THE CALL!

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A personal call to missionary work is not necessary, can be rooted in Western individualism and reflect a low view of the role of the Church. It is also something which God has used powerfully in history to motivate and encourage people. Who said theology was easy?

Category: Observations

"I think what you do is wonderful and wish I could go and do something like that myself, but I can't. I've not had the call. You have to have the call, don't you?"

I don't know how many times I've heard people say things like this. The assumption is that you can't be a missionary unless you've been called.

But - and here is the important bit - the Bible doesn't so much talk about 'calling' as 'sending' and all of us have been sent.

> *As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. (John 20:21)*

Whether you look at John, the 'Great Commission' in Matthew, or anywhere else in Scripture, the implication is that the whole church is to be involved in spreading the Gospel around the whole world. None of us should be sitting around waiting for a call - we've already got one. The question is not whether we should be involved in mission, butÂ *how* we should be involved in mission. Â All Christians should be involvedÂ in world mission as prayers and givers and we should all be involved in making disciples wherever we are. That is not negotiable.

So what are we to make of the idea of a 'missionary call'? Here are some thoughts:

- You don't have to have a special personal call to be a missionary.
- The notion of a personal call is to a great extent a reflection of the individualistic nature of Western society and does not really reflect the corporate nature of the Christian faith.
- An individual call to mission often reflects a low view of the role of the Church in the mission of God. It is the Church who should identify, commission and support people for mission work. It should not be up to individuals to tell churches that they 'have a call' and need to be supported.
- A sense of personal calling is not a prerequisite for being involved in mission, but it can be a great comfort and encouragement when times get tough.
- Being set aside by a church congregation for mission work does not mean that people can't have a personal sense of calling. Paul was commissioned by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3), but he had a deep conviction of his own role as Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13) and was guided directly by God in particular situations (Acts 16:9).
- When churches are not taking their corporate responsibility for world mission seriously, God is perfectly capable of calling an individual into mission work and using them to shake the up the church. William Carey and Hudson Taylor are excellent examples of this sort of situation.

In a similar vein, I wrote this seven years ago (this blog is getting old):

> *When we use the word missionary it becomes something that Christians do â€“ a job title, or job description. This is safe and comfortable. Mission is a thing we do at times, and something*

> *that can be left to the professionals if the going gets tough. Some people GO â€“ the rest of us can stay behind and pray and give. But, this just isnâ€™t what the Bible story is getting at. God is on a mission and we are called to be followers of this missional God. Mission isnâ€™t something we are to do, it is what we are. To ask whether All Christians are called to be missionaries is a bit like asking whether all dogs should have four legs.*