



SAMPLE: DECISIONS CD



Let the Nations be Glad [John Piper]

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, no missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!" (Ps 97:1). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps 67:3-4).

But worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can't commend what you don't cherish. Missionaries will never call out, "Let the nations be glad!" who cannot say from the heart, "I rejoice in the Lord...I will be glad and exult in thee, I will sing praise to thy name, O Most High" (Ps 104:34; 9:2). Missions begins and ends in worship.

If the pursuit of God's glory is not ordered above the pursuit of man's good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church, man will not be well served and God will not be duly honored. I am not pleading for a diminishing of missions but for a magnifying of God. When the flame of worship burns with the heat of God's true worth, the light of missions will shine to the darkest peoples on earth. And I long for that day to come!

Where passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Churches that are not centered on the exaltation of the majesty and beauty of God will scarcely kindle a fervent desire to "declare his glory among the nations" (Ps 96:3).

The Second Greatest Activity in the World]

The most crucial issue in missions is the centrality of God in the life of the Church. Where people are not stunned by the greatness of God, how can they be sent with the ringing message, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods!" (Ps 96:4). Missions is not first and ultimate: God is. And these are not just words. This truth is in the life blood of missionary inspiration and endurance. William Carey, the father of modern missions, who set sail for India from England in 1793, expressed the connection:

When I left England, my hope of India's conversion was very strong; but amongst so many obstacles, it would die, unless upheld by God. Well, I have God, and His Word is true. Though the superstitions of the heathen were a thousand times stronger than they are, and the example of the Europeans a thousand times worse; though I were deserted by all and persecuted by all, yet my faith, fixed on the sure Word, would rise above all obstructions and overcome every trial. God's cause will triumph. 1

Carey and thousands like him have been moved and carried by the vision of a great and triumphant God. That vision must come first. Savoring it in worship precedes spreading it in missions. All of history is moving toward one great goal, the white hot worship of God and his Son among all the peoples of the earth. Missions is not that goal. It is the means. And for that reason it is the second greatest human activity in the world.

God's Passion for God—the Foundation for Ours]

One of the things God uses to make this truth take hold of a person and a church is the stunning realization that it is also true for God himself. Missions is not God's ultimate goal, worship is. And when this sinks into a person's heart, everything changes. The world is often turned on it's head. And everything looks different-including the missionary enterprise.

The ultimate foundation for our passion to see God glorified is his own passion to be glorified. God is central and supreme in his own affections. There are no rivals for the supremacy of God's own glory in his own heart. God is not an idolater. He does not disobey the first and greatest commandment. With all his heart and soul and strength and mind He delights in the glory of his manifold perfections.² The post passionate heart for God in all the universe is God's heart.

This truth, more than any other I know, seals the conviction that worship is the fuel and goal of missions. The deepest reason why our passion for God should fuel missions is that God's passion for God fuels missions. Missions is the overflow of our delight in God

because missions is the overflow of God's delight in being God. And the deepest reason why worship is the goal in missions is that worship is God's goal. We are confirmed in this goal by the biblical record of God's relentless pursuit of praise among the nations. "Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him all peoples!" (Ps 117:1). If it is God's goal it must be our goal.

The Power of Missions is Worship]

God's supremacy in his own heart is not unloving. It is in fact the fountain of love. God's full delight in his own perfections overflows in his merciful will to share that delight with the nations. We may reaffirm then the earlier truth that worship is the fuel and goal that drives us in missions, because it is the fuel and goal that drives God in missions. Missions flows from the fullness of God's passion for God and it aims at the participation of the nations in the very passion that he has for himself (cf. John 15:31; 17:13,26; Matt 25:21,23). The power of the missionary enterprise is to be caught up into God's fuel and God's goal. And that means being caught up in worship.

Only One God Works for People Who Wait for Him]

This remarkable vision of God as one who "exalts himself to show mercy" (Isa 30:18)

Impels world missions in more ways than one. One way we have not pondered is the sheer uniqueness of this God among all the gods of the nations. Isaiah realizes this and says, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides thee, who works for those who wait for him" (Isa 64:4).). In other words Isaiah is stunned that the greatness of God has the paradoxical effect that he does not need people to work for him, but rather magnifies himself by working for them, if they will renounce self-reliance and "wait for him."

Isaiah anticipated the words of Paul in Acts 17:25, "God is not served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything." The uniqueness at the heart of Christianity is the glory of God manifest in the freedom of grace. God is glorious because he does not need the nations to work for him. He is free to work for them. "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Missions is not a recruitment project for God's labor force. It is a liberation project from the heavy burdens and hard yokes of other gods (Matt 11:28-30).

Isaiah says that such a God has not been seen or heard anywhere in the world. "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God beside thee." What Isaiah sees everywhere he looks are gods who have to be served rather than serve. For example, the Babylonian gods Bel and Nebo:

Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, their idols are on beasts and cattle; these things you carry are loaded as burdens on weary beasts. They stoop, they bow down together, they cannot save the burden, but themselves go into captivity. "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save (Isa 46:1-4; cf. Jer 10:5).

The difference between the true God and the gods of the nations is that the true God carries and the other gods must be carried. God serves, they must be served. God glorifies his might by showing mercy. They glorify theirs by gathering slaves. So the vision of God as one whose passion for his glory moves him to mercy impels missions because he is utterly unique among all the gods.

The Most Shareable Message in the World]

There is yet another way that such a God motivates the missionary enterprise. The gospel demand that flows from such a God to the nations is an eminently shareable, doable demand, namely to rejoice and be glad in God. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!" (Ps 97:1). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps 67:3-4). "Let the oppressed see it and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive" (Ps 69:32). "Let all who seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee! May those who love thy salvation say evermore, God is great!" (Ps 70:4). What message would missionaries rather take than the message: Be glad in God! Rejoice in God! Sing for joy in God! For God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him! God loves to exalt himself by showing mercy to sinners.

The liberating fact is that the message we take to the frontiers is that people everywhere should seek their own best interest. We are summoning people to God. And those who come say, "In your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). God glorifies himself among the nations with the command, "Delight yourself in the Lord!" (Ps 37:4). His first and great requirement of all men everywhere is that they repent from seeking their joy in other things and begin to seek it only in him. A God who cannot be served is a God who can only be enjoyed. The great sin of the world is not that the human race has failed to work for God so as to increase his glory, but that we have failed to delight in God so as to reflect his glory. For God's glory is most reflected in us when we are most delighted in him.

The most exhilarating thought in the world is that God's inexorable purpose to display his glory in the mission of the Church is virtually the same as his purpose to give his people infinite delight. God is committed to the holy joy of the redeemed, gathered from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, with the same zeal that moves him to seek his own glory in all that he does. The supremacy of God in the heart of God is the driving force of his mercy and the missionary movement of his Church.

Biblical Expressions of the Supremacy of God in Missions]

Against the background we have developed so far we may now be able to feel the full force of those biblical texts that emphasize the

supremacy of God in the missionary impulse of the Church. The motives we see will confirm the centrality of God in the missionary vision of the Bible.

We have seen some of the Old Testament texts which make the glory of God the centerpiece of missionary proclamation: “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!” (Ps 96:3). “Proclaim that his name is exalted” (Isa 12:4). There are many others. But we have not yet seen the straightforward statements of Jesus and Paul and John that say the same thing.

Leaving: Family and Possessions for the Sake of the Name]

When Jesus turned the rich young ruler away because he was not willing to leave his wealth to follow Jesus, the Lord said, “It will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:23). The apostles were amazed and said, “Who then can be saved?” (v. 25). Jesus answered, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (v. 26). Then Peter, speaking as a kind of missionary who had left his home and business to follow Jesus, said, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What shall we have?” (v. 27). Jesus answered with a mild rebuke of Peter’s sense of sacrifice: “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life” (v. 29).

The one point of focus for us here is the phrase, “for my name’s sake.” The motive that Jesus virtually takes for granted when a missionary leaves home and family and possessions is that it is for the sake of the name of Jesus. That means for the sake of Jesus’ reputation. God’s goal is that his Son’s name be exalted and honored among all the peoples of the world. For when the Son is honored, the Father is honored (Mark 9:37). When every knee bows at the name of Jesus, it will be “to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 10-11). Therefore God-centered missions exists for the sake of the name of Jesus.

A Missionary Prayer for God’s Name to be Hallowed]

The first two petitions of the Lord’s Prayer are perhaps the dearest statement of all in the teachings of Jesus that missions is driven by the passion of God to be glorified among the nations. “Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come” (Matt 6:9-10).

Here Jesus teaches us to ask God to hallow his name and to make his kingdom come. This is a missionary prayer. Its aim is to engage the passion of God for his name among those who forget or revile the name of God (Ps 9:17; 74:18). To hallow God’s name means to put it in a class by itself and to cherish and honor it above every claim to our allegiance or affection. Jesus’ primary concern—the very first petition of the prayer he teaches—is that more and more people, and more and more peoples, come to hallow God’s name. This is the reason the universe exists. Missions exists because this hallowing doesn’t.

How Much He Must Suffer for the Name]

When Paul was converted on the Damascus road, Jesus Christ became the supreme treasure and joy of his life. “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8). It was a costly allegiance. What Paul learned - there in Damascus was not only the joy of sins forgiven and fellowship with the King of the universe, but also how much he would have to suffer. Jesus sent Ananias to him with this message: “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:16). Paul’s missionary sufferings were “for the sake of the name.” When he came near the end of his life and was warned not to go to Jerusalem, he answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” Acts 21:13). For Paul the glory of the name of Jesus and his reputation in the world was more important than life.

For the Sake of His Name among All the Nations]

Paul makes crystal clear in Romans 1:5 that his mission and calling are for the name of Christ among all the nations: “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.”

The apostle John described the motive of early Christian missionaries in the same way. He wrote to tell one of his churches that they should send out Christian brothers in a manner “worthy of God.” And the reason he gives is that “they have gone out for the sake of the name, taking nothing from the Gentiles” (3 Jn 6-7).

John Stott comments on these two texts (Rom 1:5; 3 Jn 7): “They knew that God had superexalted Jesus, enthroning him at his right hand and bestowing upon him the highest rank, in order that every tongue should confess his lordship. They longed that Jesus should receive the honor due to his name.” 5 This longing is not a dream but a certainty. At the bottom of all our hope, when everything else has given way, we stand on this great reality: the everlasting, all-sufficient God is infinitely, unwaveringly, and eternally committed to the glory of his great and holy name. For the sake of his fame among the nations he will act. His name will not be profaned for ever. The mission of the church will be victorious. He will vindicate his people and his cause in all the earth.

The Power of Missions When Love for the Lost is Weak]

Compassion for the lost is a high and beautiful motive for missionary labor. Without it we lose the sweet humility of sharing a treasure we have freely received. But we have seen that compassion for people must not be detached from passion for the glory of God. John Dawson, a leader in Youth With a Mission, gives an additional reason why this is so. He points out that a strong feeling of love for “the lost” or “the world” is a very difficult experience to sustain and is not always recognizable when it comes.

“Have you ever wondered what it feels like to have a love for the lost? This is a term we use as part of our Christian jargon. Many believers search their hearts in condemnation, looking for the arrival of some feeling of benevolence that will propel them into bold evangelism. It will never happen. It is impossible to love “the lost.” You can’t feel deeply for an abstraction or a concept. You would find it impossible to love deeply an unfamiliar individual portrayed in a photograph, let alone a nation or a race or something as vague as “all lost people.”

Don’t wait for a feeling of love in order to share Christ with a stranger. You already love your heavenly Father, and you know that this stranger is created by Him, but separated from Him, so take those first steps in evangelism because you love God. It is not primarily out of a compassion for humanity that we share our faith or pray for the lost; it is first of all, love for God. The Bible says in Ephesians 6:7-8: “With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”

Humanity does not deserve the love of God any more than you or I do. We should never be Christian humanists, taking Jesus to poor, sinful people, reducing Jesus to some kind of product that will better their lot. People deserve to be damned, but Jesus, the suffering Lamb of God, deserves the reward of his suffering. 6

The Miracle of Love *that Weeps*]

Dawson’s words are a wise and encouraging warning not to limit our mission engagement to the level of compassion we feel for people we do not know. However, I don’t want to minimize what the Lord is able to do in giving people a supernatural burden of love for distant peoples. For example, Wesley Duewel of OMS International tells the story of his mother’s remarkable burden for China and India:

“My mother for years carried a hunger for the people of China and India. For many years practically every day as she prayed during family prayer for these two nations she would break down and weep before she finished praying. Her love was deep and constant, and she will be rewarded eternally for her years of love-burden for those lands. This is the love of Jesus reaching out and meditated through Christians by the Holy Spirit. 7

I emphasize again that the motive of compassion and the motive of zeal for the glory of God are not separate. God-centered compassion (which is the only kind that cares for people eternally) weeps over the misery of people who reject God’s glory and drink the cup of his wrath. But this weeping is not because of the loss of Christian joy. If that were true unbelievers could blackmail the saints and hold their happiness hostage for eternity. No, the weeping of the saints at the loss of precious souls is, paradoxically, the weeping of joy in God. And the reason joy can weep is because it longs to be extended and expanded into the lives of others who are perishing. Therefore the weeping of compassion is the weeping of joy impeded in the extension of itself to another.

The Call of God]

God is calling us above all else to be the kind of people whose theme and passion is the supremacy of God in all of life. No one will be able to rise to the magnificence of the missionary cause who does not feel the magnificence of Christ. There will be no big world vision without a big God. There will be no passion to draw others into our worship where there is no passion for worship.

God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of his name among the nations. Therefore let us bring our affections into line with his, and, for the sake of his name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts, and join his global purpose. If we do this, God’s omnipotent commitment to his name will be over us like a banner, and we will not lose, in spite of many tribulations (Acts 9:16; Rom 8:35-39). Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. The Great Commission is first to delight yourself in the Lord (Ps 37:4). And then to declare, “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy” (Ps 67:4). In this way God will be glorified from beginning to end and worship will empower the missionary enterprise till the coming of the Lord.

“Great and wonderful are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the ages!
Who shall not fear and glorify your name,
O Lord?
For you alone are holy.
All nations shall come and worship you,
for your judgments have been revealed”
(Rev 15:3-4).

End Notes]

1. Quoted in Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), p. 140.

2. I have tried to unfold this wonderful truth of the Father’s delight in himself, that is, his Son in *The Pleasures of God*:

Meditations on God's Delight in Being God (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1991), Chapter One, "The Pleasure of God in His Son.

3. See especially "Appendix One: The Goal of God in Redemptive History," in *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Portland: Multnomah Press, original 1986, 2nd edition 1996), pp. 227-238; and the entirety of *The Pleasures of God*.

4. I am aware that the Bible is replete with pictures of God's people serving him. I have dealt in some detail; with the way service can be conceived biblically so as not to put God in the category of an employer who depends on wage earners. See *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonism* pp. 138-143.

5. John Stott, "The Bible in World Evangelization," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), Chap. 4, this volume.

6. John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God* (Lake Mary, Florida: Creation House, 1989), pp. 208-209.

7. Wesley Duewel, *Ablaze for God* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), pp. 115-116.



Nobody's Fool [Os Guinness]

Calling The Core]

Earlier I mentioned the notion of calling this was: *Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.*

Now it is time to unpack that truth further, beginning with four essential strands in the biblical notion of calling that we must always hold.

First, calling has a simple and straightforward meaning. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word that has been translated as “call” usually has the same everyday meaning as our English word. (Human beings call to each other, to God, and to animals. Animals too can call.) The psalmist, for example, wrote that God “provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.”) Under the pressure of theology and history, the term call has traveled a long way from this simple beginning, but this straightforward sense and its obvious relational setting should never be lost. When you “call” on the phone, for example, you catch someone’s ear for a season.

Second, calling has another important meaning in the Old Testament. To call means to name, and to name means to call into being or to make. Thus the first chapter of Genesis, “God called the light ‘day’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’” This type of calling is far more than labeling, hanging a nametag on something to identify it. Such decisive, creative naming is a form of making. Thus when God called Israel, he named and thereby constituted and created Israel his people. Calling is not only a matter of being and doing what we are but also of becoming what we are not yet but are called by God to be. Thus “name-calling,” a very thing from name-calling, is the fusion of being and becoming.

Third, calling gains further characteristic meaning in the New Testament. It is almost synonymous for salvation. In this context, calling is overwhelmingly God’s calling people to himself as followers of Christ. Just as God called Israel to him as his people, so Jesus called his disciples. The body of Jesus’ followers as a whole is the community of the “called-out ones” (the origin of *ecclesia*, the Greek word for church). This decisive calling by God is salvation. Those who are called by God are first chosen and later justified and glorified. But calling is the most prominent and accessible of these four initiatives of God. Not surprisingly it often stands for salvation itself, and the common description of disciples of Jesus is not “Christian” but “followers of the Way.”

Fourth, calling has a vital, extended meaning in the New Testament that flowers more fully in the later history of the church. God calls people to himself, but this call is no casual suggestion. He is so awe inspiring and his summons is so commanding that only one response is appropriate—a response as total and universal as the authority of the Caller. Thus in the New Testament, as Jesus calls his followers to himself, he also calls them to other things and tasks: to peace, to fellowship, to eternal life, to suffering, and to service. But deeper even than these particulars things, discipleship, which implies “everyone, everywhere, and in everything,” is the natural and rightful response to the lordship of Christ. As Paul wrote the followers of Christ in the little town of Colosse, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”

In short, calling in the Bible is a central and dynamic theme that becomes a metaphor for the life of faith itself. To limit the word, as some insist, to a few texts and to a particular stage in salvation is to miss the forest for the trees. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a “called one” and so to become “a follower of the Way.”

The third and fourth strands of the meaning of calling are the basis for the vital distinction elaborated later in history—between primary and secondary calling. *Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him.* First and foremost we are

called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia)

Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to law or to the practice of art history. But these and other things are always the secondary, never the primary calling. They are “callings” rather than the “calling.” They are our personal answer to God’s address, our response to God’s summons. Secondary calling matters, but only because the primary calling matters most.

This vital distinction between primary and secondary calling carries with it two challenges—first, to hold the two together and, second, to ensure that they are kept in the right order. In other words, if we understand calling, we must make sure that first things remain first and the primary calling always comes before the secondary calling. But we must also make sure that the primary calling leads without fail to the secondary calling.



Discerning God's Will [Keith Davy]

Dear Friend,

Like all of us, you are going to face an ever-increasing number of decisions. Life is full of decisions. Some are trivial and will be merely a matter of preference. Others will be moral and will test your character. But you will also face an increasing number of directional decisions that will determine what you will do in life, where you will go and even who you will do it with.

Your starting point will make all the difference. Approaching these decisions apart from God leaves you to rely on your own limited ability to gather the information, to consider the options and make your best guess at the outcomes. In a real sense, it is just that, a guess. For no one can know future or all the factors that will matter.

But when you trust God, there is a different path. It involves less deciding and more following – following the one who is all-knowing, all-loving, and all-powerful. According to Romans 12:2, his plan for us is “good” (there is no evil intent toward us), “pleasing” (we would genuinely desire it if we really understood it) and “perfect” (we could not improve on it if we tried).

In one sense, this beginning point is really the hardest decision you will have to make. Will you trust yourself and what you can discern and achieve (despite your obvious limitations)? Or, will you trust God for all that he has for you, with his infinite love and wisdom? (Mark 8:34-38)

But how do you follow unseen footsteps? How do you hear a silent voice? How do you know the guidance of God? There are six signposts in the Bible that God has consistently used to guide his people. I will pose them as questions that may prove helpful to you.

1. What does God's Word say about the decision?

This is not a search for some mysterious answer taken from a verse out of context. Rather, it is an attempt to view a decision through the lens of truth, seeing the issue from God's perspective (Psalm 119:105). I will often write down a series of verses that help me think biblically about a decision.

2. What do I sense the Spirit impress on me while in intimate prayer regarding the decision?

Again, there is a danger that I may misinterpret my thoughts for the Spirit's prompting. So I never act solely on this basis. But I do pay attention to it, for this is where we enjoy the intimacy of our relationship with God. (1 Samuel 23:1-4)

3. What insights do I gain from the counsel of others?

There are three kinds of counselors that I seek:

- (1) Those who know me and can help me understand myself.
- (2) Those who know the situation and can give me valuable insight into what will be involved in the decision.
- (3) Those who know God and will listen to me share the issues and provide me with a godly perspective. (Proverbs 15:22)

4. How has God been at work in the circumstances?

As we follow God, he orchestrates the details of our lives, opening and closing doors, bringing about opportunities, and preparing us for the road ahead. I try to pay attention for the evidence of God at work in my circumstances. (Romans 1:10-13)

5. What is my deepest desire regarding this?

On the surface, I will have many different wants. But as I dig down, I find out what is really important to me. Most of the time, I have found that I ultimately desired what I later discovered to be God's will. I am certain that this is because he is at work within, shaping the desires of our hearts (Philippians 2:13). But there will be those moments when, like Jesus in the garden, we must pray “not my will, but your will be done.” The path to God's best will at times lead through pain and sacrifice.

6. What is the view of wisdom on this decision?

Here I normally write out the pros and cons of each option. Then I ask, “Which of these factors are the most important?” (Proverbs 14: 8, 15)

Through the years I have asked these questions over countless decisions. Normally I jot down my answers on paper or in a journal. I have found this important for at least two reasons. By writing them down, it protects me from “the tyranny of the most recent thought.” Too often our most recent thought will dominate our thinking and have the most influence (whether or not it merits that privilege). By writing things down, I see the whole picture at once and can make an informed decision after looking at all the signposts together. This also gives me a record that I refer back to later. This can be especially helpful when the path gets difficult and I begin to wonder how I got here and why. I have often found great encouragement by looking back at the signposts of God’s guidance in the past.

Through the years, I have shared these principles with literally hundreds of students. I would be less than honest to say that there haven’t been those who have struggled deeply with their direction after seeking God’s guidance. But they have been relatively few and for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, I have known countless individuals who have expressed deep regret over decisions they have made while operating independent of God’s leading.

It only makes sense when you think about it—if there is a God who is all-knowing (thus knows what is best for us), all-loving (wants what is best for us) and all-powerful (able to lead us into what is best for us), then shouldn’t we trust him with all our hearts and seek his ways? That is my prayer for you as you begin the next chapter of your life.

Sincerely,

Keith A. Davy
Director of Research & Development
Campus Crusade for Christ

(This letter has been modified from an actual letter to a recent graduate. I hope it is helpful for you as well, as you seek to follow God’s guidance in your life.)



Seminary [Overview]

At some point, for anyone wrestling with the possibility of ministry, the question of seminary must enter into the picture.

To be an effective minister of the gospel there are three critical issues of training. The first is the practical training, the actual doing of the ministry by engaging in evangelism, discipleship, and the teaching of the scripture. The second area of training is experiential knowledge of the Lord, that which is gained by walking with God over time—wisdom. Third is doctrinal or academic knowledge, that which people go to a seminary or take theological classes to gain.

What do you learn at [seminary]

Well, you can take classes in most anything (try going to www.rtsvirtual.org/tcourses.html to see course samplings) but central to any seminary education are the following topics:

Christian doctrine- A foundational understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning: man, sin, salvation (soteriology), the Holy spirit (pneumatology), the church (ecclesiology), Christ (christology) and His return (eschatology).

Christian History- A survey of the major events and people of the last 2,000 years of church history: the Early Church, Crusades, Reformation, etc.

Old and New Testament- The general contours of the books of the Old and New Testament are taught, as well as how the old covenant relates to the new.

Languages- The Old Testament was originally written in hebrew while the language of the New Testament is greek. To better understand, study, and teach the Bible, seminary provides training in these languages.

Additionally there are classes in preaching, evangelism, apologetics (logical defenses of the Christian faith), missions, and counseling, that give orientation and instruction on these topics.

Degree [programs]

A Master degree in biblical or theological studies averages around 45 credits, anywhere from 12-14 classes usually omitting language study. A Master of Divinity is about 95 credits or three academic years, one full year of which is devoted to language studies. A Doctorate is usually another 3-5 years on top of the M.Div. studies, usually specializing in Theology, Old Testament, New Testament, or Church history.

On a functional level, if one consistently walks with Lord and is in engaged in the work of the ministry, a master's worth of credits (around 35-45) accumulated in the early years of ministry is quite sufficient for the majority of tasks required by the ministry.

However, because of the quantity and depth of teaching performed by senior pastors in a church setting, the standard requirement for a pastor is a Master of Divinity degree.

The usual requirement for teaching at a Christian college or seminary would be a doctorate as you function as a teacher of the teachers.

The Philosophy of [Campus Crusade]

Campus Crusade sees great value in seminary education. In the early years of a staff career summers are often devoted to gaining this seminary training, making sure (though they may never get an actual degree) our staff achieve theological proficiency.

We feel in many ways this is an ideal: Christians growing theologically while they are actively engaged in the ministry, practice and theory, intellect and experience, going hand-in-hand avoiding the danger of knowledge without application.

After a basic level of seminary training is achieved some of our staff desire to invest their summers in other ways such as overseas missions or leading Summer Projects. Some, however, who speak more, are gifted teachers, who love to learn, or feel they will someday move on to become Pastors, apply for seminary staff which allows them to continue to invest their summers at seminary, some of their school year, or even take a year or two to finish up their Master of Divinity degree.

Seminary [partnerships]

One of the unique advantages to getting your education as you serve in the ministry, is that several prominent seminaries offer discounts to Campus Crusade staff members, honoring our missionary laborers. These discounts reduce tuition costs up to nearly 50%, and allow our staff to complete their degrees without having to pull away from ministry for several years. It also tends to spread out the cost of seminary over a longer time span so that most of our staff are able to complete their studies without accumulating debt. Additionally these seminaries give credit for ministry and theological training already accumulated through serving with Crusade.

The seminaries that offer Campus Crusade discounted tuition have a special partnership with us. They are five of the most respected evangelical seminaries in the country. Their academic standards are high, yet they retain an unmovable commitment to Christ, the scriptures, the body of Christ, and to the missionary endeavor.

They are Dallas Theological seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Reformed Theological Seminary and Talbot School of Theology and Bethel Seminary. In addition to these Campus Crusade has its own seminary called The International School of Theology, made up of faculty familiar and experienced with our unique evangelistic ministry. For more information about these seminaries and their course and degree offerings go to:

Trinity Evangelical Seminary [Deerfield, Illinois] 1-847-945-8800 www.tiu.edu

Dallas Theological Seminary [Dallas, Texas] 1-800-992-0998 www.dts.edu

Reformed Theological Seminary [Orlando, Florida] 1-800-752-4382 www.rts.edu

Talbot School of Theology [La Mirada, California] 1-800-652-4652 www.talbot.edu

International School of Theology [Fontana, California] 1-800-727-4768 www.intl.edu

Bethel Seminary [St. Paul, Minnesota] 1-800-255-8706 www.bethel.edu



you say you want a [revolution]

A Voice of Change

In a recent book analyzing the way ideas and communications spread (*The Tipping Point*), Malcom Gladwell gives the following example:

In 1994 the brand known as Hush Puppies was selling at the dismal rate of 30,000 pairs of shoes a year. Wolverine, mother company of Hush Puppies, was in the process of eliminating the shoe that had made them famous—perhaps a decision that would have been applauded by many.

But then something very strange happened in Manhattan. In a few Soho nightclubs, college age trendsetters began wearing Hush Puppies because, well, just...because. Within months parties all over Manhattan were sporting them—like a virus the Hush Puppy “buzz” was spreading everywhere. In the fall of 1995 designer John Bartlett called Hush Puppies wanting to use them in his Spring Collection. Then Manhattan designer Anna Sui called wanting them for her fashion show as well, and the next thing you know Pee Wee Herman is wearing them in a movie.

By 1995 the Hush puppy virus had turned into an international plague; the company sold 430,000 pairs and the following year nearly 2 million. And, get this, in 1996 Hush Puppies won the prize for the best accessory at the Council of Fashion Designer Awards, the president of Hush Puppies sharing the same stage with Calvin Klein and Donna Karan to accept the award.

Gladwell asks and answers the question “how did this happen?” The answer is that ideas spread with the same dynamic of a virus, and college age students are the ideal “carriers,” able to turn a simple “outbreak” into a global epidemic.

But it’s not just fashion, a simple survey of some of the most significant trends and shifts in the realm of ideas, art, music, politics (the 60’s for example), and religion, seem to point back to handful of college students who were able to take an idea and spread it globally, making the world stand up and take notice.

Perhaps it’s the age, perhaps it’s the zeal or network of relationships, but whatever it is, college students are the ideal carriers of a message. Which is why the motto of Campus Crusade has always been “Reach the campus today, and you’ll reach the world tomorrow.” The belief has been, and still is, that if students take seriously the command of Christ to take the gospel to all nations, unlike any other group of people, they have the capacity to accomplish the task.



She ain't Mother Teresa [wait, maybe she is]

A People of Influence

Having received a fellowship to Magdalen College at Oxford, this young atheist quietly wrestled with the meaning of life:

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance,
and, if true, of infinite importance.
The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

In his days on campus he made significant relationships with Christians who indelibly influenced his life and thought. Writing in a letter to a close friend he remarked, “had a long satisfying talk” with two Christian friends “I learned a lot.” The spiritual journey continued for several years until C.S. Lewis, with the help of his two friends (Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien), would finally mark his conversion.

“In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.”

Lewis would go on to write more than 30 books, and become one of the most influential Christians of the century, touching millions through his writings.

Did you ever consider that the student sitting in Sociology 101 may be the next C.S. Lewis, Colin Powell, or Bill Gates—the guy on the wrestling team the next Mother Teresa. OK, bad example, but you see the point: on the campus today is the next generation of social, religious, corporate, and political leaders of this country, as well as the world. Right now there's a future president, somewhere, sitting down to a plate of dining hall food. If they are reached with the gospel now, as college students, the influence they could have for Christ in the world is staggering to consider.

In October of 1835 Karl Marx shows up at Bonn University, joins the “Young Hegelian” club, sheds his Christian training, becomes an atheist, and embraces communism—the campus is a battleground of ideas and ideologies, vying for dominance and competing for followers. Everyone will graduate as believers, but in what?

It isn't a question whether the leaders are on the campus, or even a question whether these leaders will shape and influence our country and world. The question is who will shape and influence them; who will win the battle for their hearts and minds? And, if these leaders can be reached now, what effect might that have in the advance of the gospel?

This is our great hope in targeting the college campus with the gospel.