

# Truth for Today

*The Bible Explained*

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## Being a Servant of God: Lord, what will You have me to do?

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today* and thank you for listening.

We begin a new series called "Being a servant of God". This surely applies to every genuine Christian. Being a servant means that we have a master and that we must serve as our master demands. Each servant of God wants to please Him by living their lives in accordance with His mind and will. The title of this morning's talk is "*Lord, what will You have me to do?*" (see Acts 9:6) Have you cried this before? You may have asked God this question many times through your life. Has God always given you a clear answer to your prayer? Have you received an answer that you did not like? Has God not answered you at all? Or maybe God has answered you and you have not been aware of Him speaking to you. As we look at this subject, I trust that what is said will help you to be able to identify what and when is a clear call from God.

Asking the Lord, "*What will You have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6) may be for various reasons. It may be because you want to take a year out and go and do something abroad while you are young. It may be a daily cry you make when you just don't know what to do. Or it may be that you feel that the Lord is calling you to some ministry or mission. How do you know that the Lord is calling you? How do you know it is of God rather than just your own good idea? When looking, and listening for God's call or God's guidance, you need to have a neutral mind, with no inside or outside influence. It must not be because of how you feel emotionally at the time, but it must be made in quiet dependence and faith in God.

God does not always call you to some far away country where it's always warm and sunny. Generally, He wants you to stay put and serve Him just right where you are. Maybe you attend a church where there is only a small congregation and you yearn for a bigger church and you have convinced yourself that the Lord is calling you to the bigger church. But you know what? God possibly wants you to serve Him just where He has placed you. The small congregation may need you more than you need them. God wants you to be faithful and committed wherever He has placed you. God requires faithful men and women in every church, in every work place and in every street.

What if God wants you to do something which you feel is out of your comfort zone? Do you immediately respond by saying "I can't do it; it is too hard for me". There are many illustrations in the Bible where men said this to God, and God proved that, with His help, they could do it. God wants you to trust Him in things that you don't always feel confident doing. Although often God lets you serve Him where you feel most comfortable, this does not mean that you always just do things that are within your comfort zone. God delights to use people like you and me if we do what He asks us to do without question. If you ask the question, "*Lord what will You have me to do?*" (see Acts 9:6) you need to be ready and prepared to respond to the answer. It might not always be the answer you are expecting or the answer you were looking for.

Let me look at it in another way. Are you disappointed in the service that God has given you to do? Your service may not be seen and therefore you get very little praise from anyone. You may be disheartened and you have been saying to yourself, "Nobody sees or understands what I do". God, who is all seeing and all-knowing, knows and appreciates everything you do. The Lord Himself said that even a cup of water given in His name is noticed and appreciated by Him (see Matthew 10:42, Mark 9:41). Attitude in service is quite challenging because God sees into your heart and He judges your motives. Think of the scribes in Luke 20:45-47. They were proud, they liked to be seen and acknowledged, they liked to be praised, they gave big donations to the temple and liked to be seen doing it, but their hearts were selfish, horrible and filthy.

Even if we have a great attitude, sometimes it is still difficult to hear God's clear call. How do you receive it today? Will it be like Saul on the road to Damascus? (See Acts 9:1-9). Will it be like Paul at Troas? (See Acts 16:6-10). Will it be like Phillip at Samaria? (See Acts 8:26-40). Probably not!

A good starting point would be to take time to look and study the Lord's service to His Father. The Lord Himself, the perfect Servant, knew the mind and will of His Father as He served in this world as the Son of Man. You could also look at the way that God deals with His servants throughout the Bible. This would give clear indication as to what is

expected of a true servant of God. God speaks to us today through the Bible, through Christ, through circumstances of life, through other Christians and through creation.

Just a note of warning! If you feel your call means compromising and stepping outside the teaching of the Bible, you can be assured that this is **not** a call from God. Remember that Satan is an angel of light who will try to deceive the servant of God in any possible way he can. So always test your call to see if it agrees with the teachings of the Bible. That does not mean that you can take one verse out of context and use that as your excuse or reason for doing something that you know in your heart of hearts that it is not really the right thing to do.

How much does our need constitute a call? Through different stages of our lives we need different things. Are you a needy person? Do you move from church to church? Do you always need a spiritual lift? When we are young we need young company; does this mean we move to somewhere where there is more company? When we get married, we need other young married company; does this mean we move to somewhere where there is more married company? When we have children, we need company for our children; does this mean that we move to somewhere where there are more children? When we are old we need older company; does this mean we move to somewhere where there is more older company? You know what I am getting at here. The natural need that we feel can become an excuse to say we are being called by God. What you are really saying is that you don't trust God's faithfulness in your family, in your spiritual life and in your church life. God has placed you where you are and He expects you to be faithful.

Let us now look at some examples in the Bible of servants being called. Paul asked the Lord in his Damascus experience (see Acts 9:1-9), "*What will You have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6). Paul was ready for the answer as he was in the right condition; he had been brought as low as he could go. His pride was shattered and he was helpless. It is important to note that the Lord never gave Paul the answer to his question right away. Paul had three days to consider the life changing event that had just happened (Acts 9:9). God is always working behind the scenes and He was speaking to another servant of His called Ananias, who was living in Damascus just around the corner from where Paul was (Acts 9:10-19). Ananias although he was an experienced believer hesitated when God spoke to him, and told him to go and see Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:13). Saul of Tarsus had a fearsome reputation. He was a man who spread fear and terror throughout the Christian community in the area. God told Ananias that Saul was now under His control (Acts 9:15); Saul was a changed man. Then Ananias did what God told him to do. Ananias just had to go to the next street to answer God's call!

Getting back to Paul, he was now going into lifetime service for the Lord. The Lord had great plans for Paul and some of them would not be very pleasant. The Lord made it clear to Paul that he was going to suffer a great deal for the name of Christ (Acts 9:16). We never read of Paul complaining about any part of his service. Paul was ready in every way for the answer to his question, "*Lord what will You have me to do?*" (see Acts 9:6) If you ask God this question, you need to be ready for His answer, ready to obey His command and ready to accept God's plan for you.

The little maid who was captured in Israel by Naaman's army and was taken as a slave to Syria is a great example of accepting where God has placed you (see 2 Kings 5:1-19). We are not told but maybe her parents were killed in the war. She did not seem to bear any grudges as she did what she could as she served in Naaman's house. She had the ear of Naaman's wife which had to have been won by respect. So, she must have been a very good servant, never complaining due to the circumstances she found herself in. She was obviously not that young as she was fully aware of what the prophet in Samaria could do for her master, Naaman (see 2 Kings 5:3). She had amazing faith in the LORD. I am sure that the little maid never asked the LORD what she was to do, but she did what she could in the circumstances that the Lord put her in and there was great testimony and blessing because of it.

Jonah the prophet is another interesting example of a servant of God. Jonah received a definite call (Jonah 1:1-2) but he ignored it and disobeyed God (Jonah 1:3). God wanted him to go down to Nineveh which was 400 miles inland but, instead he took a ship sailing for Tarsus, about 2,000 miles in the opposite direction. Jonah was to warn Nineveh that if they did not repent from their sins, God would come in judgement upon the city. Jonah knew the heart of God. He knew that if they repented God would forgive them and he would look very foolish. Jonah brought his own thoughts and feelings into what he should do rather than just getting on with what the Lord commanded him to do.

Paul was called by the Lord at midnight in Troas (Acts 16:6-10). A man from Macedonia appeared to him in a dream asking him to come over to Macedonia and help them (Acts 16:9). Paul discussed his dream with his fellow workers and they were left in no doubt that this was a clear call from the Lord (Acts 16:10). They wasted no time and they sailed from Troas. We soon see that, as they enter Philippi, God had already prepared hearts to hear their teaching and there were conversions, baptisms and encouragement for the newly founded local church (Acts 16:11-40).

Samuel was a young boy when God called him. Hannah, Samuel's mother, promised God that if He gave her a son she would give him back to Him to serve in the temple (1 Samuel 1:11, 28). When he was old enough, Samuel went to live in the temple (see 1 Samuel 2:11) and God spoke to him on three different occasions in one night (1 Samuel 3:1-21). Samuel went to Eli to ask if he had called him on two of the occasions (1 Samuel 3:5-6). Eli said he

had not! On the third occasion, Eli told him that it was the LORD who must be calling him (1 Samuel 3:8), so he told him to say, "*Speak, LORD, for thy servant is listening*" (1 Samuel 3:9). Samuel was not quite ready for what the LORD told him (1 Samuel 3:11-21). The LORD gave him terrible news about what was going to happen to Eli and his family. Eli was obviously aware that the LORD had spoken to Samuel so he asked him what the LORD had said (1 Samuel 3:17). Samuel, of course, hesitated because of the news he had been given, but Eli insisted that he must tell him everything. Samuel did! (1 Samuel 3:18). This was only the start of the many difficult things that Samuel would have to face as prophet, priest and judge in Israel.

When Samuel was as an old man, he was instructed by God to go and anoint a new king of Israel. God told him to stop grieving over Saul the first king, because God had rejected him from being king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1). Samuel was to go down to the house of Jesse and there he would find the king whom God had selected (1 Samuel 16:1). Samuel was afraid that Saul would hear what he was up to and he would kill him, so he went down under the guise of making a sacrifice (1 Samuel 16:2-3). Jesse was afraid when Samuel came to town because he was a powerful man. Samuel even with all his experience, showed a hesitancy or maybe a lack of faith when he asked the LORD how he would know the one. Samuel instructed Jesse to bring his sons before him (1 Samuel 16:5). When Samuel saw Eliab, the first born, he immediately surmised that he was the one who would be king (1 Samuel 16:6), but God told him that it was not he. God explained to Samuel that "*man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7). All Jesse's sons had passed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:8-10) so Samuel asked Jesse if he had any other sons (1 Samuel 16:11). Jesse replied that he had one more; he was in the hills tending to his sheep (1 Samuel 16:11). When David was brought before Samuel, he immediately knew that he was the one who would be anointed king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). As we see with Samuel, sometimes we have great doubts when God instructs us to do certain things. Our own fears and ideas take over rather than accepting and relying upon God's direction and plan.

If you are looking for an extreme call, my mind goes to Abraham when God told him to go and sacrifice his son, Isaac (see Genesis 22:1-19. Abraham without hesitation prepared everything he required and left early in the next morning to do as God commanded him (Genesis 22:3). Abraham in faith prepared Isaac for sacrifice (Genesis 22:6-10), but God stepped in and had a ram ready nearby for Abraham to sacrifice instead of Isaac (Genesis 22:11-14). Abraham responded to the call and this showed God how much faith he had in Him.

In Acts 8: we read of the way that Philip the evangelist was called away by the Lord (see Acts 8:26) from a remarkable ministry (see Acts 8:4-13). Philip was preaching in Samaria where many who heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ were saved. I wonder what Philip thought when the angel of the Lord spoke to him and told him to walk away from this amazing ministry and head south into the desert (Acts 8:26). Philip got up immediately and went! (Acts 8:27). Philip was full of the Holy Spirit and was walking every step without deviation in God's will. Philip could have been excused from thinking that he was needed to for the work that he was involved with. But God had already His men on the way to continue the work. Peter and John arrived in Samaria after hearing the news of much blessing there (Acts 8:14). God, who is sovereign, had another mission for Philip and as we follow the story we see that God had been working in the heart of a man from Ethiopia who was ready to accept the Gospel and be baptised (see Acts 8:27-40). This man could have been the first to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the continent of Africa!

As a servant of God, you need to remember the sovereignty of God and accept that He knows the full picture. You may think you are doing a great work but God may be leading you to do a greater work, even though you may not agree. Understanding clearly God's personal call is very difficult but, if you are walking daily with the Lord, you will recognise the leading, guiding and direction of the Holy Spirit. Philip was so devoted to the preaching of the Gospel that the opportunities came along because he was ready and prepared. Do you and I have the same desire to serve our Lord and Master?

When you feel the Lord is calling you and you feel you are being led and guided, you must take all emotion, selfishness, personal ties, relationships and human thoughts out of any decision you make and prayerfully take it to the Lord. You must also check that what you feel the Lord is calling you to do does not go against the Bible because, if it does, it is **not** God who is calling you. You may want to discuss everything with a Christian friend you respect, someone who will give you an honest opinion. If you do, make sure that it's someone who has had more experience than you.

Can I share with you two personal examples of the way I believe God speaks, leads and directs?

Over the last year or so, I feel the Lord has been speaking to me through my Bible study, through personal circumstances and through health problems. I feel that the Lord has been teaching me patience, humility and, in certain circumstances, helplessness. I believe I need to be more dependent on the Lord and trusting Him in everything.

A young couple I know had a desire to do something for the Lord when they were young and full of energy. Over six months they prayed and looked for God's leading and direction. They made enquiries about going to serve in Africa but the door seemed to close for them. They made enquires to go to another country but only one of them got a visa, so another door closed. But just as this door closed the original door swung open and the way was very clear to them as to what they should do. They have happily served in Africa for six months.

This may not be your experience, because each one of us is unique and God deals with us in different ways. So I trust and pray that this talk will be a help and blessing to you as you seek to hear God's answer to your question, "*Lord, what will You have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6).

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