AAAAAARGH!

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In which I get irritated about some poor ecclesiology
Category: Observations

I'll admit it, there are some things that I see on the internet that really bother me. This morning in my twitter feed I came across some "tips to find God's will for your life". Here they are:

- Dive into the Bible
- Commit yourself to doing whatever God asks
- Pray constantly
- Evaluate all facts
- Ask God for wisdom
- Let others speak into your life
- Make a bold decision in faith

OK, in and of themselves there is nothing wrong with this list; in fact all of it is stuff that Christians should be doing all of the time anyway. What bothers me is the context and what is missing.

This list comes from a mission agency blog and I saw it because it was retweeted by two other mission agencies. So the context for reading this revolves around mission work. What is missing is any mention of church leadership. It suggests that you talk to a few close friends once you are near to making a decsion, but it never says that you should talk to those to whom God has given the responsibility of guiding your spiritual life. This bothers me for three reasons.

- It is disrespectful of the church; if a Christian does feel that they are called to mission work, they are likely to want their church to pray for them and to support them financially. Surely, this means the church should be brought into the conversation early on.
- It is bad theology. Mission agencies have typically not paid enough attention to the role of the local church and this is someting they need to address. Thankfully, many agencies pay more attention to the place of the church and its structure than this blog post would imply.
- It reinforces the idea of missionaries as Lone-Rangers. Almost all missionaries work in teams, often under the leadership of national churches or international team leaders. We have to help new missionaries understand that they need to work in this sort of context and we can start doing that by helping them see that discernment is a corporate, not an individual thing.

I've not linked to the original piece or to the tweets about it because I've got no wish to actually criticise individual agencies. My problem is with the sort of thinking that allows them to say things like this without adequate reflection.

To any wannabe missionaries out there; a good, prayerful, supportive home-church is absolutely vital to your work. Build up those links and don't think you can do it on your own.

Rant over