that has caught his attention. For the first time in his life he thinks and talks about missions, and he can hardly wait for the annual missionary conference to come.

But curiosity and interest are not enough. Something deeper is required, namely, *understanding*. This is not achieved in a hurry. It will take time and study. As he reads missionary literature and studies the Scriptures, a person gradually comes to understand something of the nature, scope, meaning, and mandate of the Christian world mission, the lostness of man, the magnitude of the unfinished task, and the unprecedented opportunities for Christian service. Missionary work is certainly a viable option in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

As one continues to read, study, meditate, and pray, understanding leads to *assurance*. His heart is "strangely warmed" and he begins to get a feel for full-time Christian service. What time and again he vowed he would never do, now begins to look downright attractive. The thought of being a missionary, once intolerable has now a warm and pleasant glow about it. He really *could* be a missionary!

At this point he will probably want to share his secret with others—his parents, his wife (if he has one), his pastor, or his close friends. If they are sympathetic they will help to confirm the leading he has already received from the Holy Spirit. If they are apathetic or opposed—and sometimes they are—he must tell them anyway because his heart is beginning to stir and he cannot keep the matter to himself.

As he continues to search the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit continues to work in his heart, assurance grows stronger and stronger until it becomes *conviction*. He *must* be a missionary. Anything else would be unthinkable. He can now appreciate the words of another:

The uniqueness of the missionary vocation lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit brings to certain members of the Church a compelling conviction that they have been set apart as apostles and commissioned to give their whole lives to the gospel and to build the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.²

Once this stage is reached there is no turning back. He knows beyond a doubt that Jesus Christ has called him into His glorious service. At that point conviction leads to *commitment*. He is ready to sign the Princeton Pledge of the Student Volunteer Movement: "I *purpose*, God willing, to be a foreign missionary." No disappointment, no discouragement, no opposition of friends or relatives can turn him aside.

He is convinced of his personal call to full-time Christian service.

Finally, commitment culminates in *action*. He gets moving. He makes plans to prepare for the mission field because that is where he is going. That's where the action is. That's where his heart is. And where his heart is, his feet soon follow. So he resigns his job and goes off to seminary or Bible college to begin preparation for a missionary career.

It is worth noting that these seven steps involve the whole man. The first three—curiosity, interest, and understanding—involve the mind. The next three—assurance, conviction, and commitment—involve the heart. The last one—action—involve the will. That missionary is blessed indeed whose mind, heart, and will are all involved in his high calling. He is not likely to fail, nor will he become a dropout. He is a missionary by the will of God, by the call of Christ, and by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

END OF SAMPLE

² David Adeney, *The Unchanging Commission* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1955), p.79.