

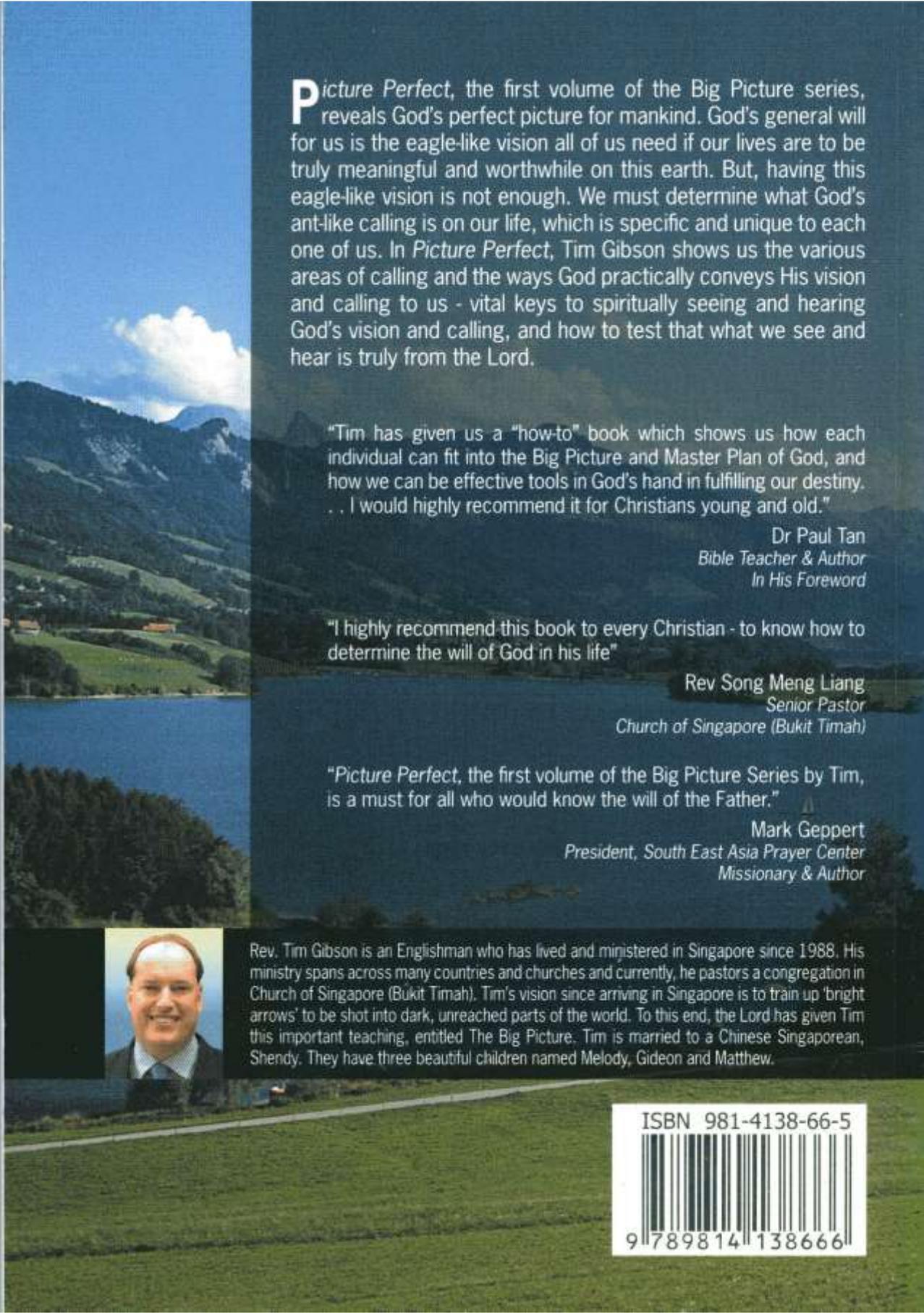
The Big Picture Series Volume One

# Picture Perfect

Know God's Will  
and How You  
Fit Into It



Tim Gibson



**P**icture Perfect, the first volume of the Big Picture series, reveals God's perfect picture for mankind. God's general will for us is the eagle-like vision all of us need if our lives are to be truly meaningful and worthwhile on this earth. But, having this eagle-like vision is not enough. We must determine what God's ant-like calling is on our life, which is specific and unique to each one of us. In *Picture Perfect*, Tim Gibson shows us the various areas of calling and the ways God practically conveys His vision and calling to us - vital keys to spiritually seeing and hearing God's vision and calling, and how to test that what we see and hear is truly from the Lord.

"Tim has given us a "how-to" book which shows us how each individual can fit into the Big Picture and Master Plan of God, and how we can be effective tools in God's hand in fulfilling our destiny. . . I would highly recommend it for Christians young and old."

Dr Paul Tan  
*Bible Teacher & Author  
In His Foreword*

"I highly recommend this book to every Christian - to know how to determine the will of God in his life"

Rev Song Meng Liang  
*Senior Pastor  
Church of Singapore (Bukit Timah)*

"*Picture Perfect*, the first volume of the Big Picture Series by Tim, is a must for all who would know the will of the Father."

Mark Geppert  
*President, South East Asia Prayer Center  
Missionary & Author*



Rev. Tim Gibson is an Englishman who has lived and ministered in Singapore since 1988. His ministry spans across many countries and churches and currently, he pastors a congregation in Church of Singapore (Bukit Timah). Tim's vision since arriving in Singapore is to train up 'bright arrows' to be shot into dark, unreached parts of the world. To this end, the Lord has given Tim this important teaching, entitled *The Big Picture*. Tim is married to a Chinese Singaporean, Shendy. They have three beautiful children named Melody, Gideon and Matthew.

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“It is with much joy that I extend my congratulations to Pastor Tim Gibson for this first publication of his work. I have known Pastor Tim for many years and seen him minister effectively as a gifted Bible Teacher. I am sure many have been blessed and have enjoyed his teaching of God’s Word.”

“I highly recommend this book to every Christian – to know how to determine the will of God in his or her life. In Hebrews 10:8-9, our Lord Jesus Christ shows us the importance of fulfilling the will of God. Jesus said that God did not desire sacrifices and offerings. To God our Lord Jesus Christ said: *“Here I am. I have come to do your will.”* Thus, knowing God’s will is imperative for every Christian. It is by fulfilling God’s will that the full potential of all that God has placed within us becomes our actual experience. Then only can we enjoy the rich and manifold blessings that God has prepared for us as His children, and glorify Him in our life.”

“May the Lord bless you richly as you see to know His wonderful will for your life.”

**Rev. Song Meng Liang**

*Senior Pastor*

*Church of Singapore (Bukit Timah)*

“And then there are the ‘Brits’. These are the ‘Big Picture’ people. From their tiny little island they conquered nations. They stood in the face of the German war machine and said: *“And if they reach our shores we’ll bludgeon them to death on our beaches.”*”

“A true ‘Brit’ is able to keep the ‘Big Picture’ perspective while all the events around would say the island was about to sink.”

“Tim Gibson brings his native tenacity into the mystical arena of God’s Big Picture for our lives. Jim Collins writes that the Good to Great Leader must be able to see the big picture and deal with the distasteful minute of every day living. Tim accomplishes this in an easy to read style that becomes a refreshing experience with every new page.”

“In our 30 years of global ministry, we have encountered few men of God with the combination of sensitivity and sensibility Tim demonstrates. Able to “hunker down” as pressure builds, he thinks not of himself, but of the others in every situation. A true ‘Brit’ he will be standing on the will of God when the tides of time are past.”

“Picture Perfect, the first volume of the Big Picture Series by Tim, is a must for all who would know the will of the Father.”

**Mark Geppert**

*President, South East Asia Prayer Center*

*Missionary & Author*

The Big Picture Series Volume One



**Know God's Will  
and How you  
Fit into it**

# Picture Perfect

**Tim Gibson**

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# Foreword

**B**Y writing this book, Tim has taken on the task of describing tediously the need for every Christian to pursue the Church's real meaning and mission.

With strong, convincing arguments, he points to the natural weaknesses of Man, and clearly reminds us of the strength and capability inherent in Christ's body, the true Church. Together we can seek to fulfill God's original intention to see the earth full of enlightened people bearing His image, ruling and reigning with justice and righteousness.

He starts by pointing us to a daily walk by faith within the framework of God's ultimate purpose and keeping in mind the destination for Mankind in His Millennium Kingdom to come. The kingdoms of this age that have been ruled by Satan's dark forces will become the Kingdom of Light as the saints rule and reign with Christ over every people, tongue and tribe on earth. As Christians we should reckon ourselves as seeds of Abraham to redeem lost humanity and also as seeds of King David to redeem the Fallen Kingdom.

Tim shows us how we can practically align our lives to be part of God's strategic end-time army, reaching out for Christ in the power of the Spirit so that we hasten His coming. Our aim must be that of the Apostle Paul and the early Church Fathers – to reach the yet unreached – setting them free from the counterfeit kingdom of Satan and bringing them into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This book has been written for the purpose of providing a convenient and authoritative source of factual information for Christians concerning various aspects of growth and training to enable them to fulfill God's general and specific will for their lives. It is above all a call to clarity. Each of us must know clearly the demands of God placed on us in this world and our role in leading Man to the one perfect sacrifice for their sins – Jesus.

We must determine what our calling is in the harvest and the specific role we are to play in the big jigsaw of God. Will we arise to *'seize the day'* and be effective in the area God is calling us to?

We must not be double-minded, but focus on what He is calling us to and give our whole commitment to our Master. Tim urges us to get the true vision, hear His call, and move in the specific and unique roles He has placed us in.

This book is well illustrated by Tim's personal experiences coupled with his insights and convictions, true to the Scriptures. Tim has been there. He has gone through the test and by his own experience has laid out his artful advice to others.

In practical ways, he reveals the various areas of calling and the ways that God conveys His vision and calling to us. We have vital keys to spiritually see God's Vision and hear God's Call. He tells us how to test that which we think we see and hear from the Lord. He makes our Christian walk with all its ups and downs on earth more bearable, meaningful and purposeful.

Tim has given us a *"how-to"* book which shows us how each individual can fit into the Big Picture and Master Plan of God, and how we can be effective tools in God's hand in fulfilling our destiny. Together the church can relate to community life in a meaningful, satisfying and redeeming manner as a testimony to Christ Jesus our Master.

Tim has presented the eternal counsel of God in a very simple and well-illustrated book and I would highly recommend it for Christians young and old.

**Dr. Paul Tan**

*Bible Teacher & Author*

# Acknowledgements

**A**s this material springs from the many years of developing the 'Big Picture' teaching package there are many people to thank concerning its creation.

First and foremost I give all praise and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ who embodies the Big Picture and without Him there would be no vision and no calling to live out of.

Next I would like to thank my beautiful wife, Shendy, who had been my 'sounding-board'. With her keen sense of what 'works' and what 'doesn't' I have been able to compile the good and leave the not so good. She has also been a constant support in the creation of this book, graciously enabling me to have ample undisturbed time, even if it means she has to look after the kids a few too many times.

I thank my three wonderful kids, Melody, Gideon and Matthew - not only for giving me many illustrations but reawakening my wonder in God's creation.

Special thanks to Rev. Dr. Albert Isaac (along with his wife Rev. Stephanie Isaac and their children) for encouraging me to put my material into book form.

Thanks to Dr. Bill and Sarah Rigden who have discipled me for many years and taught me much of what is included in this volume. Thanks also to Dr. Mike Crow and his wife Katie who counseled my wife and me and taught us so much just by being who they are in Christ. Not forgetting Pastor Song Meng Liang, who has given me room and opportunity to rise up into all God has for me, and also Pastor Ong Tiong Chuan. Thanks also to Mark Geppert and Paul Tan for writing positive reviews of this book and demonstrating the will of God in their own lives and ministries.

Finally, thanks to all the many students who have been through my 'Big Picture' seminars and have helped me to refine and change the contents based on helpful feedback - knowingly or unknowingly.

Last, but by no means least, thanks also to my own Church congregation and leaders (Church of Singapore - Bukit Timah) on whom I have tested out parts of this teaching with encouraging results.

Thank you all.

**Tim Gibson**

# Introduction

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” Ephesians 2:10*

**I**n the hustle and bustle of modern day living we often forget the following scene that exists either in faded memories, distant fiction, or now in tranquil corners of this globe:

Sitting at his mother’s feet is a little boy looking up from the floor and asking what she is doing. She informs him that she is embroidering. He tells her that it looks like a mess from where he is. From the underside he watches her work within the boundaries of the little round hoop that she holds in her hand.

She smiles at him, looks down and gently says, "My son, you go about your playing for a while and, when I am finished with my embroidering, I will put you on my knee and let you see it from my side."

The little boy wonders why she uses some dark threads along with the bright ones and why they seem so jumbled from his view. A few minutes pass and then he hears Mother's voice say, "Son, come and sit on my knee." This he does only to be surprised and thrilled to see a beautiful sunset. He cannot believe it, because from underneath it looked so messy.

Then his Mother says to him, "My son, from underneath it did look messy and jumbled, but you did not realize that there was a pre-drawn plan on the top. It was a design. I was only following it. Now look at it from my side and you will see what I was doing."

In the same way, we can gaze up in despair and ask God why our lives and circumstances seem so messy, with dark and bright threads of existence seemingly tangled together with no rhyme or reason. But God our Father would have us sit on His broad lap and gaze upon the big picture sewed into the embroidery of His purposes from eternity past.

Yes, we read in His Word that there is a pre-drawn plan, His design that all mankind is meant to follow. Indeed, all of us will have a unique path to tread that is a strategic part of this divine design.

In Ephesians 2:10 the Greek word used for ‘workmanship’ is *‘poiema’* which means ‘something that is made, particularly out of fabric’. The Greek word for ‘created’ is *‘ktizo’* which means ‘to fabricate’ that is ‘to sew or knit together fabric into a predetermined design’. Therefore, this verse could justifiably be re-written as:

*“..we are His embroideries, embroidered in Christ Jesus for good use , according to God’s pre-drawn design and pattern from the beginning of time that we should follow after.”*

This book is written with the purpose of taking you to that high place, seated on the Father’s lap, where you can rise above the place of just seeing the big mess to seeing the big message, His Big Picture. Take time out of the hustle and bustle of your life to allow the Lord to do just that as you read through this appointment with your destiny.

You will be shown God’s plan for mankind from eternity past that is made of common strands that should be seen in your life if you want to follow the Father’s divine will. Then you will begin to unravel that particular strand of God’s embroidery that you are called to be, your specific call that you have been designed to walk in from the beginning of time.

This book is part one in a three volume series and is actually an expansion of my previous teaching series entitled ‘The Big Picture’ which is also available in teaching notes form and in Windows Help File computer teaching aid form (you can find it, and many more of Tim’s

Bible teaching packages and Christian resources, at the following web address - <http://www.timshen.truepath.com>).

Here we will see God's big plan for mankind and the various specific ways we may be called to outwork that plan. Volume two will look in more detail at the Spiritual Gifts as tools of our calling and volume three will unveil the various stages that our calling will go through.

*Volume One: The Big Picture – Picture Perfect (this book).*

*Volume Two: The Big Picture – Painting the Picture.*

*Volume Three: The Big Picture – The Picture Process.*

# Chapter One

## The Big Picture



**A**s a little boy I would spend hours with my family putting together the latest jigsaw puzzle. It was a really enjoyable time of fun and family bonding, but above all I learnt a valuable principle that abides with me even now:

*If you want to know where the pieces fit look at the big picture first.*

When I first started helping with the puzzles I would just take one piece and try to fit it in anywhere my eyes led me. This of course was a long, tedious and unsuccessful process that made me feel like giving up. It also bugged the rest of my family and often interfered with their attempts at placing the correct piece. Many times they would have to help me remove one piece that I overzealously tried to force into the place I thought it should go!

We can also be like this in our Christian search for God's place for our 'piece' – for where we really fit in. We dip our foot in here and there, hoping the rest of us will just slide into place, only to find we get stuck and need help getting out.

In the process we upset those around us as we either take the place they should be in or we block them from getting to where they should be. Many Christians give up trying to find what God's perfect will is for them because they adopt this doomed strategy.

However, soon I learnt that I needed to refer to the big picture on the lid of the puzzle box so that I could more easily see where the piece I had in my hand really fit. It was simply a case of seeing the context into which the piece fit and matching the shapes and colours on it with those of the picture on the lid.

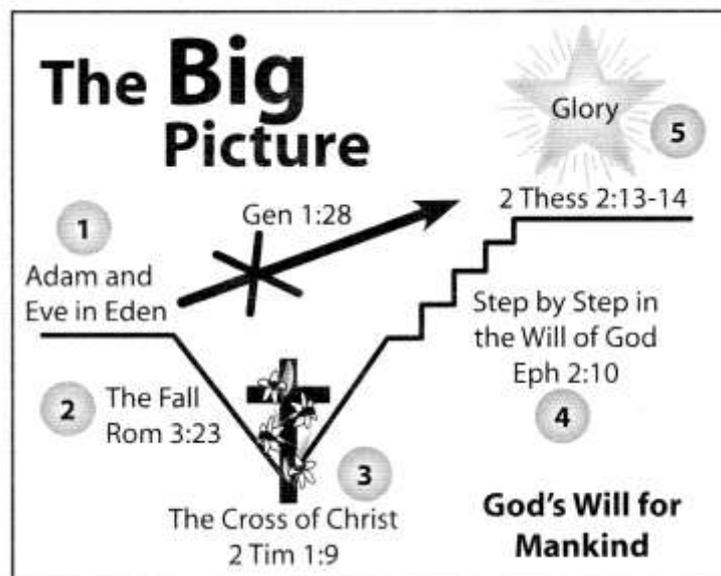
If we really want to know where we fit into God's plan and purpose then we need to do the same thing – to see the big picture of God's design for mankind. We also need to know what 'colours' and 'shapes' (giftings and abilities) we have been created with so that we will know the context into which we should be placed.

During the first few chapters I will be doing the former, unveiling to you the big picture of God's plan for all mankind. This will reveal to you God's 'general will' or 'vision' that He desires all of us to follow after. On seeing this you will appreciate the context into which you must be placed to fulfill God's design for your life.

You will be taken through Scriptural principles that will help you piece together what God is already showing you about His design on your life, whether you are aware of it or not. This will help reveal to you your specific 'calling' which you will be gifted appropriately with by God to move in.

The next volume will look in more detail at our God-given spiritual gifts that will be the tools of our calling, to get the work done as we move in God's specific will for us. The last volume will explore the process God will take us through as we walk in His calling for us.

In this chapter I will go through the five stages of God's plan for mankind, as revealed in the Bible, which can be displayed in the following diagram:



## STAGE 1: God's Original Purpose.

This stage relates to the place marked with a circled number 1 in the diagram.

*"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Genesis 1:27-28*

Reading Genesis 1:27-28 we can see what God's original intention for mankind was, which we will look into more fully in the next chapter. But, as we shall see in the next stage, man fell from the place of being able to follow the arrow to God's glorious inheritance (the place marked by the circled number 5 in the diagram) - that's why the diagram has a cross over the arrow, denoting that God's original intention for mankind to reach stage 5 has been thwarted.

Stage 1 really represents the big vision all of us need to recapture in our spirits if we are going to be effective sons and daughters of God on this planet. It really shows us the Maker's reason for creating us, and what we are really designed and equipped for. It is

God's blueprint or 'embroidery pattern' that He has drawn up for mankind from the beginning of time.

Adam and Eve represented the whole of humanity that came after them, so in their perfect state they were given God's blueprint that is relevant to all mankind in all generations. God's original purpose for mankind, as seen in this first description of God's will for them, was that they fill the earth with people bearing His Image, glorifying His name. Men and women were to be overcomers on the earth and partake of the full Glory of the heavenlies, entering into His inheritance for them.

God's intention for mankind has always been that we fill the earth, ruling and reigning under His theocratic leadership, showing forth His justice and righteousness. This will be more clearly seen when Christ returns to set up a thousand years of rule and reign on earth with His saints in the Millennium (Revelation 20:4-6) and eventually in it's fullness with the coming of the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1).

Paul expounds upon this destiny in his inspired letter to the Ephesians:

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."* Ephesians 1:3-6

Just as Adam and Eve were blessed to fulfill His purpose for them, so we are blessed to enter into our destinies, to be God's adopted sons. This sonship speaks of a place of maturity in our Christian lives where we are operating in His inheritance for us, His call on our lives.

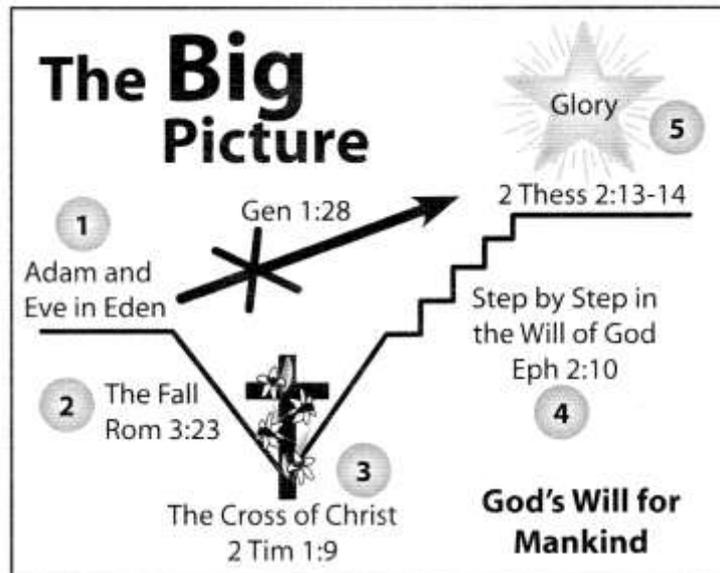
This will ultimately be realized when Jesus returns for a second time but can be realized in part now in our present Christian walk. During the rest of the volume and the following two we will be looking at how we recognize our God-given calling and how to practically move in it.

Notice that the blessings we receive to carry out His purposes are only *'in Christ'*. Outside of belief and life in Jesus Christ it is impossible to do God's will. This is because of the terrible thing that Adam and Eve did that sent them, and all of us, plummeting from God's original plan.

God's blessings will only come upon us when we remain in covenant relationship with Him. As long as Adam and Eve remained in covenant relationship with God (obeying Him and doing His desired will) God poured out His promised blessing on them and their spirits were kept alive to Him and His purposes. If we are born again, we still have a responsibility to keep the New Covenant, which may be summed up as *'loving God and loving others'*.

As soon as Adam and Eve disobeyed God and broke the covenant God had made with them, they were flung away from the place of being able to outwork God's destiny on their lives.

This brings us to the next stage. This is Stage 2 in the diagram.



## STAGE 2: The Fall of Mankind.

This stage relates to where you see the circled number 2 in the diagram. Here we see the downward arrow showing man's fall from the place of being able to outwork God's original intention. God desired them to fill the earth with a people bearing His image, ruling and reigning with Him, but the fall separated them from this high calling.

When Adam and Eve fell they metaphorically bumped their heads and lost all memory of God's design for them. They had dishonoured God's covenant by disobeying His word and were brought to a spiritual state of blindness where they were unable to outwork God's design on their lives.

*"Now the serpent...said to the woman....'you will not surely die...in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God'...So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate....they knew that they were naked and they...made themselves coverings....Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God". Genesis Chapter 3 (Selected readings)*

As a result of their disobedience the man and woman were thrown out of the garden (God's place of purpose and destiny) and lived under a curse. On the woman was a curse of pain in childbearing and desire towards her husband, and on man was a curse of hard toil and sweat-filled labour.

These curses were a direct result of their breaking covenant with God – God had promised blessing if they lived in covenant relationship with Him (Genesis 1:28) and moved in His purposes, but that blessing was removed when they broke their part of the covenant.

They now were separated from God's Will for their lives.

Instead of choosing the 'Pathway of Life' (i.e. communion and obedience towards God), mankind disobeyed God and fell away from the glorious Inheritance that was rightfully theirs. They sinned and fell short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

The fact that they ate from the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil shows us that they were pursuing a life of determining their own destinies. They handled knowledge themselves, instead of seeking God for wisdom (The Tree of Life) to follow His plan. Adam and Eve followed a false vision and fell from God's true vision for them.

When we start to go our own way, even as Christians, we too will fall from God's purpose for us and find ourselves under curses in the area that we did not follow God's covenant way.

Was there a way back? Was there a way for man to once again be in the position to attain to God's purpose for his life?

God initiated a program that was to redeem two areas (or strands) of rebellion, namely the counterfeit kingdom set up by Satan and the fallen state of mankind.

Right from the start of Scripture we see God setting in motion a plan to confront Satan's kingdom of darkness by invading it with His own victorious Kingdom of light, in the process redeeming lost humanity to populate His Kingdom and see it spread over the face of the earth (His original intention).

Following is a summary of part of an article written by Stanley A. Ellisen entitled 'What is God trying to do?' (Found in "Perspectives on the world Christian movement" by R.D. Winter and S.C. Hawthorne), which beautifully traces the development of these two strands.

Genesis 3:15 shows us God's provision to redeem both of these fallen strands:

*"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15*

(1) The head of the Serpent (Satan) will be crushed by the Seed (singular) of the woman - This is prophesying the crushing of Satan's false kingdom by the godly seed (the Kingdom of Light), thus redeeming the fallen Kingdom strand. The fulfillment of this can be seen in Jesus' ministry. He was the Seed that embodied the Kingdom of Light.

(2) The Serpent (Satan) will bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman (Jesus). This is a prophecy of Satan's apparent victory over Jesus at the cross (His heel was pierced by a nail) - we know that this was actually a decisive victory over the kingdom of darkness and purchased redemption once and for all for lost humanity, thus redeeming the Lost Humanity strand.

In the Old Testament we see God raising up a Godly seed through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) that resulted in the formation of God's chosen people, Israel. They were meant to be a KINGDOM (redeeming Fallen Kingdom strand) of PRIESTS (redeeming Lost Humanity strand - See Exodus 19:6).

Abraham's seed shows forth the priestly aspect of God's plan (typified by the Lamb), David's seed shows the Kingdom aspect (typified by the Lion) - together they combat the two fallen strands.

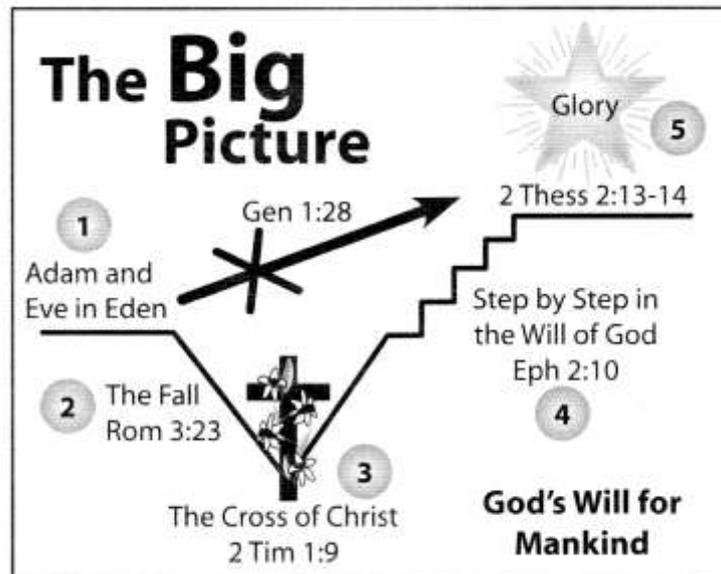
God's intention for Israel was the same as His intention for Adam and Eve. He called them and blessed them with the purpose of blessing the whole earth, filling it with mankind bearing His image, ruling and reigning in justice and righteousness. Israel was to 'bless all families (people groups) of the earth'.

However, the Old Testament records show Israel largely failing in its missionary mandate to the nations (literally 'people groups' formed from the original 70 groups as recorded in Genesis 10). There are some isolated incidents of Israel blessing the nations around them (either attractively - Gentiles coming to Israel and being converted to the Jewish faith - or expansively - Jews going forth as missionaries to surrounding nations, as Jonah was called to do) but God's judgments on, and eventual casting off of, Israel was specifically due to their failure in His missions mandate.

Israel certainly was '*fruitful*' and '*multiplied*', but only '*filled the earth*' when God sent the Assyrians and Babylonians to take them unwillingly into captivity because of their sins.

So, by the time of Jesus, there were Jews in every Roman province and even further afield due to their forced 'diaspora' (dispersion). But this was not a willing outworking of His plan and there needed to be a willing vessel.

That's when God initiated His crowning achievement. This is Stage 3 in the diagram.



### STAGE 3: The Cross of Christ.

This stage relates to the section marked with the circled number 3 on the diagram. It relates to the Cross of Christ.

*“Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” Genesis 3:21*

*“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” Genesis 4:3-5*

*“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” Hebrews 9:22*

In the above verses we see that God initiated His salvation plan by taking animal skins to cover Adam and Eve’s sin, bringing them back to a place where they could worship Him and outwork His plan on their lives. He was revealing to them that it’s only by the shedding of blood that redemption can come (God would have had to slay an animal, shedding its blood, to clothe them).

Abel had learnt that truth and offered up a blood offering, but Cain offered up the fruit of a cursed ground (making a way in his own strength). Ultimately God’s way and man’s way will come into conflict as is vividly seen in Cain murdering his brother.

The Old Testament sacrificial system, embodied in the slaying of the Passover lamb, follows this truth and foreshadows the Lamb of God who would come to willingly go the way of the Father. He would lay down His life and shed His blood for the remission of the sins of all who believe in Him.

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:7-12*

This passage of scripture vividly shows what Jesus has done for us. His death and resurrection have enabled us to once more reach for God’s glorious inheritance, His destiny.

When we humble ourselves, confess our sins and accept Jesus into our hearts by faith, we are actually seeing the door open to fulfilling God’s original intention for our life!

*“(He) has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,” 2 Timothy 1:9*

According to what I have already stated, and also what we read in 2 Timothy 1:9, even before time God had in His heart the answer, Jesus, who came to show us the way and indeed be the way (John 14:6). Only through trusting in Jesus and in His work of atonement in our life, repenting from all sin, turning our back on it and going His way, can we get back on track.

If you have never accepted Jesus into your life as Lord and Saviour, repented of your disobedience to God’s call on your life, turned 180 degrees around to live His way, then you can do it right now. Just get down on your knees and pray in belief:

*“Father God, forgive me for disobeying Your design on my life, I ask you to wash me with the blood of Jesus right now and I ask you to fill my heart with Your spirit so I will be born again. I receive your salvation right now and promise to live a life holy, blameless and in Your love. Amen “*

Inviting Jesus into our hearts, as our personal saviour, is only the first step - we are saved and then called with a holy calling.

There is a pathway (*'The Highway of Holiness'*) we must walk upon and not stray away from. For each one of us it will go in the same direction but will also be unique! It will be a strand in the overall embroidery of God’s purposes.

The whole earthly ministry of Jesus can be seen as preparing and enabling the Church to take over God's mission where Israel had largely failed. God's intention has not changed, He expects the Church to rise up and extend God's Kingdom to the ends of the earth, seeing lost humanity redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

The Church is now to be that *'Kingdom of Priests'* (*'Royal Priesthood'* - see 1 Peter 2:9) that will appropriate Christ's victory in both lost strands (fallen kingdom and lost humanity) on the earth, in His power and strength.

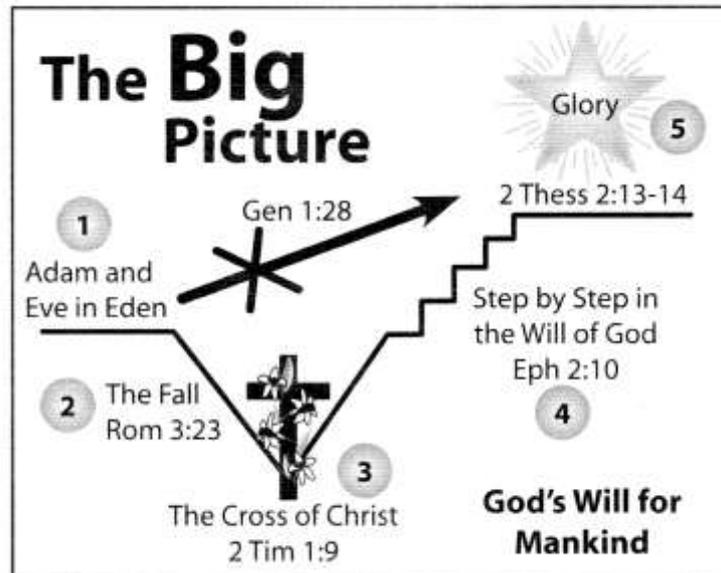
Jesus is mentioned right at the start of the Gospels as being the *Seed of Abraham* (The Lamb of God - redeeming Lost Humanity strand) and the *Seed of David* (The Lion of Judah - redeeming the Fallen Kingdom strand) - see Matthew 1:1 which shows that Jesus came to fulfill both strands as He is called the *'Son of David, the Son of Abraham'*.

When we are *'born again'* and start our new lives in Christ we are actually placed at the starting line of a race that will take us all the way to God’s original destiny for us.

However, many Christians start running in circles from this starting point. Instead of launching forth, eyes on God’s big vision, going straight on in His will, they go round and

round getting nowhere fast. As the proverb says, 'without vision the people perish (or 'cast off restraint')'.

It is within this context that we must see our part. This is Stage 4 in the diagram.



## STAGE 4: Our Present Walk Of Faith.

The section marked by a circled number 4 on the diagram relates to this stage. It is the 'Jacob's ladder' that connects us back up with God's original heavenly purpose. Through Jesus Christ we are placed on an upward staircase leading to His inheritance. We are to walk this in faith (2 Corinthians 5:7) step by step, moving from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*  
Ephesians 2:8-10

This brings us back to the first verse we looked at in the Foreword (Ephesians 2:10). It comes after two well-known verses that show we are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.

Our salvation is not based on any good works or deeds we have performed; it is completely based on the grace, unmerited favour, of God.

When I first became a Christian at the age of eleven the first passage I memorized was Ephesians 2:8-9, but I never once looked at verse ten until ten years later when I was at university.

It was only then that I began to realize that we are saved for a purpose, a purpose greater than just attending church and being involved in some small ministry. It was also then that I started to go on mission trips to North Africa, France and Spain that were to constitute the launching pad into my calling into fulltime ministry, now in South East Asia.

Our good works do not save us, but we are saved *unto* good works. He has a specific walk for us, a calling that will be unique. As each jigsaw puzzle piece is unique and yet forms part of the big picture. As each strand in an embroidery is unique and yet is an integral part in forming the whole.

*“In Him (Jesus) you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14*

It is the Holy Spirit who seals us in our callings and guarantees us the inheritance we have been promised, if indeed we believe. We first *‘trust’* in Jesus and are born again, but we live our Christian lives by faith, by *‘believing’* in His promises. As we shall see, there are general promises (vision) and specific promises (calling) that God gives us.

Only when we *‘believe’* these promises will we be *‘sealed’* with the Holy Spirit. This seal is referring to the wax seal that was on genuine property papers at that time, bearing the image of the one promising that property. This sealed document would *‘guarantee’* the inheritance to the bearer of it.

When we believe in God’s promises for us we give the Holy Spirit legal right to come upon us and empower us to outwork those promises (Acts 1:8). Then we can go in and claim the *‘property’* or *‘inheritance’* God has for us.

I remember clearly the time that I was baptized in the Holy Spirit during my first year of university in London, England (1985). It came at a point where God was showing me the call on my life to leave my homeland and go where He would lead me (God was particularly speaking to me out of Genesis 12:1-3 which was Abraham’s call).

When I finally believed in this call, and the promise of blessing that went with it, my ten-year drought (as a Christian without the power of the Holy Spirit) was ended. It happened at the end of the Alpha Course I was attending, under Holy Trinity Brompton church that I was then a member of.

As our pastor prayed for a group of us in a circle I saw a bright light and the form of a dove come upon us. My whole body was tingling with something like electricity and I started running around the room.

The former and the latter rain poured down together as I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and empowered with boldness to step out on what God was promising me.

We are saved and then we must enter into our call (we are not called to be saved, but saved to be called as we see in 2 Timothy 1:9). This call will comprise of God’s general call to all Christians but will also be a specific call to each one of us. Each one of us will have a call in the context of God’s BIG PICTURE.

According to God’s word, *‘the end’* (destination point) will not be reached until every tongue, tribe and nation has heard the Gospel message (Matthew 24:14).

So our call will be in the context of reaching every tongue, tribe and nation with the Gospel. This can only be accomplished effectively in the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.

It is imperative we learn to walk in God’s call for our lives. Our Spirit has been saved at new birth, but our Soul (mind, will and emotions) is being saved (Philippians 2:12) now. So we are to have more of the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5, 1 Peter 4:1), the will of the Father (John 5:30, Matthew 26:39, Philippians 2:13) and the emotions of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13) in our present walk of faith. When Jesus comes back for His Bride, the Church, we will be saved in our bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 5:23) as we enter into our full inheritance with Him.

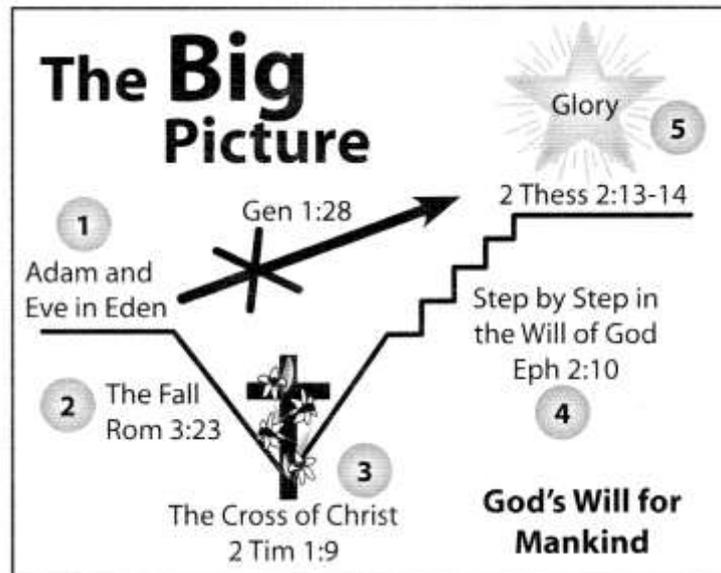
Our present Christian walk must link in with God’s original intention to see the earth full of people bearing His image, ruling and reigning with justice and righteousness. We do this by faith, reckoning ourselves as seeds of Abraham and of David - we can be a part of redeeming the two strands of Fallen Kingdom and Lost Humanity.

We must be as Lions to the Kingdom of darkness (Spiritual Warfare) and as Lambs to Lost Humanity, leading them sacrificially to the one perfect sacrifice for their sins - Jesus!

We will be looking at how we can practically align our lives now to be a part of God's strategic end-time army, reaching all people groups for Christ in the power of the Spirit so that we hasten His coming (Matthew 24:14).

Our aim must be that of the Apostle Paul, to reach the unreached, setting them free from the counterfeit kingdom of Satan and bringing them into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (Romans 15:20).

Now we will look at what we are ultimately saved into. This is Stage 5 in the diagram.



## STAGE 5: Glory – Our Ultimate Destiny.

This stage relates to the area of diagram with the circled number 5. This is the glorious inheritance we have in Christ, the fullness of His glory.

As we have already read in Ephesians 1:3-14 we see that we are ultimately called to:

- (1) Complete holiness (verse 4).
- (2) Complete adoption as sons (verse 5).
- (3) Complete praising the glory of His grace (verse 6, 12 and 14).
- (4) Complete redemption (verse 7).
- (5) Complete gathering together of all things (verse 10).
- (6) Complete obtaining of our inheritance (verse 11).
- (7) Complete redemption of the purchased possession (verse 14).

Other passages that reveal what we are ultimately called to are:

*“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Romans 8:29-30*

*“..that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” 1Thessalonians 2:12*

*“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit*

*and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14*

So the seven areas seen in Ephesians 1:3-14 can be summed up by saying that God calls us to a state of being ‘*glorified*’ – that is, entering into the fullness of His glory.

God's original purpose for man (to see a world full of those bearing His Image, glorifying his name) can only be reached through Jesus by the power of His Spirit working in and through us. Only as we are obedient to His call on our lives will we do His will and see His purposes outworked.

Finally, the Word of God shows us, this destiny will be met when every tongue, tribe and nation stands before God worshipping Him (see Revelation 7:9). When representatives from every tongue, tribe and peoples have been brought before King Jesus, the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

The Bible also shows us that heaven is just the waiting room of the saints. When Jesus returns in power and glory, all His saints will be gathered together to meet Him in the sky with new resurrection bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The saints will then descend to rule and reign with Jesus for a thousand years on earth after a period of God's wrath being poured out (Revelation 20:4-6).

This was God's original intention - the earth filled with saints bearing His image, ruling and reigning with justice and righteousness. The kingdoms of this age that have been ruled by Satan's dark forces will become the Kingdom of Light as the saints rule and reign with Christ over every people group on earth (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15).

We are now in training for this rulership, and though God's kingdom now is seen in His rule and reign in our lives and not as a physical territory, with His second coming His kingdom will be finally established on earth (Revelation 11:15).

With representatives from every tongue, tribe and nation the stage will be set for Jesus to return and apportion out rewards of rulership depending on our faithfulness to His call on our lives (Read the Parable of the Talents found in Matthew 25:14-30 to see Jesus’ teaching on this truth).

The fullness of God's original intention will of course be seen with the arrival of the new heaven and new earth after the thousand years Millennium - the ultimate glory we are called into.

*“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.” Revelation 21:1-7*

If we wisely follow God’s call on our lives we shall shine with His glory in this Kingdom like stars in the sky...*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” Daniel 12:3*

If we want to shine brightly in His Kingdom we must learn to identify God's general and specific will for our lives and walk in the light of this revelation. The next chapters outline exactly what it is we are all generally called to and the specific areas of calling that God has for us to move in.

## **Do You Get The Picture?**

### **Time to reflect:**

Look at the Big Picture diagram again and ask yourself where you are in the scheme of things.

- Are you where you should be?
- What should you do to move forward to the next level?
- Pause to pray that the Lord would reveal more to you of His Big Picture.

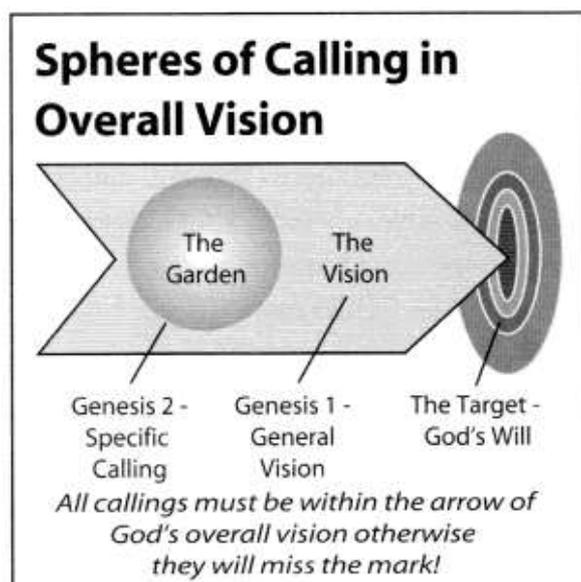
# Chapter Two

## Eagle-Like Vision



**D**uring this chapter and the next we will be seeing how Genesis chapter one reveals God's big eagle-like vision for mankind and Genesis chapter two reveals the pattern for God's specific ant-like calling for His children.

Genesis chapter one shows us God's vision for mankind that may be likened to an arrow as in the diagram below. God's vision for mankind will enable us to reach His will, his ultimate destiny for us (as represented by the target in the diagram).



Genesis chapter two shows us God's specific calling of the first man, Adam, that is to be the pattern for each of our callings. This calling may be represented by the garden the man was placed in and is seen as the circle in the '*Spheres of Calling*' diagram.

We will firstly look at the arrow, which represents God's vision for mankind. It is an eagle-like vision that God wants all of us to possess if we are to hit the target He has for us.

Some time ago I received a wonderful e-mail from a W. Tang (NUS, Singapore) who wrote about lessons we can learn from eagles. The following is an adapted version of his teaching.

The eagle is a marvelous creation of God. It is the most majestic of all birds and is mentioned many times in the Bible. In fact, the eagle is mentioned 38 times, many more times than the dove or other birds. One Hebrew word for vision or a Seer ('*Roeh*') is the same as the name of a bird at that time, similar to an eagle. It was so called due to its sharp eyes.

The Eagle builds her nest on the cliff or in a high tree. The nest is so large that a human can sleep in it. It can weigh up to 700kg and is also comfortable to rest in.

With the basis of God's word, we shall see what the king of birds can show us concerning truths about God, and also about Christians, especially concerning the quality of vision God wants us to have.

Firstly, all eagles must learn to fly.

High in the mountains, a baby eagle is born. Like all other babies, there are two things that baby eagles, known as eaglets, love to do: eat and sleep. The eaglet spends its initial life in the comfort of the nest.

Every day, mummy eagle finds food and drops it directly into the open mouths of the hungry eaglet. With a satisfied stomach, the eaglet then goes to sleep and the cycle continues when it becomes hungry again. This goes on for a few weeks, until one day, mummy eagle just hovers over the nest. This time, there is no food.

After hovering a few rounds, mummy eagle makes a dive into the nest and begins to shake it violently. She then takes one of her babies in her mouth and starts soaring into the skies. The baby eaglet begins to tremble, "Mummy is mad! Mummy is mad!". Suddenly, she drops the baby eaglet that starts to struggle.

Just before the eaglet smashes against the rocks, mummy eagle sweeps down and picks it up. This goes on for more than ten times. The eaglet starts to wonder why mummy is doing this.

Every time it is being dropped from the sky, the eaglet struggles by flapping its wings. "Mummy can fly. I want to fly like her too!" the eaglet says to itself. What a beautiful picture! Mummy is teaching her young to fly. At about the fourteenth or fifteenth try, the eaglet begins to fly.

Christians are like baby eagles, comfortable in the nest. They come to church once a week for food. They wait for pastor to drop "*spiritual*" food into their mouths. When the service is over, they go home, "*sleep*" for a few days and the cycle continues, until one day, something happens and they struggle. The nest gets shaken (Deuteronomy 32:11-13) and they don't know what to do.

"It's the devil! It's the devil!" they exclaim. No, it's not! It's just our loving Father who allows our nest to be shaken because He wants us to grow into maturity, so that we can fly and see His big vision for us. It's no point being an eagle that cannot fly. The Word of God says in Exodus 19:4 that God bore the children of Israel on eagles' wings. Here we see the mother eagle symbolizes God.

The way mummy eagle treats her young shows us how God treats His children. Just when it seems like we're going under ... SWISH ... mummy eagle, God, comes and picks us up.

In the world, they push people down when they are going up. But God lets us fall down to get us up. He allows us to go through desperate times so we will get desperate for Him and Him alone.

It's when we look up from below and see the mess that he lifts us up to see the big picture! Just like the mummy eagle lifts up the eaglet many times so the Lord will lift us up to see His big vision many times.

As we wait on Him, especially in times where we feel like we're falling, we will find that we will rise on wings as eagles (Isaiah 40:31).

Secondly, eagles are made for high places.

Unlike other birds that fly in the lowlands, eagles are made to fly in the high places, out of sight of the naked human eye and out of range of the hunter's rifle. An eagle has large eyes that are located on the sides of its head. However, it can see straight ahead.

Most birds have keener sight than humans and other animals, but eagles and hawks are said to have the keenest sight of all. It's from the heights that they can see the entire landscape and from this vantage point they choose where they will go.

God made us to fly in the high places, free from the world's control, with His high and holy vision.

A tourist to the Jurong Bird Park in Singapore once commented that the eagles there looked very clean. In reply, the bird-keeper said: "When eagles are in freedom, they are the cleanest birds. But when they are in captivity, they are the dirtiest."

God made us pure and holy to conform to the image of His Son. If Christians are in captivity, or subjected to the ways of the world, they can be the "*dirtiest*" of all creatures.

Unless we "*fly*" in the high places, out of the world's control, and according to how God has made us, we'll remain the dirtiest of creatures. We are made to soar high with an eagle's vision, seeing God's plan from that holy perspective. Having this pure perspective we will better choose which way to go.

Thirdly, eagles do not fly, they soar.

Eagles do not fly like other birds, flapping their wings profusely and using their own strength. Instead, eagles soar majestically, making use of the wind currents to gain height.

What makes the eagle so special is that she sits on the rock and reads the wind and when the time is perfect she takes off and soars upward with her great wings. There is a special up going wind, which the eagle rides, and circles higher and higher towards the sky, without effort. She just spreads her wings.

The wind is referred many times in the Bible as the Holy Spirit. We can learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and let Him lift us closer to Jesus. The eagle in this case is the Christian who is being lifted by the Holy Spirit up and closer to Jesus.

Like eagles, we should learn to ride on the current of the Holy Spirit, instead of relying on our own strength. It's the Holy Spirit that envisions us with the vision that Jesus Himself had whilst on this earth, which should be our vision.

Right now we need to allow the Lord to carry us on high, though we may be falling from God's plan for our life. We must catch a glimpse of His big picture from up there and realize that we are made for such a high calling. Then we must soar on the winds of the Holy Spirit as he reveals to us God's plans and purposes and empowers us to fulfill them.

Genesis Chapter 1 takes us to such a high place. In broad, sweeping terms we are swept way above the earth like an eagle to see God's plan and design for mankind. Allow God right

now to lift you up high so that you can take in the wonderful vista of His grand will for mankind.

As we survey what God reveals in Genesis Chapter one as His general will for us, allow God to envision the eyes of your heart. Breathe in the pure air from this high place and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

We see God creating all things for a purpose and this purpose may be summed up in God's revealed will for mankind in verses 27-28.

*"So God created man in His own image; In the image of God He created him; Male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every Living thing that moves on the earth.'" Genesis 1:27-28*

The basic vision of God shown in Genesis 1:27-28 can be seen, through the work of Christ, as being relevant to us today. Each aspect that was God's general will for Adam and Eve can be seen to relate to a specific activity for us today. Generally, God will for us to all is:

- 1. To be conformed to His image (to be like Jesus).** His general will for all believers is that they become *sons* (Ephesians 1:3-6 and Romans 8:29-30). Jesus is the pattern Son who is the express Image of God, and we are to follow Him in bearing forth this image. He desires our worship and fellowship and intimacy - from this place of sonship we will rule in the inheritance He has for us in the nations.
- 2. To be blessed.** It's God's will for us all to be blessed so we can be a blessing in the nations. The basic blessing of the Lord to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:27-28) is repeated through Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. This flow of blessing has not stopped! Through Christ, we too are partakers of it! (See Galatians 3:14 and Ephesians 1:3-6).  
This blessing is not just spiritual (salvation, forgiveness etc.) but also material - God wants to bless us in our work so we can use all the resources to be a blessing to others and extend the Kingdom of God. This blessing also speaks of God's empowering us by His Spirit to do His will.
- 3. To be fruitful.** To display a fruitful character full of the fruit of His Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). It's God's will that we all show forth His fruit, His character - especially His divine love which all the other fruits are a part of.

### LOVE IS CENTRAL

*Joy is love exulting.  
Peace is love in repose.  
Longsuffering is love on trial.  
Gentleness is love in society.  
Goodness is love in action  
Faith is love on the battlefield.  
Meekness is love at school.  
Temperance is love in training.  
If we only just brought forth the fruit of the Spirit,  
What a world we would have!  
Men would have no desire to do evil.*

-Dwight L. Moody

4. **To multiply.** We must multiply as cells in the body do. We do this first and foremost through evangelism. In the Old Testament we see this multiplication of the Israelites locally wherever they were (e.g. Exodus 1:12). In the early church too we see this local multiplication (Acts 2:47). It's God's general will for us to all be 'multiplying' ourselves through witnessing to our friends and neighbours in friendship evangelism.
5. **To fill the earth and subdue it.** He wants to fill the earth with peoples in His Image - through world missions (Matthew 28:19-20). This will happen not as a result of all our efforts but because He has promised it! We must align our lives with the *main* focus of discipling the nations.

This may not mean going cross-culturally ourselves, but it does mean our focus must be to reach the unreached with the Good News of the Kingdom so the earth may be filled with worshipping communities of believers.

6. **To have dominion.** We are called not just to be survivors but overcomers. We are to gain the Inheritance God has for us by overcoming. The Bible shows us that we will all be rewarded when Christ returns according to our faithfulness to his call (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). This faithful nature is essential to the overcomer (Revelation 17:14).

If we are to fully grasp hold on that for which He has laid hold on us we will join in Jesus' Inheritance in the nations. The inheritance as mentioned in Psalm 2:8-9 is for Jesus, but there is a way that we join Him in this Inheritance among the nations.

The answer is found in Romans 8:17-18: we are to *suffer* with Him (i.e. pick up our cross and follow Him). This suffering will particularly come when we determine to follow His will when it clashes with our own - part of this suffering will be leaving our comfort zones to sow our lives in His missionary purpose for the world.

We must be World Christians with World Vision, so all we do will have a World Impact. We must have World Actions that will touch the world because we have linked in with God's big picture. One Scriptural example of this is Mary.

*"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. "She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." Mark 14:3,8-9*

Jesus condoned Mary's seemingly foolish action of pouring out the Spikenard on His feet and He said it would *touch all nations*. What she did was a World Action. Even today her story is touching lives in countries all around the globe even though she probably never stepped foot outside the boundaries of Israel!

We must link in with God's world vision by pouring out our lives like perfume in every activity we do with an understanding of God's worldwide plan, even if we never leave our country of birth.

Her action touched the whole world in some significant way because of her understanding of God's plan. She had linked in with the missions' heartbeat of God, knowing He must be anointed for burial as a sacrifice for mankind, redeeming them to Himself. She saw this big picture by sitting in high places, down at His feet (Luke 10:39)!

Mary was fulfilling each one of the six general areas that God has commanded us to move in as we have seen in Genesis 1:27-28:

1. She was acting in the *'image of God'* (pouring out herself in humility)
2. She was receiving and pouring out *'blessings'* (the spikenard),
3. She was showing forth the *'fruit'* of Love.
4. She was *'multiplying'* in the sense of evangelizing those who hear her story.
5. She was *'filling the whole earth'* in that this story is now told around the globe.
6. She was *'having dominion'* as she broke forth from her immoral background to do something that showed she was ruling over her own spirit and following the will of God.

A stunning modern-day example of such a World Impacting life is that of Jim Elliot. He was called to Ecuador in the early 1950s to be a Martyr for the faith at the hands of the Auca Indians.

Although he concentrated purely on this obscure tribal group in a relatively insignificant corner of the globe, Jim Elliot's life has impacted Christians around the world. Many thousands of missionaries to the furthest parts of this world were called through the testimony of this man; indeed His life has been a great inspiration in my own life.

He literally poured out the alabaster jar of his life and the fragrant offering has impacted world missions today in a dramatic way. We must let the famous words quoted by this World Christian sink deep into our spirits: *"No man is a fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."*

Our prayer is not 'Am I called to missions?' but it is 'What is my part in God's mission?'

All Christians living in His will should be growing to be more like Jesus, showing forth more love day by day, evangelizing, discipling and furthering His mission in the world as overcomers. We cannot say of any one of these areas, "I am not called to that!". We are!

Everything we do should be within the big arrow of God's vision revealed in Genesis 1:27-28. If we are not involved in all of the areas outlined above then we are missing the mark in our lives. We need to receive His eagle-like vision.

### **WINGS OF EAGLES**

*As on the wings of eagles  
My flight through this life goes  
My wings are fixed; my course is set  
To where only my father knows  
My eyes are focused on the horizon  
As I stay pointed to the mark  
I travel onward steadily  
Whether in daytime light or nighttime dark  
I have no fear of where I am going  
For I know God guides my flight  
He said he would never leave or forsake me  
And I know His Words are right  
As I fly on and ever closer  
To where my Father has shown  
He leads me and he guides me  
For I am one of his own*

Poem by Ron Eagle

## **One Vision, Many Callings**

We shall see that having an eagle-like vision is the prerequisite to moving in our God-given calling. Each one of us will have a big vision that contains all the above elements, but there will be many specific callings that make up that big vision.

In the life of Nehemiah we saw he had a vision of Jerusalem broken down but to be rebuilt. His calling was to lead the work. Others caught the same vision but with different callings (workers were called to different areas of building the wall, different skills etc.).

This principle is the same for Churches, Cell groups, Missions groups etc. Each church needs a big eagle-like vision and every church worker and member should seek for their specific ant-like calling in the context of that vision. Indeed, within one vision there may be other 'embryonic' visions waiting to be birthed for others to join in (this requires one who will run with the vision).

We will now be looking at the specific ant-like callings (represented by the 'Garden' in the diagram above) that can make up these visions.

## **Do You Get The Picture?**

### **Time to reflect:**

- How is your eagle-like vision?
- How much are you living in that vision?
- Ask yourself the following questions:
  1. How much am I conformed to His image? How much am I like Jesus? Am I becoming more like Him?
  2. How blessed am I? Have I received the full blessing of the Holy Spirit? Am I walking in such a way that others can see I am spiritually blessed?
  3. How much of the fruit of the Spirit am I displaying? (Galatians 5:22-23)
  4. Am I multiplying myself by sharing my faith and discipling others?
  5. Do I have world vision? Am I doing something that is furthering God's mission in the world?
  6. Am I demonstrating authority in my God-given area of calling?

If your answer is not so affirmative in any of the above areas, then pause to pray for the area of your life to be awakened more and more.

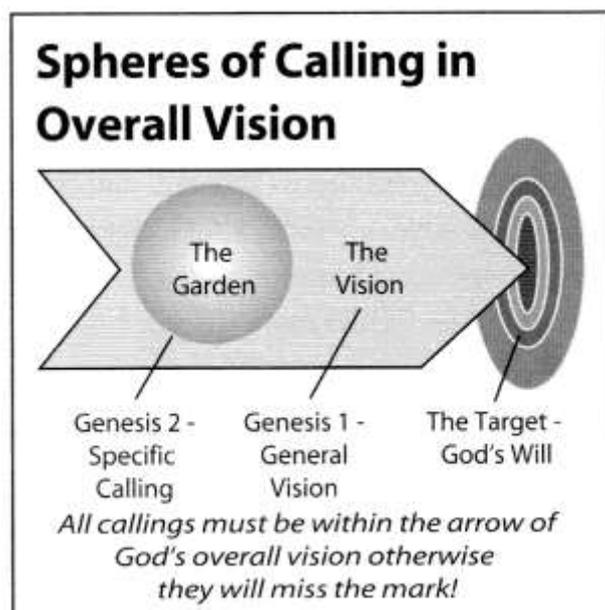
# Chapter Three

## Ant-like Calling



*We are to work hard, like ants, in the garden God places us.*

**T**his chapter looks at the sphere in diagram, The Garden, which is our sphere of calling within His overall Eagle-like vision (the arrow). This diagram is included again below for your reference.



The following wonderful story is taken from Elisabeth Elliot's book, "Keep A Quiet Heart" (Servant Publications, Ann Arbor Michigan, 1995) and is a first-person account given to her from Brenda Foltz.

Brenda was a young woman who wanted to learn rock climbing. Although scared to death, she went with a group and they came to this tremendous cliff face. Practically perpendicular, in spite of her fear, she put on the climbing gear, took hold of the rope and started up the rock face.

Well, Brenda got to a ledge where she could take a breather. As she was hanging on, whoever was holding the rope up at the top of the cliff made a mistake and snapped the rope against her eye, knocking out her contact lens.

You know how tiny contact lenses are and how almost impossible to find they are? Well, here she was on a rock ledge, with who know how many hundreds of feet below and above her. Of course, she looked and looked and looked, hoping that she would be able to find that contact lens.

Here she was, very far from home. Her sight was now blurry. She was upset by the fact that she wasn't anywhere near a place where she could get a new contact lens. And she prayed that the Lord would help her to find it.

Her last hope was that perhaps, when she got to the top of the cliff, one of the girls that was up there on the top might be able to find her contact lens still there in the corner of her eye. When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye. There was no contact lens to be found. She sat down with the rest of the party, waiting for the rest of them to come up the cliff face.

She looked out across range after range of mountains, thinking of that Bible verse that says, "*The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.*" She thought, "Lord, You can see all these mountains. You know every single stone and leaf that's on them, and You know exactly where my contact lens is."

Finally, the time came to go down. They walked down the trail to the bottom. Just as they got there, there was a new party of rock climbers coming along. As one of them started up the face of the cliff, she shouted out, "Hey, you guys! Anybody lose a contact lens?"

Well, that would be startling enough, wouldn't it? She had found the contact lens! But do you know why she saw it? An ant was carrying that contact lens so that it was moving slowly across the face of the rock.

What does that tell you about the God of the universe? Is He in charge of the tiniest things? Do ants matter to Him? Of course they do. He made them. He designed them.

Brenda's father is a cartoonist. When she told him this incredible story, he drew a picture of that ant lugging that contact lens (as you see in the comics with a balloon with words in it over his head) with the words: "Lord, I don't know why You want me to carry this thing. I can't eat it and it's awfully heavy. But if this is what You want me to do, I'll carry it for You."

*"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest."*  
*Proverbs 6:6-8*

I guess Solomon was right. One can learn a valuable lesson from that ant – work hard in your God-given call and trust that God knows what He's doing. We could probably all say a little more often, "God, I don't know why you want me to carry this load. I see no good in it and it's awfully heavy. Still, if you want me to, I'll carry it for You with joy."

Little did that ant know that what he carried was very precious and actually brought sight to someone else! The call of God on your life will bring sight to others who are spiritually blind – a truly noble calling.

Remember the fable about the ant and the grasshopper? The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and laying up supplies for the winter. The grasshopper thinks he's a fool and laughs and dances and plays the summer away. Come winter, the ant is warm and well fed. The grasshopper has no food or shelter so he dies out in the cold.

We're not to be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly use! We mustn't be like the grasshopper, dancing and playing in church, rejoicing in God's vision of the harvest but doing nothing about it! Once we receive eagle-like vision we still need to return to earth and work in our specific calling like an ant. We must activate the vision we have in practical, down-to-earth ways, or we will perish spiritually.

In Chapter two of Genesis we see God giving Adam a specific calling as his part in accomplishing the overall vision. He had a specific job to do, an ant-like calling. This shows us a pattern that is relevant to us today.

*"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'" Genesis 2:15-18*

The garden God planted for Adam may represent the specific sphere of ministry God gave him. God will also give each one of us a specific sphere of ministry that must be within the arrow of his general vision for mankind. Look again at the 'Spheres of Calling' diagram and you will see that the circle represents this specific sphere of ministry.



If our specific calling is not in the context of His big vision (i.e. not within the arrow) then we will not accomplish God's best. For example, someone may be merely performing a 'social gospel' in the third world by feeding and clothing the poor but without evangelizing and discipling – they would be moving in ministry outside the big arrow and thus miss the mark of God's high calling.

The word 'Eden' means 'delight'. God's sphere of ministry for us will bring us great delight and pleasure, as it is God's delight (Ephesians 1:5,9; Philippians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). It's the only place where we will find true meaning and pleasure.

There are seven things we can learn from the Garden of Eden being Adam's sphere of ministry, and hence the pattern for our own God-given ministries.

### **1. God planted the garden** (Gen 2:8)

God initiated Adam's vocation by *planting* the garden *specifically* for him and even *put* Adam there. It's all of God!

We all have a '*sphere of calling*' a '*garden*' the Lord had created for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). We must not presume what His ministry is for us but get to the place where we let Him put us in the place He's planted for us. This is what we will learn how to do in the next chapters.

This vocation must be used specifically to further God's missionary plan for the world, to see worshipping communities in every tongue, tribe and nation. It may not be that you are called to live cross-culturally, but it does mean that what you do for a living must further God's missions mandate somehow.

For some it will be the traditional missionary calling, for others it may be to use their business to bless missions work in some form. The list of possibilities is endless and God is highly creative in calling His Sons into endless varieties of vocations to complete His vision of seeing people from every people group worshipping before His throne!

### **2. Adam had a specific task** (Genesis 2:15-18)

Adam was to tend (cultivate) and keep (watch over) his sphere of calling. We are to tend the garden (ministry) God gives us and watch over it so no enemy creeps in. According to the garden / vineyard that God put us in we will each have specific things to do unique to our gifting and calling.

As you discover the gifting God has equipped you with, you will see a pattern emerging that will reveal the nature of God's job for you. For example, if the apostolic gifting is very prominent then you will specifically be called to be involved in a church planting capacity in unreached areas.

If you have a strong gift of administration you may well be involved in some form of missions support and organization. Your spiritual gifts are the tools to help you tend the garden God has placed you in. The nature of the tools will determine the nature of the job and vice versa.

### **3. Adam had a specific word from God.**

He was not to eat of one tree. God gives us His '*logos*' (general Word of God) but also '*rhema*' (specific, quickened word of God to us for our ministry - as used in Romans 10:17). Breaking this word means expulsion from the ministry.

There will be foundational revelation words that God gives us. We must seek the Lord as to what they mean practically and determine to align our lives with His revelation; otherwise we will forfeit our inheritance in the nations.

Also, not eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil means that we must not use our earthly knowledge to move in His call on our lives. We must eat from the Tree of Life

that is His wisdom (Proverb 3:18). We must trust in the Lord to lead us and not lean on our own understanding,

#### **4. There was one Tree of Life.**

The Tree Of Life was God's perfect will, but he was free to eat of any other tree except the forbidden one (Genesis 2:9 and Genesis 2:16). These other trees speak of God's good and acceptable will (Romans 12:2).

We should seek His perfect will - the Tree Of Life. All other trees, except the forbidden one, are good and acceptable and the Lord will favour us as we partake of them, but the sweetest of all is the Tree Of Life (His perfect wisdom).

We must ask for God's wisdom to constantly partake of the Tree of Life - that pathway that is God's best for us and the most pleasurable and satisfying. God promises that He will always answer the sincere prayer for wisdom with liberality (James 1:5).

#### **5. God provided a helper for Adam** (Genesis 2:15-18)

God is for teamwork. He doesn't want us to go it alone in our calling but will provide co-labourers be it a wife or ministry partner/s.

Notice again that it is all of God. Adam tried to find a helper from among the animals, but all this seeking in his own ability was to no avail. Eventually it was God who brought his helper to him! We must pray for those we are to co-labour with and learn to see those who God is bringing to us.

Again, these teams must align all they do in the light of God's mission - to fill the earth with people bearing His image. Constant guard must be made against Satan tempting one partner to fall into the temptation that can be summarized as the spirit of Babel, to eat of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, to seek for personal power and recognition at the expense of doing God's will.

At the time of writing, Shendy, my wife, and I have just completed a twelve-week course entitled '*Married for Life*'. Its teaching stresses the importance of the husband and wife blending their giftings and callings and working together as a team. In our relationship we are seeing God has gifted us with complimentary giftings that slot together beautifully in His call for us.

#### **6. Adam named things and had authority over them.**

Within our particular '*sphere of calling*' we are to have authority and '*name*' things, exercising our God-given dominion.

You will find that in other areas you will not have the same level of authority or sense of dominion - if you are moving outside of God's call then you will not experience this anointing of authority and victory.

For example, when I teach on Biblical topics, challenging Christian's out of their comfort zones and into His purposes, I move under an obvious anointing and authority for the Lord. However, you ask me to teach secular subjects such as Chemistry (for which I earned my secular degree) in a classroom setting and I will stutter and falter in my presentation, as this is not my area of calling.

God's specific call on your life is actually your apprenticeship; you're training for ruling and reigning with Him in the Millennium.

## 7. The Garden had boundaries.

We are not to stray outside of our ministry boundaries and step on others toes! (Paul knew this concept in Romans 15:20).

Boundaries are there for a reason. Just as vineyards needed a hedge around them to protect the vines from wild animals and disease (Isaiah 5:2) so we need to move within a hedge of protection.

We must know what God has called us to, but equally what He has *not* called us to (that which is not in the boundaries of His calling to us). If we move outside our boundaries, not only will we step on other's toes but also we will lose focus and not be as effective as God has made us to be. We also will lose our spiritual beauty, as is seen in the following lovely little story that was given to me by Rev. Ernest Edwards:

There was once a German Shepherd dog who lived with a kind master who loved him very much. Every day when the master went to work the German Shepherd would be on a long chain in the garden, long enough to traverse all the house grounds and be able to go inside through the dog-flap if needs be.

One day, as the German Shepherd was keeping watch over his Master's property, a Bulldog came bouncing up to him laughing and taunting. The bulldog said, "Ha! Ha! Look at you, all chained up. Not free! I'm free; I can do what I want. If I'm hungry I go to the litterbins and find food, I can chase all the lady dogs. You can't be happy!"

"Actually", said the German Shepherd dog, " you do have a point. I do wonder what it would be like to have a little more freedom and step out of the boundaries set by my master. But my master is good! He cares for me and loves me and I am secure in his care."

But the Bulldog kept coming back day after day with the same old tactics. Finally, the German Shepherd dog started to be taken in by the bulldog and said, "OK, if I did want to be free how is it possible? I'm chained up!"

"Ah!" said the Bulldog coming in closer, "You have to be smart like me. When your master is out you go into the living room, right to the center and do big business!"

"But my master will beat me!" gasped the German Shepherd in alarm.

"Ah! He will beat you a few times, then he'll let you loose!", replied the Bulldog.

That night the German Shepherd couldn't sleep, He was tossing and turning deciding whether to listen to the Bulldog or not. Eventually the next day came and the master hugged him and left the house with the usual loving words of 'Be a good dog, look after my house'.

But the German Shepherd was under the spell of the Bulldog, and he went to the center of the living room and did his big business!

The next day the Bulldog came over again and saw the German Shepherd dog still chained up sitting silently in the garden. His nose was bright red!

"What happened?", asked the Bulldog, "You did it didn't you? What happened?"

"My master was so angry, he took me to the center of the living room and rubbed my nose painfully in the mess!" replied the German Shepherd.

"Ah! That's just the first step. You do it a few more times and you'll be free", said the Bulldog running circles around him.

"No", said the German Shepherd, "Through this experience I've learnt one thing".

"What's that?", inquired the Bulldog.

"Now I know why your face is like it is!"

The moral of the Story is:

The Devil comes to tempt us away from the safe boundaries God has set for us (His commandments, His word and His specific area of calling for us). He tempts us to make a mess in the house of God instead of being watchful and caring for our Master's house (the Church).

The Devil will come time after time to tempt us and tell us we're not really free. However, true freedom only comes in being a servant of the Lord! Stepping out of His boundaries will make us look spiritually ugly, like the Devil!

We should recognize Satan's tactics and resist him to his face and he will flee - Martin Luther, the famous reformer, did this. One night he woke up and the Devil was at the end of his bed. Martin Luther said, "Oh! It's only you!", and he went back to sleep.

We must not only work hard and plan as the ant does but we must make sure all we do is within the vision as seen from the heavenlies for our life (as an eagle's vision). Vice versa, we must not be so heavenly minded so as to be of no earthly use - there must be a balance in our lives of both the qualities of an ant and of an eagle.

There is, however, a specific garden, sphere of ministry, God has for us in the context of His big vision. We must allow the Lord to put us there and then work out our calling faithfully, staying within His boundaries for us.

## **Divine Gardening**

*"This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*  
Genesis 2:4-7

Adam was called to work in the Garden of Eden, which we have seen is a type of the sphere of ministry we are called into. But it is also a picture of the whole church with the potential for great growth.

It is interesting to see that God created the plants before man but they were not put in the earth (i.e. planted) or had any growth until man was created and began tending the garden. Before man was ready to take the seeds and plant and tend them, a mist preserved them in storage.

These plants that God created were seen as 'good' by God (Genesis 1:12) and represented the work Adam had to do in planting and tending for them. So we see a principle here of God storing up good-works beforehand (Ephesians 2:10) that we should pick up, plant and care for until growth is seen.

There are different stages in seeing the plant spring forth and yield much fruit. Each stage could represent different stages with differing activities to which we will be called.



In the diagram you can see this process. God starts by providing seed for us, stored in a 'mist' (this speaks of the Holy Spirit incubating the good works until we rise up to sow them).

### Pre-Harvest Activities

Some of us will be involved in preparing the ground for the seed (*'ploughing'*) – breaking up the hard hearts of the people. This is particularly the job of the Prophet who will call people to repentance (Hosea 10:12-13). Also, the Intercessor will pray for the ground of an area to be softened so the place is prepared for the Word of God to be sown.

Others will be involved in the planting process. This is sowing the seed of God's word into the hearts of unbelievers. The Apostle Paul is mentioned as a *'planter'* in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. This is particularly the Apostle's realm of ministry.

### Harvest Activities

Still more will be involved in reaping in the harvest itself.

*"I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."* John 4:38

This is particularly the ministry of the Evangelist, reaping a harvest of lost souls that have been prepared by the pre-harvest ministries. Most people will want to be involved in this area of activity as it seems to be the most glamorous and fruitful. However, this phase is useless without the other two.

### Post-Harvest Activities

In Biblical times, after the harvest had been reaped (i.e. cut and bundled) it was taken to the Threshing floor where oxen would trample on the wheat to separate the chaff from the grain. Then the farmers would use a winnowing fan or fork to blow away the chaff and collect the grain. The chaff would then be burnt and the grain put in storage for making food (bread) or the next round of sowing.

All this process spiritually represents post-harvest ministries such as the Pastor/Teacher who will rightly divide the Word of truth (threshing/winnowing) and refine God's people with God's fire through discipline or walking with them through times of suffering and pain.

*"And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food."* Genesis 1:29

Jesus said His *'food'* was to do the will of the Father (John 4:34). God provides us all the seed necessary for fruitfulness to do His will, His good works. Notice that Genesis 1:29

comes straight after God's big vision (*'Be fruitful, multiply'* etc.) – our ant-like calling will fit into God's big picture somehow and will contribute to God's harvest.

We must determine what our calling is in this harvest, in which stage it will be at. The next chapters will help to discover that specific calling as we identify what Spheres of Calling actually exist.

## **Do You Get The Picture?**

### **Time to reflect:**

- Ask yourself the following questions concerning your ant-like calling:
  1. What is the garden God has planted for me? Has He put me in it yet?
  2. What specific tasks is God calling me to perform?
  3. What specific words has God given me?
  4. Am I crying out to Him for wisdom, to eat of His tree of life?
  5. Who is God leading me to work with in my calling?
  6. What areas of ministry has God given me authority over?
  7. What are the boundaries of my ministry?
  8. Am I called into a predominantly pre-harvest, harvest or post-harvest ministry?

If you are not sure of any or all of the above, take time to pray for the Lord's clarity and revelation in these areas.

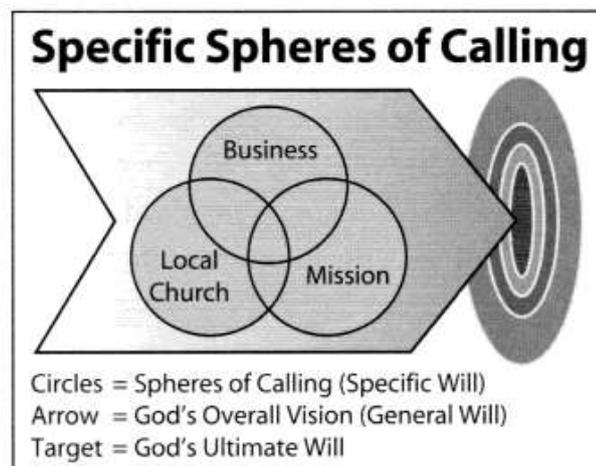
# Chapter Four

## The Spectrum of God's Calling



*Moses received his calling as a Shepherd and later went on the Shepherd God's people.*

**F**ollowing is a diagram that modifies the "Spheres of Calling" diagram to show the spectrum of God's calling.



In this chapter we will see how every Christian can be involved in God's Big Picture. We can all be 'missionaries' in the sense that we are contributing to His overall 'mission' whether we go or stay. Our lives must be aligned so that we are within the arrow of His Big Picture so that our lives will not *'miss the mark'*.

It is a common misconception among Christians that only a select few can have a *'call'* and only those in *'full-time Christian work'* (i.e. Church worker / missionary etc.) have a *'call'*. The

Scriptural truth is that all Christians are *'saved and called'* (2 Timothy 1:9) - God desires for all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and that means that all potentially, are called.

Every Christian is called to be more like Christ, to mature spiritually in character, to have a heart for the lost (and be actively involved in evangelism and discipleship), a burden for the World (Missions heart) and be actively pursuing that vision whatever their call. But the truth is *'many are called but few are chosen'* (Matthew 20:16) - this means that He calls, or invites many to step into His will, but few respond to follow His *good pleasure* (2 Thessalonians 1:11 and Philippians 2:13).

Scripture shows us that every legitimate occupation of life is in a significant sense a calling from God (1 Corinthians 7:20). The circles in the diagram represent the three *'gardens'* or areas of calling – business, local church and missions.

Following is a table that shows the spectrum of callings in the early church, which encompasses each of the specific spheres (*'gardens'*) of calling. You can take time to look up the Bible references and see for yourself that they each were actively involved in God's mission no matter which *'sphere of calling'* they were in.

Arena of Calling	Persons	Job	Activities	Refs
<b>1. Full-time Business</b>	Lydia	Seller of dye (very rich)	Opened house and gave	Acts 16:14-15 & 40
	Philemon	Businessman	Home church	Phil 1
	Aquila & Priscilla	Tentmakers	Home church	Acts 18:1-
<b>2. In the Services</b>	Cornelius	Centurion	Prayer, giver	Acts 10
	Phillipian	Jailer	Prison Ministry	Acts 16:25-
	Onesimus	Servant	Missions etc.	Phil 10-17
<b>3. Places of Influence</b>	Zenas	Lawyer	Helped Missionaries	Tit 3:13
	Publius	Magistrate	Supported Missionaries	Acts 28:7-
	Caesar's Household	Nobility	Uncertain	Phil 4:22
<b>4. Local Church</b>	James	Church Leader	Spiritual Leader	Acts 15:21
	Archippus	Church Worker	Various Ministries	Col 4:17
	Titus	Pastor/Teacher	Shepherding	Tit 1:5-9
<b>5. Missions</b> <i>Notice how all the five-fold ministries are involved here.</i>	Paul	Apostle	Church Planting	Many!
	Apollos	Teacher	Itinerant Teacher	Acts 18:24
	Philip	Evangelist	Itinerant Evangelist	Acts 6:5
	Timothy	Pastor/Teacher	Missionary	Acts 16:1
	Barnabus	Prophet etc.	Missionary	Acts 9:27
	Luke	Doctor/Writer	Missions	1 Tim 4:11

In every category, however, they still furthered God’s main desire by doing all their activities in the context of His big mission. They were all World Christians even if they never set foot out of their hometown. In other words, they all remained within the arrow of God’s Big Picture whilst being somewhere in the overlapping three ‘gardens’ in terms of their activities.

Each of us will have a calling that fits into one of the main areas, or into one of the overlapping areas. In the table we see that, in the early church, there is mention of Christians being active in business, local church and missions.

Let us look at an example of an early church character in each of the three spheres and also the four overlapping areas:



## 1. Business – Lydia

*“Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.” Acts 16:14-15*

*“So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.” Acts 16:40*

Lydia was the first European convert to Christianity. She was a rich businesswoman; we know this because selling purple dye was a lucrative business. These passages are all we hear about Lydia in the Bible, but it is clear that she housed Paul and his missionary team. Indeed, the Church that grew in Philippi was known for its hospitality (Philippians 1:5) that originated from Lydia’s initial acts of housing Paul, Silas and Luke.

Also, there is mention of financial aid that Lydia and the Philippian Christians sent to Paul and his missionary team (Philippians 4:10). Lydia linked in with God’s big picture by housing

missionaries and providing financially for them, whilst running a successful business in Philippi.

She had a world vision even though she remained in one place doing her business day by day. We see that she had a pre-harvest ministry of hospitality and giving in the context of church planting missions.

I know of an English businessman who ran an arts and crafts shop in England. He traveled to Cambodia to source out arts and crafts and then sent large crates full of them back to England to sell in his shop. Most of the profits went into missions projects he witnessed whilst in Cambodia. In this way, he used his business sphere of calling to link in with God's general purpose of reaching the unreached.

## **2. Local Church – James the son of Joseph and Mary.**

A good example of one who was called as a local church worker but who still had a world vision is James.

*“And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.’ Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,” Acts 15:13-19*

James was the Jerusalem Church leader and there is no reference to him traveling widely, but he mostly remained in Jerusalem to lead the church there.

However, we see from this passage of Scripture that James had world vision. When Simon Peter and Paul and Barnabas testified of their missionary doings, James got the Church behind them and supported their work.

He used Scripture to teach the whole congregation the importance of missionary enterprise. His ministry was a post-harvest one that included pastoring and teaching.

If we are called primarily to local church work we need still to have a world vision that will not hinder other from launching out to do His will in the furthest corners of the earth.

Sadly, I have witnessed people with a missionary calling being hindered because their Church leaders said there is more need at home. Church workers and leaders need to encourage and teach on the importance of missions even if they themselves are not called to go out.

## **3. Missions – Silas (or Silvanus).**

*“But Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.” Acts 15:40-41*

Silas was a leader and prophet in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:22, 32) who was called of God to travel with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:22-41). He accompanied Paul through Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Thessalonica. When Paul left for Athens, Silas stayed at Berea and then joined Paul at Corinth (Acts 17:13-15).

Paul mentions his work there in 2 Corinthians 1:19. He is associated with Paul in the letters written from Corinth (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and is not named again until

the reference to him in 1 Peter 5:12. Silas was not called to business or local church work as such.

He had a missionary call on his life that meant he had to travel and have a support role in Paul's missionary work. It seems he also had a hand in scribing some of the inspired epistles. His ministry was predominantly pre-harvest as a support, especially in administration.

Some of us will have a strong missions calling and we will feel very frustrated and restricted in local church work. We need to pray for the time, like Silas, when we can be sent forth by our Church into the mission field.

#### **4. Business and Local Church – Philemon.**

*“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:” Philemon 1:1-2*

Philemon was a businessman who owned a slave named Onesimus (Philemon 10) and was almost certainly a resident of Colossae. Though Paul himself had not visited Colossae (Colossians 2:1), Philemon was apparently converted through him (Philemon 19) and had been a colleague (fellow-worker) perhaps in Ephesus (Acts 19:31).

He was a businessman but had a Church in his house (probably much like a cell group). All this activity would have been in the context of a world vision that he would most certainly have got from his association with Paul. Probably he shared in his home Church on the missions outreach that was taking place through the letters Paul would have sent him.

He also would have led the church in prayer for the missionary work and maybe even collected offerings for such works. His ministry would have been a mixture of pre-harvest giving and post-harvest pastoring.

If you are called to be a businessman with a strong Church leadership role you will be in an ideal place to lead the church in a missions support role by providing resources, leading your members in missions prayer and so forth.

#### **5. Business and Missions – Aquila and Priscilla.**

*“After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” Acts 18:1-3*

Aquila and Priscilla joined Paul in his missionary endeavours, but as tentmakers. They were involved in their own trade whilst reaching out to a foreign community for Christ. Later we see that they went with Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19) where he left them to continue the missionary work. They probably continued in their tent making trade there. It was there that they instructed Apollos, a wayward teacher of Scripture, in the ways of truth.

They were highly esteemed by Paul in Romans 16:3-4 as having *‘risked their own necks’* for his life. They obviously lived as missionaries on the field, but in the context of holding down a reputable business.

They would no doubt have used the profits of their business to fund their missionary work. Again, they would have had a predominantly pre-harvest role but also some post-harvest teaching was involved in their ministry. According to Romans 16:5 we see they did later

have a Church in their home on returning to Rome, showing that they still fellowshipped and ministered in a local assembly even though that was not their main sphere of calling.

I know many missionary friends who have been called by the Lord to missions but who hold down a job in their country of calling. This job provides them with the income to carry out their God-given assignments and also is a mission field in itself.

There are many testimonies of such missionaries dealing with integrity and righteousness in their business so that they become a shining testimony to others. This is especially important in countries that particularly need the message of Jesus (the 10/40 window countries) where corruption and injustice are daily facts of life.

## **6. Local Church and Missions – Timothy.**

*“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Timothy 2:1-2*

Timothy was the son of a mixed marriage; his mother, who instructed him in the Scriptures, was a Jewess and his father a Greek (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). He was a native of Lystra and was a convert of Paul’s first missionary journey after witnessing Paul’s sufferings (2 Timothy 3:11).

The apostle was strongly attracted to the young man and added Timothy to his missionary party. Timothy had specific prophetic utterances that called him into this missionary enterprise (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14) and was sent forth by the laying on of hands by elders in his church and by Paul himself (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Timothy was first entrusted with a special commission to Thessalonica to encourage the persecuted Christians and probably train them in God’s missionary ways.

He was also ministering with Paul during his preaching work at Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:19) and accompanied Paul during the apostle’s ministry in Ephesus. From there he was sent with Erastus on another important mission to Macedonia, and from there he was to proceed to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10-11).

Timothy’s mission was not successful in Corinth and Titus became the apostolic delegate there. However, Timothy still accompanied Paul on his next trip to Corinth, for he was with him as a fellow-worker when the Epistle to the Romans was written (Romans 16:21).

Timothy also went with Paul on the journey to Jerusalem with the collection (Acts 20:4-5) and is heard of later when Paul, then a prisoner, wrote to the Colossians, Philemon and the Philippians. When Paul was released he left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3) and commissioned him to deal with false teachers, train and appoint godly men in God’s purposes and lead the Church worship there. Later Timothy became a prisoner as Hebrews 13:23 shows, but no details are given, and of his later history nothing definite is known.

From what we do know about Timothy, we see he had the role of a Pastor/Teacher and was used in the mobilizing of churches into God’s will – especially in countering false doctrine that kept the churches sterile in their missionary purpose.

He was both a missionary and a local church pastor/teacher, especially in Ephesus. He was a bridge person, helping others cross from Church into missions and his ministry was predominantly a post-harvest pastoring/teaching one that prepared others for pre-harvest activity.

This is the role that the Lord has called me personally into and God has used the life of Timothy to speak much to me about my call (it’s no coincidence that my name too is Timothy!).

In 1988 I was called to leave my home country (England) and came to Singapore where I went through Bible School training and started doing missionary work in and around the South East Asian area. All through this time I was doing pastoral work and training in missions.

Now, like Timothy, I'm helping pastor one church in Singapore and at the same time envisioning and training people into missions, polishing them as bright arrows to be shot into his target areas for them.

## **7. Business, Local Church and Missions – the Apostle Paul.**

*“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ” Ephesians 3:6-8*

*“So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” Acts 18:3-4*

The Apostle Paul was actually involved in all three spheres, having a strategic networking role. He was a missionary who planted new local churches and nurtured them to a point where he could entrust leadership to others.

In the process of doing this he is also seen as supporting himself and his ministry by making tents. His role was right in the center of the three spheres! His ministry spanned all harvesting activities but was predominantly a pre-harvest apostolic role.

In conclusion: we all have a specific, individual call in the context of God's mission that will fit somewhere within the three overlapping spheres or *'gardens'* of missions, local church and business. As you seek God to *'plant'* you where He wills, He will reveal which of the seven areas you fit into.

Reading through Scripture we clearly see that God has a specific call for each one of us that we need to understand and move in.

1. He has a definite will for my life (Psalm 32:8, Ephesians 2:10, Hebrews 12:1).
2. God desires us to know His will (Ephesians 5:17) and enables us to do so (Colossians 1:9).
3. His will is continuous (from mother's womb - doesn't begin at 30!) (Isaiah 58:11).
4. His will is specific (Isaiah 30:21).
5. God's will for us is profitable (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:1-3).
6. His will can be outworked in the specific vocation we find ourself in if it is done from the heart, not as men-pleasers but God-pleasers (Ephesians 6:5-8).
7. His specific will for us will always be an important, strategic part of accomplishing His overall missions purpose in the earth - a part of His Big Picture! (James 4:13-15)

Having been through this chapter, no Christian can say they are not called. God is actively calling each one of us and has been doing so from before our birth.

The question is, will we arise to *'seize the day'* and be effective in the area God is calling us to within His overall purpose? We must not be double-minded, but focus on what He's calling us to and give our whole commitment in working in that *'garden'*.

"When I was a boy, my father, a baker, introduced me to the wonders of song," tenor Luciano Pavarotti relates. "He urged me to work very hard to develop my voice. Arrigo Pola, a professional tenor in my hometown of Modena, Italy, took me as a pupil. I also enrolled in a teachers college. On graduating, I asked my father, 'Shall I be a teacher or a singer?' "'Luciano,' my father replied, 'if you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair.' "I chose one. It took seven years of study and frustration before I made my first professional appearance.

It took another seven to reach the Metropolitan Opera. And now I think whether it's laying bricks, writing a book—whatever we choose—we should give ourselves to it. Commitment, that's the key. Choose one chair."

This story is taken from a 'Guideposts' article.

What is that one chair, that one garden, God has for you? The next chapters will help you find out and then you can commit yourself to doing the good works He has prepared beforehand for you in that call.

## Do You Get The Picture?

### Time to reflect:

- Which of the seven spheres of ministry do you feel most drawn to?
  1. Business\*
  2. Local Church
  3. Missions
  4. Business\* and Local church
  5. Business\* and missions
  6. Church and missions
  7. All three areas

It must be noted that the examples given for each area are just examples. There are many other out-workings of the ministry in each area. Write down more possible ministry tasks needed in each area, especially the area you feel most drawn to. Pray for the Lord's equipping and that He would give you greater clarity as to how your ministry will be worked out.

\*I am using the term '*business*' to describe any '*secular*' area of work. It could relate to entrepreneurial or corporate business, arts and entertainment, design and technology, education and family, government and law or hospital or medical work (Adapted from Bill Bright's seven Mountains of Cultural Influence.)

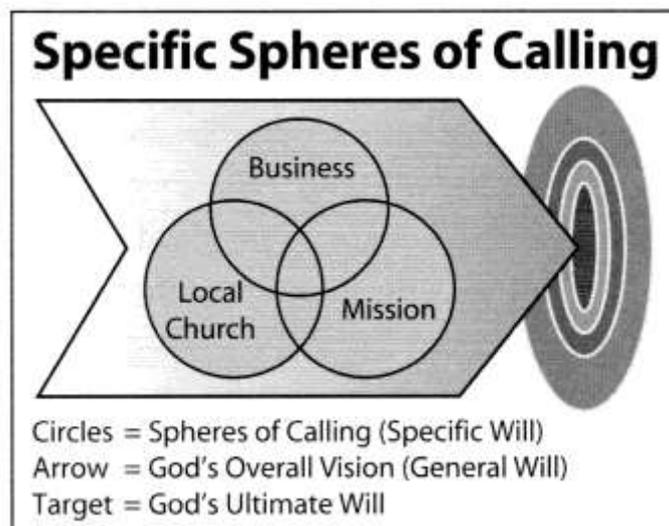
# Chapter Five

## Vision is Seeing Jesus



*"The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy. The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise." Proverbs 15:30-31*

**B**y their very names, vision denotes seeing and calling denotes hearing. As we have already seen, we all have a specific calling within His overall vision for mankind. This calling will be somewhere within the three overlapping spheres of missions, business and local church.



The Apostle Paul was called to be an Apostle involved in all three areas, specifically to the gentiles to the west (Romans 1:1, Galatians 1:15-16), but had a more general vision (Acts 26:15-18), based on the original vision given to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:27-28).

This will be the same pattern for each one of us. These chapters will show how we need a revelation, both of God's big picture (vision) and also of His specific calling for us, and how to receive and move in them.

We will now look at Biblical definitions of Vision and Calling and see how we arrive at the conclusion that:

VISION = Seeing Jesus Doing.

CALLING = Hearing Jesus Saying.

In this chapter we'll focus on Vision (excuse the pun) and then hear about Calling (excuse this pun also) in the next.

Both Hebrew and Greek words for Vision have the meaning of gazing wide and open eyed at something remarkable - awed by the beauty, and filled with joy. It varies in meaning from being a very real, tangible experience to simply being a mental perception.

One Hebrew word for vision or a Seer ('*Roeh*') is the same as the name of a bird at that time, similar to an eagle. It was so called due to its sharp eyes. We have already seen the '*eagle-like*' vision we should all have as Christians in Chapter 2. In this chapter we'll be exploring more on how to '*catch*' this vision.

In Matthew 17:9 the vision was actually Jesus Himself who is the embodiment of God's original intention. All of John's visions in the book of Revelation were '*the Revelation of Jesus Christ*' (Revelation 1:1) Himself.

All that we are to do, that is to be of any true worth, must be done in Him. We only receive a prophetic vision of what we must do as we draw close to Him.

*"Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint (or perish) but happy is he who keeps the law." Proverbs 29:18 (NKJV)*

As we draw near to Jesus we will receive prophetic vision. If we don't have this we will not have the context in which to live our lives, and we will do what we please instead (i.e. '*cast off restraint*'). There needs to be a seeing with our '*spiritual eyes*'.

*"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of His inheritance in the saints." Ephesians 1:17-18*

It may not be a literal vision of Jesus in a tangible form, but it will be an experiential knowledge of Him that will open our spirits to the riches of His inheritance for us. It will be a revelation of God's big picture, his big vision for our life. As shown in the diagram below, vision is seeing Jesus in our spirits performing actions, movements, pictures, impressions and signs.

*"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white unto harvest!" John 4:35*

Jesus spoke this in Samaria as the multitudes of Samaritans were just coming towards Him on the horizon in response to the Samaritan woman's report. The disciples would have been looking at Jesus, concerned only for Him, but Jesus directed their eyes beyond - to the lost.

It was in the beholding of Jesus, and seeing Him pointing, that they lifted up their eyes to see a vision of the lost. As we fix our eyes on Jesus, He will begin to show us what He sees and point it out to us in actions, movements, pictures, impressions and signs.



One of my friends, whilst worshipping Jesus in a Church service, suddenly had a vision of a huge wheat field swaying in the wind. It was ready for harvesting. She then saw the wheat turn into swaying hands of millions crying out for salvation.

The vision then panned out and she saw the field was in the shape of the map of China. She received a vision of the harvest, a burden for the lost souls of China. This is in line with the general vision God gave mankind from the very beginning. Really, vision is seeing Jesus and catching a vision of the harvest Jesus is pointing out!

We need to spend time gazing wide and open eyed at that someone who is remarkable – Jesus - awed by His beauty and filled with joy. Then we will see what he wants us to see – world vision!

When I was at Bible School I started worshipping Jesus like never before. It was then that He started to open my spirit to His prophetic movements in this day and age that I have a part in. I began to see the westward sweep of the gospel through history, which after Paul's missionary expansion to the west kept going west.

At first it was Europe who carried the torch and sent out countless thousands of missionaries in pioneer roles. But the gospel carried on its westwards march to America, which picked up the torch and started sending out even more missionaries. But now we are in the generation where the gospel has marched even farther west to South East Asia. Now, South East Asian countries are sending more missionaries than the entire western world combined.

Now is God's '*kairos*' time for South East Asia concerning missionary outreach, especially into the 10/40 window (a prophetic picture Jesus has in recent years shown to the Church concerning the most unevangelised nations of the world lying between the latitudes 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator, stretching from Japan in the East to North Africa in the west).

This is a vision that Jesus is giving many in this generation; it comes out of fixing eyes on Jesus and seeing His prophetic movements, actions, impressions, pictures and signs.

It is possible to read chapter one of this book and mentally see God's Big Picture, understanding the message of the Bible, but without it being a revelation to us. We need to be *'sucked in'* to the Big Picture. To be *'living it'*.

Eddy Hall, in an article entitled "The Bible and the Painting that came to Life"; talks about the first chapter of "The Voyager of Dawn Treader", one of C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia. It opens in little Lucy's bedroom. She and her brother Edmund and their cousin Eustace were looking at Lucy's favourite picture, a framed painting of a Narnian ship. As they looked at the picture, the water and the ship began to move and before long the three children has gone through the picture frame and entered the land of Narnia.

I think the Bible is a lot like that painting. We tend to spend a lot of time looking at the Bible, studying it, analyzing it, treasuring it, and even applying it. But so long as it remains lifeless, we're not really seeing it. The Bible does not exist primarily to be studied, mastered, or even obeyed. The Bible is a window through which Jesus reveals himself to us.

### **Conditions for seeing**

What do we need to do to see His vision? What are the conditions needed?

Much like an eagle needs good, clear weather 'conditions' to see from on high, so our heart must be in a good 'condition' to see properly with our spiritual eyes.

### ***The first condition is that we must have our spiritual eyes opened.***

*"I pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of His inheritance in the saints." Ephesians 1:17-18*

It is through our own prayers and of others on our behalf that our spiritual eyes are opened to God's vision. Without this 'enlightening' or 'opening' of our spiritual eyes we could read the previous chapters about God's vision for us, understanding in our heads what it is, but have no real revelation that moves us to action.

*"So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But arise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things, which you have seen, and of the things, which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Acts 26:15-19*

True vision always leads to get up and go! When the Apostle Paul had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus he receiving a world vision of reaching out to the Gentiles that transformed his life and motivated him to go and do God's will. It was a revelation of Jesus and a progressive revelation (*'I will yet reveal to you'*) of His purposes.

God had to literally blind Paul naturally so that his spiritual eyes were opened to see God's vision (Acts 9:8). When his spiritual eyes were opened he was obedient to the vision he saw, even though he walked in darkness in the natural.

He chose to walk hand in hand with the Lord, trusting Him to lead him step by step into the good works prepared beforehand for him to walk in – to walk progressively in the light of the Lord that shines brighter the longer it is walked in.

*"But the path of the just is like the shining sun that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18*

*"I said to a man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'; and he replied, 'Go into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way!'" - From a Christmas Message delivered by King George VI 1939*

It was when a man called Ananias prayed for him that *'immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once'* (Acts 9:18).

The Holy Spirit then came upon him and Paul was able to move in God's vision. Never underestimate the power of praying for others to have their eyes open to God's vision for them or even praying for yourself to see His vision more clearly.

***The second condition is that we focus in on the vision.***

*"I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected. Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Habakkuk 2:1-3*

It's not enough to just 'see' the vision. Our natural eyes see many things around us, but it's not until we focus in on an object of interest that we see that object 'clearly' and see all the details. We need to spend time staring at the vision of Jesus for us so it becomes clearer and clearer. To do this we need to get in a high place like Habakkuk did.

He was determined not to stare at the walls of the city that hemmed him in, worrying about the encroaching Babylonian armies outside. Habakkuk left his worries, fears and doubts at the bottom of the steps and placed himself on the rampart – the high watchtower on the perimeter of the city. There he waited for the Lord's vision and then wrote it down clearly.

We must wait on the Lord in prayer and also fasting for clarity in the vision God is giving us. It's good practice to write down what God reveals and make it into clear, short sentences that will help us focus on what God wants us to do. The more we do this, the clearer and more detailed the vision becomes. Our 'ramparts' will be a place where we can leave worldly worries and visions behind to seek for the Lord's sight:

*"So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly." Mark 8:23-25*

The blind man at Bethsaida was healed when Jesus led him out of the town – away from the busy sights and visions of town life. Like Habakkuk went to the edge of the town, up on the ramparts, so the blind man had to go outside the town to have his sight restored.

We need to let Jesus lead us 'out of the town' - not physically, but spiritually. Out of all the worldly, carnal visions of our busy existence.

It's interesting that Isaiah had his fantastic vision of the Lord in His holy habitation 'in the year that Uzziah died' (Isaiah 6:1). Isaiah received vision for service only after there was a death. It was a death of a strong worldly vision headed by King Uzziah who was a man of

vision, but not God's vision. God clearly had told Israel not to rely on their strength but on His.

However, King Uzziah's vision was to build up a strong army with strong fortifications (which you can read about in 2 Chronicles 26:11-15). But in 2 Chronicles 26:16 the summary of such a vision is *"but when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction"*.

This worldly vision of one's own strength had to die before Isaiah had the true vision of the Lord.

Habakkuk, the blind man, Isaiah and you and I must leave all visions of this world before we can truly receive His vision!

Then the blind man let Jesus touch his eyes, applying spit on them! We must take time to allow Jesus to anoint our spiritual eyes. At first we will see His vision like *'trees, walking'* (blurry and, at first, a bit nonsensical). But as we take time to allow Jesus to finish his job of focusing our spiritual sight by applying more *'eye salve'*, our spiritual vision will be restored so we see all His ways for us more clearly.

***The third condition is that we must have child's eyes.***

*"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.'" Matthew 11:25*

It's a common fact that eyesight gets worse with age. In Matthew 11:25 we read that God reveals His visions to *'babes'*, those with the most uncorrupted sight. This is talking about us needing to have the positive characteristics of how a child sees in our spiritual *'seeing'*. We must see as a child does even though it means being counted as a fool: in innocence, straight forwardly and full of excitement and wonder.

At the time of writing this book I have a two-year-old son, Matthew. When I point out something new to him he will focus his whole attention on it with great excitement and concentration.

The other day we were walking out of a local shop and there were a pair of rabbits on the grass in front of the shop. Many adults were walking past, looking briefly at the rabbits and then walking by with a *'seen that before'* attitude. But there was a group of kids looking at the rabbits. When I pointed them out to Matthew he excitedly ran to see the rabbits and tried to look at them from every angle, finding out as much about them from me as he could.

We need to have this attitude when the Father points out some aspect of Jesus' vision for us – not having a *'seen that before'* attitude, but a child-like attitude of genuine excitement and inquisitiveness.

***The fourth and last condition is that we have clear spiritual eyes.***

This may seem obvious, but there are many ways we can have faulty vision that is blurred or even non-existent due to spiritual blindness. We will look at four things that can cause such faulty vision.

**1. Hatred in our hearts.**

*"But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." 1 John 2:11*

Our spiritual sight is blinded if we harbour hatred in our hearts towards anyone. We must release forgiveness and let the Lord melt all bitterness with His love, and then we will begin to see His vision for our lives.

## **2. The lust of the eyes.**

*"For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world." 1 John 2:16*

The 'lust of the eyes' means that we set our affections on earthly appetites. If our eyes lust after that which is abominable to God our spiritual sight will become dull as we're fixing our sights on things of the earth rather than His things. We must 'make a covenant' with our eyes, like Job did (Job 31:1), not to look lustfully at things of this world.

## **3. A judgmental and critical spirit.**

*"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" Matthew 7:3*

We can be spiritually blurred in our vision or even spiritually blinded due to having a 'plank' in our eye (we can't see much with something that big stuck in our eye, can we?) - this is a judgmental and critical spirit that looks at small faults in others. If we are guilty of this we need to repent and transform our critical speech into constructive, edifying speech.

## **4. False doctrine and teaching.**

*"Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who make my people stray; who chant "Peace" while they chew with their teeth, but who prepare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths: "Therefore you shall have night without vision, and you shall have darkness without divination; the sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be dark for them. " Micah 3:5-6*

I know people who come out of cults or are involved in teaching error who find it very hard to discern God's true vision for their life. Those who sit under the ministries of those who teach extremes are also affected. The remedy for this is to seek the truth with your whole hearts.

Faulty vision in spiritual eyes is quite common among God's people. His Word gives us keys to remedy these ailments and blockages. Let us apply the truths we have learnt and see His way more vividly.

### **Ways we can see God's vision for us.**

We've looked at the conditions for seeing His vision and reasons we can have faulty vision. Now we will look at how we can practically discern what He's showing us.

There are three categories of guidance: Personal, Corporate and Supernatural.

**(a) Personal** (Individual or direct guidance).

**(i) The witness of the Holy Spirit.**

*“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” Ephesians 5:17-18*

We understand what the will of God is by being filled with the Spirit.

The actual meaning Paul has here is that we should be continually filled with the Spirit, day by day asking for His fresh outpouring in our lives. Then we are in the position to hear the Holy Spirit’s witness.

*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”. Romans 8:14*

*“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”*

*Galatians 5:16*

The Spirit must lead us so we can walk in His ways. This is the principle of 'following the cloud' as the cloud of God’s presence led the Israelites by day. We need to be continually filled with His Holy Spirit so we can learn how to flow in Him, understanding His promptings, discerning His still, small voice.

We must allow His anointing to flow (1 John 2:27) and He will give a peaceful witness (Colossians 3:15) as to which way to go or not go (*'check in the Spirit'*). This way we will 'see' his vision for us.

A Biblical example of such leading is found in Acts 16:7-10.

*“After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Acts 16:7-10*

There are times when I have 'seen' the Lord’s way forward by such a prompting of the Spirit. One such occasion was when I was preparing to join World Horizons (WH) mission organization in 1987. There was a WH conference in Birmingham that was to last a few days. This conference was important, as it was the first real step towards joining WH.

However, I arrived too late for the briefing and, by the time I did arrive, all delegates had been designated their accommodation for the night. In the natural I had no idea what to do, but it was then that I had a prompting by the Spirit to get on a bus that was arriving in the bus station I had been dropped off at. Not knowing where I was going, I got on the bus, paid enough fare to go into central Birmingham, sat down and waited. It was raining heavily outside and all the windows were misted up so I could not see outside. In my heart I was praying without ceasing!

Suddenly, I felt the prompting of the Spirit once more. This time it was a clear signal to get off the bus at the next stop. So I pressed the button and got off the bus into a dark, unfamiliar street. I had no idea at all as to where I was. But, I saw a church opposite where I got off and I thought they might know something about the conference.

Knocking on the door of the church, I waited until I heard someone coming and the door opened. I got the shock of my life! A guy named Jon, who had previously been involved in leading a mission trip I was on, had opened the door. Almost at the same time we said, “What are you doing here?” I found out that this was the exact church that I had been designated to stay at that night!

This leading by the Spirit was important as it was an integral part in my receiving world vision and it launched me into my missions ministry – even though at that time I had no specific details about where that would be or in what capacity.

**(ii) Counsel of the heart.**

*"I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." Psalm 16:7-9*

The more our heart (spirit) is submitted to the Lord, the more it will counsel and instruct us so we can 'see' His ways with the eyes of our heart.

*"Relegating all problems to the Lord, trusting implicitly in His guidance for the past and future experiences produces the remark: "I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel." My going to Equador is God's counsel, as is my leaving Betty, and my refusal to be counseled by all who insist I should stay and stir up the believers in us.*

*And how do I know this is His counsel? "Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons." Oh, how good - for I have known that 'my heart' is instructing me for God.*

*"My heart said for Thee,' Seek ye my face.'" No visions or voices, but the counsel of a heart which desires God."*

This is a quote by Jim Elliot who was called to Equador in the early 1950s to be a Martyr for the faith. (Taken from "Shadow of the Almighty" by Elisabeth Elliot, Opening section of Chapter 17).

As we delight more and more in the Lord, He will place desires in our heart that are in line with His vision, these are the desires we can claim and He will surely grant them (Psalm 37:4).

**(b) Corporate** (guidance through other Christians).

*"And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" Acts 21:10-11*

Guidance may come through prophetic acts of others! The prophet Agabus used a prophetic act when he bound the Apostle Paul with his belt, indicating he would be bound by the authorities on going to Jerusalem. Old Testament prophets too used many visual prophetic acts such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah frequently employed this methodology. Examples are his burying the loin cloth (Jeremiah 13:1-7); visiting the potter (Jeremiah 18:1-10); smashing the clay jar (Jeremiah 19:1-13); and wearing the yoke (Jeremiah 28:10-14).

Others may have prophetic visions that relate to God's vision for our futures – one Prophet saw a vision of bright arrows being sent out of Singapore into dark areas of the world, lighting up those areas, and he saw me like a polishing utensil for those arrows. This is a vision that I am still praying into complete fulfillment today, as it represents God's 'big picture' for me personally (and indeed it fits in with God's overall big picture).

God will use others as His 'projectors' and we must pray for eyes to see what the Lord is showing us through them.

**(c) Supernatural** (guidance through miraculous divine intervention).

**(i) Dreams and Visions.**

*"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Joel 2:28*

*"Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more." Genesis 37:5*

*"Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth." Acts 10:10-11*

*"In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me-- to me, Daniel-- after the one that appeared to me the first time." Daniel 8:1*

Any dream or vision one receives should be tested. It should not contradict Scripture and will usually be very vivid and give a sense of God's presence with it. They usually confirm what the Lord has already been saying, especially concerning his 'big picture' for your life.

Prayerfully consider your dream/vision remembering they could represent symbols or principles - not necessarily absolutes. Talk them over with mature Christians and remember that it is the Lord who is the interpreter of dreams, not your own fanciful wishes (Daniel 2:28).

There are times when I have 'seen' visions given by the Spirit of God that have envisioned me for the purposes God has for my life. One such occasion was in 1986 when I was at university in London. I had just signed up for my first mission trip to North Africa and the Lord was starting to call me into missions.

As I was praying in my room about this forthcoming trip, I asked the Lord to confirm that this was really His will, and I was also praying the Lord would give me opportunity to meet a person from the country I was going to, in London.

Suddenly, I received a vivid vision of a North African man coming towards me with shopping bags in his hands. I recognized the vision as being next to a London underground station that was near where I was staying. Immediately I went out to wait by the station I had seen in the vision.

Standing beside a Mosque next to the station, I patiently waited. No one came who matched the man in my vision and I was about to give up waiting until something remarkable happened. Suddenly, from out of the Mosque doors, there came hundreds of North Africans who had been worshipping in the Mosque.

They all looked the same to me and I knew the one I was looking for was carrying a shopping bag in each hand, like I'd seen in the vision. Then, out of the crowd, I saw him coming straight at me. He looked exactly like the man I saw in the vision and he was carrying the two shopping bags. But I was wondering how to get his attention and even how to talk with him, as I thought he might not speak English.

I needn't have worried. God orchestrated our meeting!

Just as he was about to pass me, one of the shopping bag handles broke and all his shopping went sprawling over the pavement. I jumped forward immediately and helped him pick up all his things and we had a quick conversation in English (he could speak a little). It was then that I knew God had given me the vision to confirm my missions calling and excite me concerning His 'big picture' for my life.

I have found that God gives important dreams or visions concerning crucial turning points/decisions in our life (God gave Peter the important vision of creatures in the net at the turning point of the Church reaching out to the Gentiles. Also Paul and his team received the vision of the Macedonian man at the point in history where the Gospel was about to cross continents – from Asia to Europe).

In 1988 as I was stepping out into Missionary work, with World Horizon missions organization, I had a girlfriend. She wanted me to work first and settle down but I felt I could still continue the relationship, which was my first real one.

But the Lord gave me a dream, which was very vivid - I was in an open white Rolls Royce driving along a highway. My girlfriend was sitting beside me. Every time we went over a bump she would fly out of the car onto the wayside. I would have to stop, reverse, get out, pick her up and put her back in the car. This happened many times then the dream stopped.

I was blinded by the situation (wrong relationships tend to do this) and didn't know what it meant. Eventually my friend plucked up the courage to tell me that it meant she was a hindrance to God's pure (white) purposes (car on highway) in my life. Each time we would encounter a difficulty (bump) she would hinder me in God's purposes.

I ended the relationship as a result (she took it quite well I must add!) and received a new freedom to pursue God's 'big picture' for my life, which I did not have as I was 'trapped' in that relationship.

God lets us 'see' dreams and vision to keep us on the right track concerning his big vision for our lives.

Joseph is a classic example of this. The Lord gave him a dream of his family and even the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him. It was a vision revealing God's big picture for Joseph to be an overcomer (Genesis 1:28), the many stars actually represent the many lives who would come to the Lord and become part of the 'godly seed' Joseph belonged to (from Abraham). It was actually a 'world vision' that also showed Joseph how his own life would further God's big plans.

Indeed, through Joseph's love and faithfulness to the Lord, the nation of Israel was saved from famine and they multiplied and grew in Egypt, becoming a testimony to a foreign nation – furthering God's original intention.

God has dreams and visions for you concerning His big picture and your part in that. Open your spiritual eyes to these dreams and visions and embrace them and outwork them in faith. He will enable you to accomplish that which He shows you as it is His will and desire, and nothing can stop the Lord from fulfilling His desire!

## **(ii) Divine or angelic Visitation.**

*"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the LORD'S army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so." Joshua 5:13-15*

Angels or the Lord Himself may appear to warn or to encourage (by providing physical needs and safety), but mostly they come with significant announcements. The Lord appeared to Joshua to show Joshua that he must lead the Israelites to gain the Promised Land under His command. This is all in the context of God's big picture.

He showed Himself to assure the gathering of His people into His promised inheritance, under His leadership and command, so that they may be a light to the Gentiles (the nations around them).

This is a pattern throughout Scripture. Jesus or angels appear to God's servants to always confirm His big picture and strengthen His people in it (e.g. The Lord appears to Moses – Exodus 33:19-23 – in the context of giving the Law that will make His people a unique testimony among the nations).

### **(iii) Signs and Wonders.**

According to Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary a '*Sign and Wonder*' is something that points to, or represents, something larger or more important than itself. The word is used in this way to refer to a wide variety of things in the Bible.

But by far the most important use of the word is in reference to the acts of God. Thus, it is often linked with '*wonders*'. In the Old Testament most references point to the miracles produced by God to help deliver the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 7:3; Isaiah 8:18).

In the New Testament the word '*signs*' is linked with both '*wonders*' and '*miracles*' (Acts 2:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4). Signs point primarily to the powerful, saving activity of God as experienced through the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. The word occurs frequently in the Gospel of John, pointing to the deeper, symbolic meaning of the miracles performed by Jesus. Throughout the Bible the true significance of a sign is understood only through faith.

'*Signs*' are just what they imply: they are signposts pointing to some aspect of Jesus (remember, vision is '*seeing Jesus*'). Presently, here in South East Asia, we hear a lot about gold dust appearing falling from heaven in meetings. Gold is a symbol of the divine nature of God that Jesus is the embodiment of, and this sign merely points to the fact that Jesus is present when His people meet together. We should not seek the sign, but Him whom the sign points to – Jesus. In Him is our vision for living!

WARNING: Don't seek this last category (Supernatural guidance). If God wants to He will speak supernaturally. God may actually use more of this kind of guidance for immature and younger Christians but He expects us to mature to hear His still, small voice in our spirit. Although, in crucial times, He still does speak supernaturally (e.g. Paul's Macedonian vision (Acts 16:7-10) - this was a crucial turning point in world mission (to another completely new continent).

Supernatural guidance is still possible and we should not shut ourselves off from this possibility. On the other hand we must not actively seek for this form of guidance as it is subject to the sovereignty of God.

In the End Times, especially as the time of the Antichrist approaches, we can expect an escalation of this form of guidance among God's people and also an escalation of counterfeit signs and wonders.

From this chapter we have seen that God reveals His vision to us in many ways, but ultimately it is a vision of Jesus that we need, in whom we can be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and have dominion.

The only way of receiving this vision is to get closer to Him and constantly set our spiritual eyes on Him.

*“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2*

We must look to Him in times of waiting, Bible reading, worship and spiritual service and in Him we will see His story for us revealed in the many ways outlined in this chapter. He is the author and the finisher of our life of faith and He has given a perfect example of a life of faith whilst on this earth.

*‘The joy that was set before Him’* was actually the big picture given to mankind right from the start (encapsulated in Genesis 1:28). As we gaze, wide eyed and with great awe at Jesus we begin to have great joy as we see unveiled before us His plan of salvation and our part in it.

As we begin to see Jesus in our spirits we’ll see Him give actions, movements, pictures, impressions and signs that will help us walk this life of faith.

Just as Vision is seeing Jesus we will now see in the next chapter that Calling is hearing Jesus invite us to a specific call within His big vision.

## **Do You Get The Picture?**

### **Time to reflect:**

- Do you meet the conditions for seeing God’s vision for your life?
- Are your spiritual eyes opened and focused?
- Are you seeing like a child?
- Are your spiritual eyes blocked by hatred, lust, a critical spirit, or false doctrine?

Pause to pray for the Lord to anoint your spiritual eyes with eye salve so you can see more clearly. If you need to repent of anything that has been a blockage, go ahead and do that first.

Write down any guidance you have received from the witness of the Spirit, the counsel of the heart, prophetic acts of others, dreams and visions, divine or angelic visitation or signs and wonders.

What do these things show you concerning God’s vision for your life?

## Chapter Six

# Calling is Hearing Jesus



**T**he Biblical use of '*calling*' refers to an INVITATION. It is an urging on, an inciting by words. It comes as an encouragement to do something and is a term particularly found in the New Testament. One's call is the invitation of Christ to enter fully into His vision!

This is all purely by grace, and grace enables us to accomplish our call (Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). This invitation will be specific (as to the area of calling/gifting).

### **The Invitation of the Lord.**

As mentioned above, the Biblical word for '*calling*' literally means an invitation. Jesus speaks to us (He is the Word (John 1:1)), delivering an invitation to join Him in the harvest. He will invite us into a specific harvest activity that requires a specific gifting that we are being equipped with.



He invites us into His plans by giving us words, concepts, directions and messages. All this requires is **faith**.

*"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17*

We receive faith by 'hearing' with our spiritual ears. We are to hear His personal words to us. In this verse the Greek word used for 'word' is 'rhema'. It's interesting that this word is used rather than the usual 'logos'. 'Rhema' is the revealed spoken, personal word of God to us, whereas 'logos' is the general written Word of God.

So, true faith, to do His good works that are prepared for us, only comes by hearing the 'rhema', revealed personal word of God to us.

But, unless we are taught how to hear this we will be like Samuel first was as a little boy, unable to distinguish the voice of God from the voice of man (read 1 Samuel 3:1-10).

Eli was the priest of God, but had failed in his duty to teach Samuel how to hear God's voice, as he himself was unable to do so. In fact, it says in verse 1 'the word of God was rare in those days'. Why was this? Because 'there was no widespread revelation (or vision).'

They had lost God's big vision for them and even the lamp in the tabernacle was going out as a reflection of the spiritual state of God's people. Eli's physical eyes were dim (verse 2), also reflecting the condition of His spiritual eyes. God called Samuel four times before he realized it was God calling!

As a church, we need to learn afresh how to hear the 'rhema' call of God after our spiritual vision has been restored, like Samuel did and he received a specific call that his whole life was founded on.

Following is a story I adapted from an internet friend of mine, Patricia A. A. Schwab, showing how God calls us.

A man was sleeping at night in his cabin when suddenly he heard a voice that trembled like the thunder. It was Jesus' voice and He told the man he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin.

God explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might. At first the man thought it was not really God and didn't respond until the fourth time when He finally rose to do the Lord's bidding day by day.

For many years he toiled from sunrise to sundown, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmovable rock, pushing with all his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore, and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Seeing that the man was showing signs of discouragement, Satan decided to enter the picture by placing thoughts into the man's weary mind: "You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't budged. Why kill yourself over this? You are never going to move it." Thus giving the man the impression that the task was impossible and that he was a failure, these thoughts discouraged and disheartened the man.

"Why kill myself over this?" he thought. "I'll just put in my time, giving just the minimum effort and that will be good enough." And that he planned to do until one day he decided to make it a matter of prayer and take his troubled thoughts to God. "God," he said, "I have laboured long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a millimeter. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

Jesus responded compassionately, "My friend, when I asked you to serve me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to me, with your strength spent, thinking that you have failed."

"But, is that really so? Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back is sinewy and brown, your hands are calloused from constant pressure, and your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have."

"Yet you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to be obedient and to push and to exercise your faith and trust in My wisdom. This you have done. I, my friend, will now move the rock."

When He moved the rock the man saw a chest full of shining treasure and Jesus said; 'Now go and use this treasure to bless those whom I lead you to.' The man realized that he would not have been able to carry the heavy treasure before he responded to God's call, but now his muscles had been developed he was well able to carry this chest.

At times when we read the Scriptures and/or hear the Lord speak to us, we tend to use our own intellect to decipher what He wants, when actually what God wants is just simple obedience and faith in Him.

By all means exercise the faith that Moves Mountains, but it is still God who actually moves the mountains and reveals our true calling, providing the resources to fulfill it. This chapter will help you learn how to hear this call of God.

*"The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

*His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked." Isaiah 11:2-4*

This is talking about Jesus, but because we are to be 'in Christ' we too are to display the same characteristics. We are not to 'judge by the sight of' our eyes or 'decide by the hearing of' our ears. This means that we don't depend on physical sight or hearing but on our spiritual senses. It is the anointing of the Spirit that enables us to see and hear spiritually and therefore rule and reign in our calling on this earth.

We will now look at conditions that need to be met in order to truly hear God's call on our lives and then at how we can practically hear Jesus' 'rhema' words to us.

## Conditions for Hearing

What do we need to do to hear His call? What are the conditions needed?

***The first condition is that we must incline our spiritual ears to Him.***

*“So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path.”*

*Proverbs 2:2-9*

We need to ‘tune in’ to hear what the Lord is saying. The following story was sent to me by Emory Edge and it illustrates this need to hear the right voice.

Back when the telegraph was the fastest method of long-distance communication, a young man applied for a job as a Morse Code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the office address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, busy office filled with noise and clatter, including the sound of the telegraph in the background.

A sign on the receptionist’s counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office. The young man filled out his form and sat down with the seven other applicants in the waiting area. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. They muttered among themselves that they hadn’t heard any summons yet. They assumed that the young man who went into the office made a mistake and would be disqualified.

Within a few minutes, however, the employer escorted the young man out of the office and said to the other applicants, “Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has just been filled.” The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and one spoke up saying, “Wait a minute. I don’t understand. He was the last to come in and we never even got the chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That’s not fair!”

The employer said, “I’m sorry, but the last several minutes while you’ve been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the following message in Morse Code: ‘If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.’ None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. The job is his.

We live in a world that is full of busyness and clatter, like that office. People are distracted and unable to hear the still, small voice of God as He speaks in creation, in the Scriptures, in the life and work of Jesus and in our hearts. Are you tuned in to God’s voice? Do you hear Him when He speaks to you? Are you listening? *“This is my Son, whom I love....Listen to Him!”*

There are many voices clamouring for our attention, the voices of fear, doubt, reason, hatred, materialism, comfort and so forth, but we need to actively incline our spiritual ears to hear God’s words. How do we do this? Proverbs 2:2-9 gives us active words that show us what we should practically do to incline our ears to hear his voice...

- (i) Apply your heart.
- (ii) Cry out.
- (iii) Lift up your voice.
- (iv) Seek and search as for treasure.

All these words describe the condition of an intense desire to hear the truth. It is possible to be *'listening'* but not really hearing.

Sometimes when I'm working on my computer my wife will say something to me and will think that I've heard it. But the reality is that it's gone in one ear and straight out of the other!

For me to really hear and take in what she is saying I have to stop my work turn my back on the computer, look firmly in her eyes and concentrate.

It's the same with hearing the Lord. We need to stop what we're doing for a moment, turn our back on all other sources of information (other voices) and concentrate intently on what God is saying to us.

*"Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward." Jeremiah 7:24*

The above verse shows clearly what happens to us if we fail to incline our ears to God's voice – we'll backslide!

***The second condition is that we must have pierced and circumcised ears.***

*"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." Exodus 21:5-6*

Effectively, the slave who asked for a pierced ear was saying, *'I love my master so much that I give up all my rights and will willingly do whatever he tells me.'* This is the attitude we must have in listening to the Lord. He entered into a covenant relationship with his master that he would fulfill all his responsibilities willingly according to the master's desires.

This is the same idea as the meaning of *'circumcised ears'*.

*"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." Acts 7:51*

*"To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the LORD is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it." Jeremiah 6:10*

Circumcision was evidence of keeping God's covenant in the Old Testament. It represented a person wholly committed to keeping the Master's desires. To be *'uncircumcised'* of ear meant not heeding the word or covenant of the Lord (not having the *'flesh life'* cut away). This has serious consequences.

*"...and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you." Exodus 15:26*

Not heeding the covenant meant that curses would be activated in that person's life in the form of diseases and so forth. But keeping His words (i.e. being a hearer and a doer of His words) would bring life and the mercy of God.

*"Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you-- the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 55:3*

This is the same principle for our specific calling. If we fail to respond in covenant fashion to what God is promising us, then our ears are not pierced or circumcised and curses are

activated in our lives. Let us let the Lord pierce and circumcise our ears so we are covenant keepers in our walk with Him.

***The third and last condition is that we have unblocked spiritual hearing.***

We will look at passages of Scripture that reveal how we may have blocked spiritual ears. These faults in hearing must be dealt with if we are to successfully follow God's plan for our life.

### **1. Trusting in our own might.**

*"The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf." Micah 7:16*

Here we see the nations becoming spiritually deaf due to having trusted in their own 'might' (strength). We too can become deaf if we trust in our own strength and resources.

When we are so used to making our own decisions, based on hearing our own intellect or theories of the world, we are trusting in a strength other than God's and we will become deaf to the voice of God. We need to 'trust in the Lord and lean not on our own understanding'.

### **2. Not exercising our spiritual senses.**

*"Of whom (Melchizedek) we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:11-14*

It is possible to become 'dull of hearing' spiritually due to not exercising our spiritual senses (i.e. not regularly waiting upon the Lord to hear Him). Just as physical exercise is a regular discipline, so exercising our spiritual senses should be regular and intense.

If we don't take time to hear God's voice and distinguish it from other voices then our spiritual ears will become dull and God's voice will only sound a faint echo instead of a clear sound.

### **3. Deliberately ignoring the promptings of God.**

*"Therefore I will number you for the sword, and you shall bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight." Isaiah 66:12*

Here we see it is possible to deliberately ignore the promptings of God as he speaks to our spiritual ears. The result here was that the people were given over to judgment ('number you for the sword').

When God speaks to us we need to take what He says seriously and take it into prayer and action. Ignoring it will only bring judgment upon us!

#### 4. Having itching ears.

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers: And they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2 Timothy 4:3-4*

'Itching ears' can stop us from hearing the truth! This is hearing only that which will satisfy our cravings, hence turning spiritual ears from the truth and refers to those who will only listen to teachers or read books that talk about what they want to hear.

Some Christians only want to hear messages on the End Times because the itching in their spiritual ears (actually caused by spiritual infection) can only be satisfied when they hear such teaching. If we only listen to what we want to hear the Bible say, then we will turn our ears away from the truth and end up in deception.

God will also bring teachers along who may speak hard things for us to accept, but it is the word of God for us. We need to hunger for God's pure, unadulterated truth, listening to the whole counsel of God's word, no matter how painful and difficult to accept it may be, not just the bits that satisfy our itching ears.

#### 5. Not being in the place of hearing God's word.

*“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Romans 10:14*

This is obvious. If we are not in a place of being able to hear the word of God from anointed vessels then we cannot hear to believe! We must seek the fellowship, teaching and preaching of anointed communities so as to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church and to us individually.

#### Ways we can hear God's calling for us.

We've looked at the conditions for hearing His call and reasons we can have faulty hearing. Now we will look at how we can practically discern what He's calling us to.

Let's look at the three categories of guidance: Personal, Corporate and Supernatural.

##### (a) Personal (Individual or direct guidance).

###### (i) *The Word of God.*

*“And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:15-17*

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16*

The general will of God can be seen in the **logos** (written word of God) and can be defined as the 'holy and stated purpose of the Father to make us like Christ'.

From the Bible there are obvious and explicitly stated things that we know are the will of God for all.

- (1) It is God's general will for us to give thanks in everything.  
*"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*<sup>1</sup>  
*Thessalonians 5:18*
  
- (2) It is God's general will for us to live pure lives, abstaining from fleshly lust.  
*"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality."*<sup>1</sup> *Thessalonians 4:3*
  
- (3) It is God's general will to live blameless, law-abiding lives in our society.  
*"Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"* *1 Peter 2:12-15*

As we have already seen, World Missions is the basis for the Bible and the whole Scripture reveals God's general will of reaching all peoples with the Gospel and we are all to have a vital role in this.

As we read the Bible we receive a mandate to reach the unreached and live an upright Christian life that will fit in with this Vision.

We must take time to read His word and let it *'dwell in us richly'* so that in every situation we will have a 'word' to live by. Read the following quotes from men of God who knew the importance of God's word in their lives:

*"The vigor of our Spiritual Life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from the experience of fifty-four years. The first three years after conversion I neglected the Word of God. Since I began to search it diligently the blessing has been wonderful. I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and always with increasing delight. Each time it seems like a new book to me. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God. "* - George Muller

*"I prayed for Faith, and thought that someday Faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But Faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, 'Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God'. I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and Faith has been growing ever since. "* - D.L. Moody

*"Remember that it is not hasty reading, but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths, that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee that gathers honey, but her abiding for a time on the flower that draws out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most, that will prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest, and strongest Christian."* - Thomas Brooks

*"A Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't."* - Charles Spurgeon

The following story shows us the importance of the general Word of God in showing us the way we should live our Christian lives.

HMS Ambition, a huge royal navy ship ploughed effortlessly through the stormy seas. The captain proudly looked out from the cabin to the waters ahead.

Suddenly he saw a light in the distance. The ship was heading directly towards it. Then through the Morse code came a message, "Change your course by 20 degrees or you will crash into us".

The captain turned up his nose and said to his staff, "Who does this ship think she is? This is the HMS Ambition, no one asks us to change course. Send back a message asking them to change course by 20 degrees."

Obediently the message boy tapped out the Morse code message as ordered. However the same message was received as before, that they had to change course or they would collide.

The captain grew enraged and tapped out the next message himself, "This is Captain Proudhead, and I order you to change course immediately".

The return message was interpreted as...."This is ordinary seaman Bloggs, I repeat my request for you to change course or you will crash into us!"

The captain was now fuming, "What! An ordinary seaman is ordering me to move? This cannot be!" He banged out his next message, "THIS IS HMS AMBITION, THE QUEEN'S OWN SHIP. SHE TURNS FOR NOBODY. CHANGE YOUR COURSE NOW!"

After a while the final message came through... "This is a LIGHTHOUSE! Please change course now or you will crash into us!"

Many times in our own pride and ambition we refuse to change direction even if we are heading on a crash course, especially concerning the Word of God.

His Word is a light for our smooth passage and we must listen to the most humble servant as they correct us by God's word, or we will make a shipwreck of our faith!

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Ps 119:105*

We know from God's word it is God's general will for us to live holy lives, pray to and worship Him, reach out to others in love (especially those who have never heard the good news about Jesus) and be involved in discipling others with great joy, peace and love! However, His specific will for our lives can also come as He gives **rhema** words (the quickened, spoken word of God to our spirits).

God may highlight a general word in the Bible and make it specific to us. He did this with me when I was in North Africa on a mission trip in 1985. God spoke through Genesis 12:1-3 which is the general call of God to Abraham and his seed. God used this verse to specifically call me to leave my father's house (then in Great Houghton, Northamptonshire, where I was living with my family at that time) and my country (England) and go to a place He would show me (eventually this was revealed to be Singapore).

### **Ways We Can Hear His call (or invitation) Through the Word**

- *Regular Bible Reading (planned and systematic).*

We all need to have a daily Bible reading plan. In my Bible there is a Bible reading plan in the front that I have been through many times. This gives passages of Scripture to read in the morning and evening every day. Our church has a Bible reading plan that my family has been going through recently and it has been a great blessing.

In my own experience I have found that it is during these times that the Lord will highlight one verse or thought from the reading that seems to *'jump out'* at me. This is the Lord's *'rhema'* for that particular time and should be taken into serious

meditation and prayer to gain the most insight from it. It can often be concerning our specific calling or an aspect we are currently involved with.

- *Mental Suggestion (Bringing a Biblical thought to mind, maybe not previously memorized).*

There are times when the Lord may bring to remembrance a particular verse you have read or heard before, but not particularly committed to memory. The Lord may activate your sub-conscious record of this verse or passage at a certain time to call or invite you into some aspect of His will or encourage/protect you in it.

I've heard stories where the Lord impresses a verse on the mind of a non-believer or a young believer that they have never read before – only later do they find the verse in the Bible. This is usually to encourage them and spur them on to enter fully into God's will and purposes and is also usually only for pre-believers or young converts.

- *Recalled Memory Verse (Psalm 119:9-11)*

For mature Christians who have committed much Scripture to memory, the Lord often highlights a particular memorized verse at a certain occasion to speak a 'now truth' that guides, warns or encourages.

I can remember a time when everyone around me was urging me to phone up to be part of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' in Singapore. In the natural it was a 'good' idea. We were struggling financially and I am very good at general knowledge. But as I was praying I clearly felt the Lord prompting a verse to my Spirit that I had previously read.

*"A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished." Proverbs 28:20*

Now, please understand, this was God's 'rhema' word for me then. I am not condemning Christians who want to enter into such events. For me, God was saying that if I entered such a program I would be stepping outside the boundaries of His call on my life.

Since 1988 the Lord has led me to live a life of faith, trusting Him 100% for my finances and He has always honoured the following verse in my life as I claim it in faith.

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33*

Some people like to use the 'open-page method'. This is where the Bible just drops open and your eyes fix on one verse that the Lord is speaking to you through.

This is a very dangerous method and you must know it's definitely of the Lord (no forcing it to happen). One person did this and the first verse his eyes saw was *"And Judas hanged himself"* and then the second verse was *"Go and do likewise"*. This is definitely not the voice of God as it conflicts the general counsel of God's Word. But, having said that, God can and does use this method!

I know of one young lady who had trained to be a nurse but wanted to go into full-time Christian service as a church worker. One day, as she was praying about this very matter, Her Bible fell open and her eyes immediately fixed on one verse that seemed to jump out at her.

*"And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was". Hebrews 5:4*

The Lord was telling her, through His Word, that it was not an honour she could take upon herself to be a church worker. It was not God's will for her. God was calling her to use her nursing training and she did go on to be a nurse and was used by the Lord in that area to bring many people to the Lord. The 'open-page method' worked well here, but it was not her planned course of action – the Lord sovereignly spoke in this way to her.

We have seen that God uses His Word, the Bible, to speak to us of His general and specific will for us. The following two verses give an example of how the Lord has spoken in these two ways in the past.

### **General will**

*"Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant." 2 Kings 23:3*

In this verse, we see the children of Israel covenanting with the Lord to keep His general revealed word (His commandments, testimonies and statutes).

### **Specific will**

*"In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments." Daniel 9:2-4*

In this passage we see a specific word for a whole nation that was found in God's holy word. God had spoken a 'rhema' word that Israel would be in Babylonian captivity for only seventy years. Daniel took this word seriously and went into warfare prayer to see it come into being.

Notice that he did not just sit around saying, "God said it will happen, so I'll just sit around and watch Him outwork it!" Indeed, this attitude is unscriptural. We see that the scriptural response to receiving a 'rhema' word from the Lord is to take that word into serious prayer. We will look into this principle a bit later in this chapter.

#### **(ii) Waiting on the Lord.**

Through times of waiting in prayer and fasting (Daniel 9:3-4) we can hear and outwork God's specific call for us.

Fasting is not a tool to twist God's arm to do something, but a way to more tightly hold His hand to go where He goes and do what He does. Prayer must accompany it or it is just dieting! See Matthew 6:16-18 for Jesus' teaching on fasting.

Often the Lord will tug at your spirit for a season of fasting (if you're not that sensitive I suggest you fast more so you become more sensitive). It may be for a specific issue you're praying about or just to get closer in your relationship with Him (in which case, hearing Him more clearly will lead you more into His specific calling on your life).

We don't know what we should really pray so it is wise not to come to God with a shopping list of all your prayers. The first step is to wait on God for His prayers!

Ask Him to put His prayers in your heart so you may pray them in faith and see His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Luke 11:1-2) (i.e. The prayers are already waiting to be prayed in heaven - we need to seek what they are and pray them).

*"Beware in your prayer, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but also by fancying that you know what He can do." Andrew Murray (1828 - 1917)*

As you are waiting on the Lord He may answer your prayers in one of four ways, as Bill Bright teaches. His four possible answers are:

- (1) "NO" – you're not asking for the right thing.
- (2) "SLOW" – you're not asking at the right time.
- (3) "GROW" – you're not asking with the right intention/attitude.
- (4) "GO" - all the above conditions are met and this is the prayer that He will answer.

Sometimes God answers our prayer, but not in the way we were expecting as the following poem so aptly shows.

### I ASKED FOR. . . .

*I asked for strength and  
God gave me difficulties to make me strong  
I asked for wisdom and  
God gave me problems to solve  
I asked for prosperity and  
God gave me brawn and brain to work  
I asked for courage and  
God gave me dangers to overcome  
I asked for patience God placed me in  
situations where I was forced to wait  
I asked for love and  
God gave me troubled people to help  
I asked for favors and  
God gave me opportunities  
I received nothing I wanted  
I received everything I needed  
MY PRAYER HAS BEEN ANSWERED.  
- Author Unknown*

You will find that the Lord will only answer the prayers that are His will and are in line with His big picture and also His specific calling on your life. They will be in line with His good pleasure for you and not your own pleasures.

*"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." James 4:3*

It must also be noted that sometimes the prayers He gives us cannot even be verbalized and the Holy Spirit will 'groan' through us - see this quote:

*"We realize that we are energized by the Holy Spirit for prayer, we know what it is to pray in the atmosphere and the presence of the Holy Spirit; but we do not so often realize that the Holy Spirit himself prays in us with prayers that we cannot utter." - Oswald Chambers*

Sometimes there will be a godly burden over a situation and we can feel the Spirit of God within us *'groaning'* over it. This will show us that part of our call involves this situation and we must allow the Holy Spirit to continue this process until something is birthed, a fruitfulness is achieved, that will be seen in tangible form. One time I had this feeling of the Spirit *'groaning'* within me was concerning our home cell group that had dwindled in numbers until no one was coming at all.

Every time I prayed about it I could not verbalize anything, but felt the Holy Spirit groaning and even grieving within me. I allowed this process to continue until there was a freedom again to pray verbally with understanding.

When this freedom came then I could boldly ask for more people and even a new venue, which soon was *'birthed'*, and the cell group quickly came into being after that and is doing well to this day!

Also, *'praying in the Spirit'* (i.e. praying in other tongues) greatly helps to build up our spirits and lead us in praying for God's perfect will. But, ultimately, the prayer that can be understood by us is the most valuable because we can mentally agree with it and also understand what God is going to do.

The best prayer to pray, to really understand what God's will is and what to pray, is the prayer of inquiry. It's in praying this prayer that we will have the right prayer that will certainly be answered with a "GO!"

So what is the prayer of inquiry? It is simply praying something like, *"Lord, what is the greatest thing I can pray right now? What would You have me do?"* It's praying this, with faith and expectation that He will answer, that will cause us to pray in God's will – to pray His prayers.

When we receive what we should pray in our spirits, then we can pray for that as if we had already received it, as God will surely give the answer.

King David knew the value of the prayer of inquiry as we can see in one of many examples:

*"Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard of it and went out against them. Then the Philistines went and made a raid on the Valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of God, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand. So they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, "God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water." Therefore they called the name of that place Baal Perazim. And when they left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire.*

*Then the Philistines once again made a raid on the valley. Therefore David inquired again of God, and God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees." And it shall be, when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines." So David did as God commanded him, and they drove back the army of the Philistines from Gibeon as far as Gezer. Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations." 1 Chronicles 14:8-17*

This passage is interesting as it shows King David using the prayer of inquiry twice, in similar circumstances, but getting a different answer and strategy each time. The first time God instructed David to lead his men in battle against the Philistines which they did to victorious results.

However, the second time they were not to attack straight away, but circle around them as God was sending His heavenly troops against the Philistines. Because David had a listening ear and an obedient heart, God led His people into victory that day. If he had attacked the second time like he did at first then the Philistines would surely have conquered David's armies!

Try waking up and praying, *"Lord! What is the greatest prayer I can pray this morning?"* and wait for Him to whisper the prayer into your heart. During the day, inquire of the Lord in all you do: *"Should I do this Lord?", "How should I do it?", "Which way should I go?"*.

Above all prayer is about listening - we have seen that we must not presume how to pray. We must inquire of Him what we should pray. This means waiting on Him to listen to His still, small voice.

Read through the following verses on waiting on The Lord that use one of four different Hebrew words for 'wait'.

- **duwmiyah** (doo-me-yaw); Stillness; adverbially, silently; abstractly quiet, trust: This Hebrew meaning is more to do with the still, peaceful and trusting quality of one's heart towards the God of our salvation.  
The following verse uses this particular Hebrew word:  
*"Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation." Psalm 62:1*
- **damam** (daw-man)  
The Hebrew meaning here is to wait in Godly fear, not daring to question His word but having great expectancy in Him.  
The following verse uses this particular Hebrew word:  
*"My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him". Psalm 62:5*
- **chakah** (khaw-kaw)  
The Hebrew meaning here is more one of cleaving or sticking to the Lord and trusting in His word.  
The following verse uses this particular Hebrew word:  
*"Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield." Psalm 33:20*
- **qavah** (kaw-vaw')  
The Hebrew meaning here is the most interesting. Our waiting on the Lord is as if we are being twisted into God's holy strand – His will. As we wait on the Lord we are actually becoming a part of God's embroidery and allow Him to twist us into place in His big picture.  
The following verses uses this particular Hebrew word:  
*"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day." Psalm 25:5*  
*"Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" Psalm 27:14*  
*"I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry." Psalm 40:1*  
*"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope." Psalm 130:5*  
*"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31*

Read the following quotes on prayer:

*"You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." - A.J. Gordon*

*"If we are serious about being spiritual revolutionaries, we must determine to learn how to pray! There are many excellent books on the subject, but there is no substitute for getting on our knees and starting to pray. Samuel Chadwick said, 'The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from prayer. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.'" - George Verwer*

If we really want to hear God's calling we need to spend time waiting and listening to Him in our personal prayer.

**(b) Corporate** – hearing God's spokes persons who will be 'as God' to us.

**(i) Godly Counsel**

*"For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety." Proverbs 24:6*

This is the hearing God's '*rhema*' words from experienced, godly counsel and should be in the form of principles not pronouncements! (i.e. Not legalistic '*thou shalt*', but principles by which the person being counseled may decide for themselves what course to take).

Remember that you may even get wrong advice from the right, godly source.

*"Then Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you. But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?"'"2 Samuel 7:3-5*

Nathan, the godly prophet, firstly advised David to do all that was in his heart (i.e. build a house for God). If he had not later come to withdraw that advice David would have moved outside the will of God on a godly man's counsel.

You are ultimately responsible for knowing God's call upon your life. Remember that all advice given must agree with the general counsel of God's word. Never blindly accept counsel, pray through it and seek the Lord to confirm it.

**(ii) Godly Ministry** – Anointed preaching and teaching from God's servants.

*"And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left "Isaiah 30:20-21*

*"Know how to listen, and you will profit even from those who talk badly" – Plutarch*

The Lord often speaks specifically to us through His anointed servants as they minister. It may be a verse, a phrase or a point they speak out that the Lord highlights to your spirit and makes it relevant to you.

I remember one season of time where God was speaking to me about going into missions. In every church service and Christian meeting I went to, for almost a month, the speaker was sharing on the same passage of scripture (about Abraham going to a foreign land in Genesis chapter 12).

It was obviously arranged by God and I got the message and invitation loud and clear.

### **(iii) The Spiritual Gifts.**

God's specific word to us may come through the operation of The Gifts of the Holy Spirit. It comes particularly through the gifts of Word of Knowledge, Word of Wisdom and Prophecy.

The Word of Wisdom is a portion of wise counsel or direction the Lord supernaturally deposits into a believer to speak or act out at a particular time, usually to help someone move into God's will. It often goes hand-in-hand with a Word of Knowledge, which is a supernatural deposit of knowledge about someone or a situation.

I can remember one time when I was on a mission trip in Sabah, East Malaysia. We were having a break from ministry and enjoying a swim in a beautifully located swimming pool.

During the time away from Singapore I was reflecting over a relationship I had with a Singaporean girl that had lasted almost a year. There was a bit of unease about the relationship in my heart and I was praying for the Lord's will in this matter.

As I was in the midst of doing a few laps of the pool, one of the Church leaders from England, actually a respected prophet waded straight up to me. He put himself right in front of me so I could not continue swimming and he simply looked me straight in the eyes and said, *'The relationship you are in now is the wrong one, get out of it!'*

As you can imagine, I was quite taken aback by this but, because of the way it came, I had no doubt that it was from God. The Lord had given this leader a Word of Knowledge (he knew nothing at all about my relationship) and then the Word of Wisdom (how to deliver the message).

As a result, I broke off the relationship on returning to Singapore. Her true colours were then revealed as she yelled and screamed in the street when I announced our break up! I believe that, if I had continued in this relationship, I would have been greatly distracted from God's call on my life.

*My calling was preserved because of a Prophet in a swimming pool!*

The Lord can also speak prophetic utterances through others concerning your calling.

These words of prophecy should confirm what He is already saying. If the word comes as something very new (e.g. You are to go as a missionary to Mongolia) which you have not been feeling, take it into serious prayer but don't just take it straight away as from God - test it first (pray through it asking God to confirm it further).

The three steps in dealing with prophecies are:

#### ***Firstly, don't despise prophecy!***

*"Do not despise prophecies." 1Thessalonians 5:20*

Treat all prophecies seriously and never cast them out until you have done the next step.

#### ***Secondly, test the prophecy.***

*"Test all things; hold fast what is good." 1Thessalonians 5:21*

Seven tests you can use are as follows (these will be expounded on more fully in volume two):

1. Agrees with Scripture? (Galatians 1:8)
2. Fruits in Person's life? (Matthew 7:15-20)
3. Track record in person's life (Deuteronomy 18:22)
4. Glorifies Christ? (John 16:13-14; Rev 19:10)
5. Leads towards God? (Deuteronomy 13:1-3)
6. Brings Liberty? (1 Corinthians 14:3; Romans 8:15)
7. Inner Witness? (1 John 2:20,27; Ephesians 1:17-19)

***Thirdly, if it is from the Lord pray it through until fruition.***

Prophecies should NEVER be just left on the shelf. God's way (as revealed in the Word) is to seriously test the word first and if it is from God then you should seriously pray it through until completion, as Daniel did with the word from Jeremiah (see Daniel 9:2-4) and as Paul exhorted Timothy:

*"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare," 1 Timothy 1:18*

Paul charged Timothy to wage warfare with the prophecies spoken over him. This is certainly not a passive stance. It's not an attitude that says, *'Well, God said this will happen, so I'll sit back on my laurels and just watch it transpire!'*

There may be seasons where you don't receive any prophecies for a long time and then times where prophecies don't seem to stop coming. Before I went to Bible School I did not have a single prophecy spoken over my life. However, whilst in the second year of Bible School, suddenly the prophetic gates opened and prophecies marched out regularly!

On receiving these prophecies I wrote them down and then went into prayer over them and even serious research (especially those that were based on specific passages of Scripture). Many of them I'm still praying through into fullness now and witnessing their outworking before my very eyes.

It must also be noted that God may use other people's statements, the impact of which they are totally unaware. What they say may not be due to a spiritual gift operating, but the words are a word from God to you. Hanani is one Scriptural example of this.

*"Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." Nehemiah 1:2-4*

The above example of this is when Nehemiah's friend comes with a report about Jerusalem being torn down - this news report has a profound effect on Nehemiah and is in a sense a call to Nehemiah to eventually go and fulfill his calling (rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem).

I can think of one modern day example of this. There is a couple from England, who are good friends of our family, who are now serving as missionaries in Cambodia.

Both of them first really felt there was a calling to Cambodia on their lives as they watched a news report about Cambodia on television. They both broke down crying on seeing this report and the news they heard was like an invitation for them to go to Cambodia and be a part of the restoration there.

It was more than just a feeling of pity that they had; it was a God-induced emotion that compelled them into Godly action concerning Cambodia

### **(c) Supernatural**

#### **(i) The Audible Voice of God.**

This is very rare but does still happen today. It is purely up to God to decide if He will speak this way (no matter how holy the person is). Don't seek this form of guidance as it could lead to you hearing other voices! Seek the Lord and if He will speak this way, so be it.

Examples of this are found in 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Acts 9:1-7 and John 12:27-30. In these passages those who heard the audible voice of God were Samuel, Saul (to become Paul) and those witnessing Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

In each case it was at a pivotal point in the history of God's people and such a dramatic form of communication was needed.

This concludes our look at how we see and hear God's vision and calling in practical ways. In the next chapter we will explore further how we test what we actually do see and hear to tell if it really is from God.

## **Do You Get The Picture?**

### **Time to reflect:**

- Do you meet the conditions for hearing God's call on your life?
- Are you inclining your ear to His voice or are there other voices you are listening to more?
- Are your spiritual ears pierced and circumcised so that you hear Him and are obedient to do whatever He says?
- Are your spiritual ears blocked by trusting in your own strength, not exercising your spiritual senses, ignoring His promptings, itching to hear unbalanced teachings or not being in the right place to hear?

Pause to pray for the Lord to unblock your ears (repenting where you need to) and that you will have covenant hearing.

Write down any rhema words you have received from the Bible, whilst waiting on the Lord in prayer, or from godly ministers that relate to your calling. What do these things show you concerning your life's calling?

## Chapter Seven

# Testing What We See and Hear



*Always test what you're seeing or hearing with God's Word.*

In 1212 a French shepherd boy by the name of Steven claimed that Jesus had appeared to him disguised as a pilgrim. Supposedly, Jesus instructed him to take a letter to the king of France.

This poor, misguided boy told everyone he saw about what he thought he had encountered. Before long he had gathered a large following of more than thirty thousand children who accompanied him on his pilgrimage.

As Philip Schaff records it, when asked where they were going, they replied, "We go to God, and seek for the holy cross beyond the sea." They reached Marseilles, but the waves did not part and let them go through dry-shod as they expected.

It was at Marseilles that tragedy occurred. The children met two men, Hugo Ferreus and William Porcus. The men claimed to be so impressed with the calling of the children that they offered to transport them across the Mediterranean in seven ships without charge. What the children didn't know was that the two men were slave traders.

The children boarded the ships and the journey began, but instead of setting sail for the Holy Land they set course for North Africa, "where they were sold as slaves in the Muslim markets that did a large business in the buying and selling of human being.

Few if any returned. None ever reached the Holy Land. Two cunning men enjoyed enormous financial profits simply because they were willing to sacrifice the lives of thousands of children.

This sad story was taken from, *'Family Survival in the American Jungle'* by Steve Farrar (1991, Multnomah Press, Page 60-61), dramatically reveals to us the importance of correctly discerning if any apparent guidance, whether audible or visual, is from the Lord or from other, more dubious, sources.

In this particular case, the angel that appeared to Steven was of demonic origin. I can categorically state this because this guidance led Steven and thousands more children into a web of deception and eventually into a lifetime of bondage. Also, the goal of seeking a holy cross is not within the arrow of God's eagle-like vision!

As we shall see, God's will never call us into such situations and He enables us to practically distinguish between His godly guidance and other, destructive, forms of guidance.

Understanding what God does call us to will help us avoid what He doesn't call us to. All the various methods we have been looking at by which we can see and hear God's will must be tested. Are they from God or our emotions or from the enemy?

I did an extensive search through Scripture to see what we have actually been called to as God's children. Knowing this will help us avoid forms of guidance that we can forecast will lead us into anything else but God's way.

The following seven areas show us what we are called to according to Scripture, and how knowing each area will give us practical tests in discerning if any particular guidance is from God or not.

## **1. The Fellowship Test.**

*"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9*

God's calling will always lead us into greater fellowship with Him and His people. I've heard Christians say that God called them to stay at home rather than go to church! Straight away I know they are hearing from ungodly sources as Scripture clearly commands us not to *'forsake the assembling of the Saints'* (Hebrews 10:25).

There's a story of a member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, but had now stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him.

It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited.

The pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs.

After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone.

Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and *"dead as a doornail"*.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back in church next Sunday."

God's call will always lead us to be placed next to burning coal, whether it's the Lord Himself or His people on fire for Him.

The Greek word used here for *'fellowship'* is *'koinonia'*, which means *'participation, social intercourse or communication'*. If we think we've heard God call us into a situation where it will be detrimental to our participation, social intercourse or communication with Him and His people, then we've not heard properly and this is not His calling.

I've watched on in agony as many people I know convince themselves that God is calling them out away from the ministry and into secular work due to rough circumstances.

Now, I'm not saying that God will never do such a thing, but in the cases that I have witnessed it was eventually clear that this was not God's call, as they later fell away in their relationship with the Lord and His people.

God's true calling will lead people into a more passionate relationship with Him and His body, the Church.

## **2. The Liberty Test.**

*"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Galatians 5:13*

His calling always leads us into true liberty. There will never be a negative sense of internal bondage in going according to God's call, unless we are walking in the right direction with a wrong attitude.

What I mean by this is that it is possible to hear God's call and respond to it but allow our flesh life to control us so that we get frustrated or stressed out in doing His will.

The following incident recently happened to me. After praying through what our responsibilities should be in terms of ministry, work, looking after the children and household chores, my wife and I decided that I should look after the children and the house in the mornings and she would take over when she returned in the afternoon.

At first I took it relatively well, but after a while I got frustrated and angry, feeling that all my time for the 'important things' was being taken away. I would sweep the floor, bashing the broom moodily into chairs and walls, muttering under my breath.

It took my wife to remind me of the decision we made before God before I came to my senses and chose to rejoice in the Lord in the midst of my morning responsibilities. Would you believe that there were actually times I was singing and dancing with the broom around the house?

Accepting the responsibility that God had shown me I should take at this particular time gave me great liberty in my spirit and I actually found the Lord inspiring ideas for teaching and preaching whilst waltzing with the broom!

The following story, taken from "The Upside of Down" by Joseph M. Stowell, shows how God's dreams and visions of liberty for our life will come into being:

Auguste Bartholdi traveled from France to Egypt in 1856. There the grandeur of the pyramids, the magnitude of the mighty Nile, and the beauty of the stately desert Sphinx stimulated his artistic mind.

Meanwhile he met another visitor to Egypt, Ferdinand de Lesseps, who was there to sell an idea. To save merchant ships the long journey around the tip of the African continent, de Lesseps proposed cutting a canal from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

De Lessep's concept inspired the artist Bartholdi. He decided to design a lighthouse for the entrance to this canal - but no ordinary lighthouse. It would symbolize the light of

Western civilization flowing to the East. Over the ten years it took to build the Suez Canal, Auguste worked on his idea, drawing plans and molding clay models.

He scrapped plan after plan - until he found the right one, the perfect design.

Only one problem remained. Who would pay for it? He looked everywhere, but no one was interested. The Suez Canal finally opened - without a lighthouse. Defeated, Auguste returned to France. Ten years of toil wasted.

With him he took his concept. His lighthouse would have been a colossal robed lady standing taller than the Sphinx. She held the book of justice in one hand and a torch lifted high in the other that would light the entrance to the canal.

Back in France, the French government sought his artistic services. They wanted to give a gift to America. They chose Bartholdi's lighthouse, which now stands in New York harbour, and is called the Statue of Liberty.

Great dreams of liberty eventually find the right open door.

Bartholdi had a dream of liberty that at first seemed impossible to become reality. However, as he patiently endured all the disappointment and the period of waiting, finally the door was open for his dream of liberty to become a tangible reality.

God calls each one of us to build a 'statue of liberty' – not the literal one like Bartholdi's but a sphere of ministry that will lead many into true freedom, only found in Christ. Early in the 20th century, playwright and social critic George Bernard Shaw wrote, "*Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.*"

Some people feel that taking on too many responsibilities will bring them into greater bondage, but the reality is that the responsibilities God calls us to will bring us great inner freedom, and lead others to true freedom too.

### **3. The Peace Test**

*"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful." Colossians 3:15*

His calling is always one that brings internal peace. This peace is the peace of God and not our own. It's a supernatural peace that surpasses all our human understanding.

Unfortunately the phrase, "*I have great peace about this*" has been misused by many Christians who are trying to convince themselves and others that a course of action, that they really want to follow in their own flesh, is from the Lord.

I can vividly remember one Christian testifying in a small group meeting that he had great peace in leaving his church to go to another and he felt it was the will of God. However, the real situation was that they had been hurt in their church and wanted to leave. Yes, there was a fleshly sense of 'peace' in doing this but this is not seeking for the 'peace of God'.

God's peace may come even in a seemingly impossible or usually fear-bringing situation.

When God first was indicating to me that I should leave my homeland (England) and launch out to Singapore, it was a suggestion that would normally induce fear into my bloodstream! I was brought up as a 'family boy', always preferring to remain at home than travel anywhere and I was also very timid and fearful.

But when this call from God came there was a peace that came that surpassed all natural understanding. Even though I only had enough money to pay off my next rental bill, and in the natural I was very fearful of traveling so far, leaving my friends and family, I sensed a supernatural peace in my spirit – the peace of God.

This was a confirmation that indeed God was leading me in this way. Since that time I have learnt to identify such a feeling of peace (or indeed a lack of it) in discerning if a particular course of action is from God or not.

The word for 'rule' in the above verse can also be interpreted as 'referee'. It comes from the Greek word 'brabeus' which means 'an umpire, one who judges in public games'.

The peace of God in us is like a football referee. When a referee blows his whistle in a certain way we know that there has been a foul and play should stop. Again, if he blows the whistle in another way we know play can resume.

As in the natural, so in the spiritual. If we feel unease in our spirit (a lack of peace) concerning a matter then it could well be His way of blowing the whistle for us to stop and not follow that course of action. If, on the other hand, we feel great peace about a situation and the whistle seems to be calling us to resume play in a particular matter, this may well indicate God's green light.

This process is only learnt through experiencing His guidance first hand and even committing many 'fouls' (i.e. following wrong course of action) before His peace really rules in our hearts.

The deeper you get in God, the more of His peace you'll experience to guide you in His ways. It's rather like a submarine in a violent sea storm.

There is a story told in 'The Speaker's Quote Book' by Roy B. Zuck (p238) of a submarine on patrol during wartime that had to remain submerged overnight. When it resurfaced the next day, a friend on another ship radioed the captain, "How did you fare in that terrible storm last night?" Surprised, the officer exclaimed, "What storm? We didn't know there was one".

Although the ocean had been whipped into huge waves by high winds, the vessel was not affected because the waters below were calm and tranquil.

In the same way, the deeper we are in God, the more of His peace we'll experience and the less effected we will be by the storms of life that may toss and turn us in directions contrary to the will of God.

## 4. The Life Test

*"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." 1 Timothy 6:12*

God calls us to have a quality of life called 'eternal life' and indeed to lay hold on this. His calling will cause us to come alive with this supernatural life. It will cause us to feel more alive and clearer in ourselves as to His life in us (*'it's no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me'* – Galatians 2:20).

'Eternal life' is not the same as 'temporal life' (our own human soulish life). We need to mature such that we recognize what His 'eternal' life is and what our own 'temporal' life is.

Remember, Jesus said He came to bring abundant life to us. This is His very own quality of life. In every decision that we make there is His 'pathway of life' available to us:

*"You will show me the pathway of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forever more". Psalm 16:11*

We must go the way of the 'Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:2), which is the opposite of the 'Law of sin and death'. Personally, I have experienced places and situations ruled by the spirit of death. Every time this spirit operates people are affected negatively in that they feel lethargic and find it difficult to rise to any creative activity and many fall sick.

Once, when I was leading a mission trip to a small village in Sabah, East Malaysia, our whole team began to feel sleepy and lacked motivation to do anything. We noticed this was true of the whole village and many of its inhabitants were sick. The villagers were also unwelcoming and would not allow us into the stilt houses to pray for the sick.

Inquiring further, we found out that the villagers lived in fear of a big black stone that was located on the perimeter of their village. On hearing this, we shook ourselves free of this spirit and held a *'Praise March'* around this black stone, singing praise songs that celebrated the resurrection and life of Jesus. As we were doing this we could literally feel the spirit of death leave not only us but also the surrounding area.

On returning to the village, we immediately noticed the difference. The people were more welcoming and more active. Straight away we were invited into one house to pray for a sick old lady and others started to open up their homes to us. God's call for us and for that village was a call to *'eternal life'* only found through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Walking in God's Will will lead us to experience, in a tangible way, this *'eternal life'*. If we choose a course of action that is not His Will then it will often have a sense of *'death'* about it rather than *'life'*.

Some of the tangible signs of a particular way being a *'way of life'* are: true excitement over it, a deluge of constructive creativity concerning it, a feeling of being *'alive'* whilst pursuing it and a zest for life in general.

When I first came to Singapore, as my first step of obedience to God's call, I can vividly remember an overwhelming sense of being *'alive'* in God's purposes. Even though I was not pursuing the high-flying career my honours degree in Chemistry from Imperial College, London could have given me, I had the sense that I was really *'living'*.

Even though I often scraped by on a meager income and lived in a smelly, dirty dormitory with men from many other nations, often with annoying habits, I was constantly alive with the very life of God!

Indeed, I often look to my coming to Singapore as the turning point in my life where I came out of my shell and out from my fears and really stood up as the man of God I was destined to be. He had shown me the *'pathway of life'* and I chose to walk it.

## 5. The Holiness Test

*"For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in (unto) holiness." 1 Thessalonians 4:7*

*"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, Brethren beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14*

God always calls us to greater purity. His calling should lead to a greater level of holiness, of separation unto Him. If the so-called *'call'* does not lead into greater holiness then it is not from God.

If you feel God is calling you into a particular course of action ask yourself, *"Does it cause me to live a more pure life? Does it challenge me to be more like Christ and separate myself more to Him?"* If the answer is *'Yes'* then this could well be the direction God is leading you in.

When I was a young boy I remember following the gruesome case of the *'Jack-The-Ripper'* multiple murders in London. It was a copycat series of murders based on the original *'Jack-*

*The Ripper* who struck in the 1880's. One man would kill prostitutes and 'rip' his victims open.

The copycat *Jack-The-Ripper* was eventually caught and in his trial he recounted how he saw a messenger of God come to him, giving him a divine call to punish these sinners by killing them one by one.

Now, obviously this call was not from the Lord because God commands us *'Thou shalt not murder'*. God would never ask us to do something that causes us to directly go against His laws and lead us into a life defiled by greater sin.

## 6. The Blessing Test

*"..not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing." 1 Peter 3:8-9*

As the call to Abraham was to be a blessing (see Genesis 12:1-3), so is our call. We must ask whether the direction we feel God is leading us in leads to blessing for others or not. He always draws us out beyond ourselves to be a channel of blessing. In whatever we do we must ask ourselves, *'Does this course of action bring blessing to others?'*

One morning R. C. Chapman, a devout Christian, was asked how he was feeling. "I'm burdened this morning!" was his reply. But his happy countenance contradicted his words. So the questioner exclaimed in surprise, "Are you really burdened, Mr. Chapman?" "Yes, but it's a wonderful burden—it's an overabundance of blessings for which I cannot find enough time or words to express my gratitude!"

Seeing the puzzled look on the face of his friend, Chapman added with a smile, "I am referring to Psalm 68:19, which fully describes my condition. In that verse the Father in heaven reminds us that He 'daily loads us with benefits.'"

Every day the Lord loads us with blessings that are to be used for His kingdom purposes – to bless those around us we are called to. We need to see ourselves as Postmen and Post women.

God loads us with His *'holy mail'*, some has our own name and address on them, but most will have the name and address of others on them. His *'holy mail'* will contain no bills, trash or hate mail, only words, deeds and resources that will bless, encourage and motivate others into His purposes for their lives.

Whenever we receive a blessing from the Lord we must ask ourselves whom we are to pass it on to.

Bryan Hupperts passed on the following vision to me:

*"While praying, an image began to form in my mind's eye. I found myself in the presence of Lord and I sat there just enjoying Him. And then the vision began to unfold. I was standing in a huge living room full of gifts and children. There seemed to be something like 1000 gifts per child and I knew I was in the Lord's house. Something was terribly wrong - out of order. Something seemed missing. I began to think it bizarre that each child should have so many gifts.*

*While pondering the scene, I realized that there was only supposed to be one gift per child because the neglected, dormant gifts that were piled to the ceiling were Christ's gift of salvation and forgiveness. Each only needed one.*

*That's when I saw the truth: there weren't too many gifts in that huge room, there weren't enough children! A man (who I believe to be the Lord Jesus) came over to me and handed me a scroll. I opened it and read these words: Authority to Grant Adoption.*

*He spoke and said, "I want my house full. Go and adopt children for me."*

In our father's presence there are many gifts to bless many children. His call to us is always one that will take us to specific people who we can bring into our Father's house to collect their gift, full of the blessings of the Lord.

From this vision we see that many potential 'labourers' are still spiritual children, out seeking blessings for themselves. Few are carrying a note of authority that gives them the sole aim of bringing more children in to be blessed!

Let us allow Jesus right now to place that scroll in our hands that gives us authority to grant adoption. Then let us seek the people or peoples where He is leading us to do just that – the place where we are truly called to be a blessing.

## **7. The Suffering Test**

*"For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:"1 Peter 2:20-21*

This test must not be misunderstood. The word 'suffering' comes from the Greek word 'pascho' where we get the term 'passion'. It means going through certain hardships or allowing certain things that go against the flesh to happen for the sake of Jesus. In old English if one said 'suffer it to be so' it meant to allow something to happen, as it was the best course.

Just as Jesus' calling led Him down the pathway of suffering, so will our calling. After all, we are called to partake in the suffering of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:5-7) and if we want to be joint heirs with Him then we must suffer with Him (Romans 8:17).

Please note that this is not suffering for any wrong we do, which could be termed 'corrective suffering', but it is suffering precisely because we do what is right – it is 'Christ like suffering'. It is suffering His will to be done in our lives.

I am not saying that unless we're always suffering then we're not in the Will of God. What I am saying is that if our 'call' is very comfortable without any hardship and suffering at all then it cannot be a true call from God!

In *Green Leaf in Drought*, Isobel Kuhn relates the story of a missionary family going through great trials. The theme is:

*"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" Jeremiah. 17:7-8.*

There is one passage that has encouraged some to a higher vision of trials. The passage outlines 'four anchors' Isobel Kuhn adapted from Andrew Murray's writings. These are 'anchor attitudes' we must have in the midst of suffering:

1. Say, He brought me here. It is by His will I am in this strait place and in that fact I will rest.
2. He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child.
3. Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends for me to learn.
4. In His good time He can bring me out again—how and when He knows.

So let me say, I am

1. here by God's appointment;
2. in His keeping;
3. under His training;
4. for His time.

Yes, we will be called to places where we will suffer but, as the following quote beautifully reveals, God's provision and protection will be with us:

*"If God sends us on stony paths, He will provide us with strong shoes."* (Quote from Alexander Maclaren in 'Prokope', Vol. 1, No. 4, October-December, 1997, p. 2)

I remember when I first graduated from Bible School and was seeking for God's next step. At that time I was not married and lived in the School dormitory (which would have sent shivers up my Mum's back had she had seen it).

Living by the little faith I had then, I often lived on fifty Singapore dollars a month, God surprising me sometimes with additional love offerings or with a treat of a nice meal.

It was at this point that I was offered a stable job of pastoring a small congregation that had very few problems. With the offer came a nice salary, accommodation and a car. This was extremely tempting, but I clearly sensed the Spirit saying 'no'.

If I had said 'yes' then I would have lived comfortably with a 'nice' ministry, but I would have been out of the Will of God. From that time on, as I followed God's leading, I went through a series of painful experiences in mission's team life and then in Church leadership.

This 'suffering' was all part and parcel of God's call and I actually matured much spiritually though it. God's call will lead to times of suffering, but the joy in the midst of that suffering, knowing you are in the center of God's Will, outweighs all pain involved.

From the above seven tests we see that there is a definite 'character' to God's Will. There are certain places that His Will will never take us and other places it will always take us.

It's understanding what these are that will help us discern if a particular course of action is truly His Will for us or not. The following poem says this is a unique way:

#### **THE WILL OF GOD**

*The will of God will never take you,  
Where the Grace of God cannot keep you,  
Where the Arms of God cannot support you,  
Where the Riches of God cannot supply your needs,  
Where the Power of God cannot endow you.*

*The will of God will never take you,  
Where the Spirit of God cannot work through you,  
Where the Wisdom of God cannot teach you,  
Where the Army of God cannot protect you,  
Where the Hands of God cannot mold you.*

*The Will of God will never take you,  
Where the Love of God cannot enfold you,  
Where the Mercies of God cannot sustain you,  
Where the Peace of God cannot calm your fears,*

*Where the Authority of God cannot overrule for you.*

*The will of God will never take you,  
Where the Comfort of God cannot dry your tears,  
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,  
Where the Miracles of God cannot be done for you,  
Where the Omnipresence of God cannot find you.  
Source Unknown.*

*The Underlying Test: Does the whole counsel of God's Word support it?*

*"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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

All Scripture instructs us as to the right way we should go in our life and equips us to do those good works that we have been prepared beforehand to do.

Does the course of action you are considering agree with the overall counsel of God's word - the Bible? In all the above tests the underlying test must always be that it agrees with the Word of God.

Even if it passes all seven tests above but it is not a Scriptural course of action then it must be rejected. This obviously means that we must 'let the Word of God dwell' in us 'richly'. The more we really know of the whole counsel of God's Word, the wiser and more accurate will be our life decisions.

For example, you may have peace in your spirit and a sense of freedom in pulling away from a Church group, but still have bitterness in your heart towards certain Church members.

This bitterness must first be dealt with as the Bible clearly shows that we must not allow a bitter root to form that will defile many (Hebrews 12:15).

There was a time when I needed proper employment status in order to renew my entry permit in Singapore. I was given the opportunity of submitting my name to register a company, but the way of doing it was below board, not in keeping with the legal requirements for companies in Singapore.

Obviously, this was a very tempting offer and it was the gateway to seeming freedom in my situation. I could have said, "*The timing of this seems to be of God and it certainly helps me to stay on and do God's Will*". However, if I had taken this up I would have been breaking the law of the land, which is clearly unscriptural in this case (1 Peter 2:13).

Implementing all these seven tests with the underlying test of God's Word will help us keep on track with the Lord. He constantly desires to show us His way forward and invite us on in tangible ways, but we need to distinguish His high, holy and heavenly calling from worldly, fleshy or demonic callings that will lead us far from outworking His purposes in our lives.

## Do You Get The Picture?

### Time to reflect:

- Take some of the key visions and words you have received (those you have written down during your time of reflection at the end of chapters five and six), and apply the eight tests listed below to each of them. Throw out any one of those visions or words that fails one or more of the tests:
  1. The Fellowship Test – does it lead you into a more passionate and edifying relationship with Him and His body, the Church?
  2. The Liberty Test – does it lead you to greater inner freedom and also others to true freedom?
  3. The Peace Test – does it bring internal peace?
  4. The Life Test – does it lead to true excitement, a deluge of creative activity and a feeling of being truly alive?
  5. The Holiness Test – does it lead to greater purity?
  6. The Blessing Test – does it lead to greater blessing for others?
  7. The Suffering Test – does it lead to inevitable suffering in some area, a *'paying the price'*?
  8. Does it agree with the whole counsel of God's Word?

From the words and visions that pass the tests, and the other observations you have made as you reflected on the teachings in this book, take time to write down what you believe God is calling or inviting you to do with your life. Write clearly on a separate piece of paper that you can come back to again and again, and pray it into reality. Refine ad hone it as the Lord reveals more to you.

## Conclusion

In this first volume of the Big Picture series, we have seen, from Scripture, God's perfect picture for mankind. God's general will for us is the eagle-like vision all of us need if our lives are to be truly meaningful and worthwhile on this earth. But, having this eagle-like vision is not enough, we must determine what God's ant-like calling is on our life which will be specific and unique to each one of us.

This volume has revealed the various areas of calling and the ways that God practically conveys His vision and calling to us. We have learnt vital keys to spiritually seeing and hearing God's vision and calling for us, and we have also learnt how to test that what we see and hear is truly from the Lord.

If, after having read through this entire volume, you still do not have a clue as to God's calling on your life, do not despair. Remember that your first calling is to Jesus Himself and that all vision and calling is in Him.

When I joined World Horizons mission organization, I came to a point of despair as I realized that I had no idea what God was calling me to do or where I was to go.

Sharing my dilemma with a friend, she shared a vision God had given her concerning my situation. She saw me standing in the huge hands of Jesus but I was pulling at my hair in great anguish (maybe that's why I'm balding now!). The word of God to me was simply to rest in the realization that He was carrying me into His purposes and that, as I remained in His hands, He would lead me safely into His will.

This vision applies to you too if you are despairing that you do not know His will for your life. The truth is that you can be sure that this one thing is the will of God for you right now: That you seek Jesus with your whole heart and abide in His loving hands with thanksgiving in your heart and a worshipful spirit. Have faith in Him that He will lift you up in His hands to the place where you can see His Big Picture and that He will whisper His calling into your ear before setting you down in His time in your place of calling.

You may say, "I don't know His call on my life." Yes you do! His call on your life is to Himself.

The next volume (Painting the Picture) is more specific in that it will help you to identify exactly what your calling is by determining what gifts the Lord has provided you with to outwork that calling. The final volume (The Picture Process) will reveal to you the various processes you will go through in God's call on your life and how to respond in the midst of them.

To see if these volumes are available you can check at:

<http://www.timshen.truepath.com/bigpicture.htm>

At this address you can also download free student and teacher resources for this material and many other topics.

## Invite Rev. Tim to Teach or Preach

If you would like Rev. Tim Gibson to teach the Big Picture or any of his other material in your church or ministry, you may contact him at:

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Or you may send him a letter to:

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## Other Teachings and Resources by Rev. Tim Gibson

Tim has an extensive online Christian teaching resource where you can access Bible teachings and resources to view online, download or purchase on a DVD to run from your computer or laptop.

The following teaching topics and resources are available:

- The Big Picture Series.
  - Understanding Revelation.
  - The Song of Solomon: Progress of Love.
  - The Gates of Jerusalem (Spiritual Restoration).
  - Hermeneutics (How to study the Bible).
  - Bible Times and Customs.
  - Old Testament Survey.
  - New Testament Survey.
  - First Corinthians: Overcoming Church Problems.
  - First and Second Thessalonians: End-Time Living.
  - First Peter: About Suffering.
  - Preacher's Illustrations and Jokes Database.
  - Christian Teaching Games.
  - Christian Flash Movies.
- ... and much, much more.

To see more about all of these and more please go to the following web address:  
<http://www.revtimothygibson.com>