

Prayer & Self Denial 2019 - 'Where God Leads'

Julian Doorey - Sermon - Week 2 - Called to Mission? - 16-6-18

(John 3:16, Eph 2:8-10, Gal 6:4-5, Psalm 37:4, Prov 3:5-6, Rom 12:2, Acts 15:39-41, John 12:24-25, John 6:38-40)

Already seen this <PSD 2019 - Vid - Theme 2 - We're Making a Difference (BD) - 3m 50s

Prayer

Introduction

Welcome to the 2nd week of our NZ Baptist Mission 'Prayer and Self Denial' (PSD). This is our annual one month focus on global physical and spiritual needs and our response to that. NZ Baptists have worked overseas since 1885. Currently we work in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Macau and East Asia. The purpose of PSD is to raise awareness, prayer and funds for overseas mission. This fits our church logo: 'Continuing the work of Jesus in the world...' We're part of something so much bigger than our own lives, our families, our homegroup, our church, our city, our country. Remember... 'For the God of the whole universe so loved the whole world...' (John 3:16). BTW... It's great to have Bravo (Yr 10-12, age 14-16) staying in church with us. They'll be taking notes and giving us feedback on our PSD talks... be gentle!

PSD info about prayer, denying ourselves and giving financially - presented in Community Time.

This year's theme is 'Where God Leads', taken from Isaiah 6:8: 'Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' Where is God leading you - as a person? Where is God leading us - as a church community?' Last week our 1st message was 'Empowered for Mission - the work of the Holy Spirit'. The primary purpose of God's spirit is to empower us for mission. I wonder: If there was no empowering Spirit, would we be able to do mission? Putting it the other way: If we're not involved in mission, why would we need the empowering Spirit? That's a tough question worth thinking about.

Today's talk is titled 'Called to Mission?' We're looking at God's calling on our lives and how we make decisions about that. Note the '?'. Is God calling you? How do you know?

God's call to Bangladesh - Video reflection

Today's PSD video was set in Bangladesh (BD). We have a 134 year heritage there. We have good relationships (mostly) with the national church. There are real opportunities for - education, health, business, building, planning, organising, computing, accounting, Bible teaching, witnessing, discipling... **Do we have school teachers or medical people here (hands up)? Opportunities!**

In the video, Ross said 'We're here to make the community a better place... our activities are part of God's will to make this world a better place'. I said a similar thing to Carisbrook School recently as I explored outreach ideas... 'As a church, although not primarily a social service organisation, we desire to see good outcomes for people and their communities, just as schools and other not-for-profits do'. Amazingly, God soon after opened the door for our Apple Outreach, providing > 1 tonne of apples free to the community, focusing on Carisbrook School. Now we're returning to the challenge of accessing cheap firewood for the school refugee families.... watch this space.

We heard of lives and buildings(!) being transformed... the former prison retrofitted as a school. **Do we have practical building-plumbing-electrical people here (hands up)? Opportunities!** We saw the light engineering company, doing what is called 'Business as Mission'. **Do we have any light**

(or heavy) engineers here (hands up)? Opportunities! Then Ross talked about it taking a short time to begin a new life in Christ, but a lifetime to grow as a disciple. Do we have any Bible teachers and disciplers here (hands up)? Opportunities!

Finally, we heard about 28 vacant visa slots - which one has your name on it? Why not 'Join us'?

God's work for you

4 The Bible tells us God has prepared a mission work for you (and only you) to do. Paul says...

[Eph 2:8-10](#): ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God ⁹ not by works... ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do **good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (TNIV)

God created you. God made a way for you to be saved by grace through faith. Jesus died on a cross for your wrong doings, so that you can be in a relationship with God. But there is more good news... God (in advance) has prepared **good works** for you to do. You have a special job. No one else can do it. This is a key meaning / purpose of life... Created for **good works**!

[Gal 6:4-5](#): ⁴⁻⁵ Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life. (MSG)

God has a special mission work for you to do, but we need to carefully explore who we are (interests, skills, personality) and what that work is. It's our responsibility to do the best with our one short life. God gives each of a mission task, but we need to try and find out what that is.

Discerning God's will

How do I discern (or decide about) God's will for my life? How do I discover God's work for me?

Google search

'God's will for me'... 240 million results (0.67s). I didn't realise I was so popular... and will be so busy. Allowing 10 mins to read each result, it would take 4566 years to read them all!

Bible verses

5 There are a number of Bible verses which talk about God's will for people. For example:

[Psalm 37:4](#): ⁴ Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. (TNIV)
[Prov 3:5-6](#): ⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways submit to Him, and he shall make your paths straight. (TNIV)
[Rom 12:2](#): ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. (TNIV)

These are great verses, but none of them actually say that we can know God's will in advance... but only that we will come to discover God's will as we trust and follow him. We can only say that 'I believe God wants me to say or do such n'such...', rather than 'God wants me to say or do such n'such...'. Many churches have been fractured by one person claiming to speak 100% for God.

Books & courses

6 There are lots of books and manuals about finding God's will. A couple I recommend (library) are:

- [Network](#) course - from Willow Creek Church (USA, 1994). This explores your Passions (interests), Gifting and Personality. Bill Hybels said 'Believers flourish in their service to Jesus

when they are serving in the area of their giftedness and their God-given uniqueness'. This is trying to get 'the right people doing the right thing in the right place'.

- SHAPE course - from Saddleback Church (USA, 2006). Our Cook homegroup is currently doing this. This explores your Spiritual gifts, Hearbeat (interests), Abilities, Personality and Experiences. Rick Warren said 'You are uniquely designed, wired and shaped by God to do certain things. You are shaped to serve God by Serving others'. This is trying to 'find and fulfil your unique purpose for life'.

3 broad approaches

I will present 3 broad approaches to seeking God's will, which I think are really helpful. God works in different ways for different people / personalities / theologies. Each has pros and cons.

(1) Tightrope approach

7 Imagine a tightrope walker - walking along a thin rope, balancing high above the ground. It's dangerous... one wrong move and they'll fall, injuring or killing themselves. Some people discern God's will this way. There can only be one path from God which they must follow. If they try another path, they'll fall out of God's will, with disaster and suffering. Perhaps instead of tightrope walking, we could think of another risky activity - say unicycling. [[Unicyclists ride from church back, then out front doors - Michael Smith, Jacob Craig, Joel Wilden - Julian talks](#)]. You need to be very careful / crazy! What say we get it wrong - perhaps it's better to stay safe / do nothing.

Strengths: God is seen as deeply personal, specific and involved in our lives. People are able to know and be sure of God's will, before they set off on their path.

Weaknesses: God is seen to withhold blessing or even punish if we get it wrong. A tightrope decision person may never be able to make a big mission or lifestyle decision, just in case they get it wrong. eg: Many people say 'God has not called them to overseas mission'... what has God called them to?

God's will can seem contradictory eg: A person says 'God called me to overseas mission...' but 18 months later when things are tough with teammates, they say 'God is calling me home'. eg: A person says 'God told me to marry that person...' but 18 months later they may say 'Perhaps God can live with that person, but I certainly can't'.

A big weakness is around accountability and group decision making. eg: If a person says 'God told me...' then who am I to argue, even if I think another path is better. Tightrope decision people can find it difficult to work with others. eg: Remember the Paul and Barnabas disagreement in Acts 15 - they were setting off on their 2nd mission journey. Barnabas wanted to take John-Mark with them, but Paul didn't as he had found John-Mark unreliable previously. We read...

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[Acts 15: 39-41: ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ and Paul and Silas to ⁴¹ Syria and Cilicia. \(TNIV\)](#)

eg: A NZ church leader declared that the Christchurch earthquakes were caused by same-sex activity. However, recently they said the earthquakes were not caused by this. Could you imagine being a free-thinker in that church with the leader ducking and diving about God's will?

(2) Playground approach

9 Imagine a playground - loving parents watching their kids enjoy trying out different play equipment. The kids move around, preferring some activities over others. A protective fence keeps the kids safe, away from the street. Some people discern God's will this way. There may be several (many?) paths from God for them. They are free to try out and change paths without major

negative consequences. As long as they stay within God's moral boundaries (protective fence), they are free to experiment, until the best path is found.

Strengths: God is seen as loving parent, desiring the best for our lives. God gives freedom to trial and experiment, to find a good path, without fear of failure or punishment. It's about finding the best fit in terms of interest and abilities. This often includes working with others on a shared vision.

Weaknesses: God is seen as not personal, specific or involved in our lives. It appears people are unable to know God's will, before they start on a path. There may be lots of chopping and changing, trial and error, wasting time and resources along the way, with major changes in vocation / careers. Almost any activity may be labelled mission. Having many good options, a person may not be able to settle on one excellent option. eg: Remember the warning in John 12, we cannot be involved in everything and have everything. Saying 'yes' to one path requires saying 'no' to others.

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John 12: 24-25: ²⁴ Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. ²⁵ In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is, destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal. (MSG)

(3) Sailing approach

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Imagine sailing - a yacht planing through the water at high speed (30+ knots). The sailor is paying careful attention to the invisible wind, discerning its speed and direction. The sail is set to catch the wind. Other boats are travelling in the same direction. Some people discern God's will this way. They try to 'see' what God is already doing. Then they align themselves and participate with Him and others. Their aim is not to get God to do something, but to journey / partner with him.

More imagery... 'It's a dance in which God leads and you follow. It's a wave that God sends and you ride it. It's the breath of God and you are the feather that floats upon it. It's the wind of the Spirit that blows and you lift your sail to catch it. It's a powerful current that is already flowing and you are in that flow'. (Ruth Haley Barton, Pursuing God's Will Together, p6).

What is God doing in this world... What is it we are to join in with? Reading in John 6...

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John 6:38-40: Jesus said... ³⁸ 'For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ ... ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life...' (TNIV)

Jesus came to do God's will, that... Everyone who looks to Jesus and believes (follows) in him shall have eternal life. Sounds like mission to me. We're called to set our mission sails to catch that wind.

Strengths: This shares some of the strengths of the tightrope and playground approach. God is personal, specific and involved - he provides the wind. A person can make a start without being sure of the final path. God is loving, desiring the best, but does not direct every footstep. We have freedom to choose our path, as long as we are willing to partner with God in his broader mission.

Weaknesses: This shares some of the weaknesses of the tightrope and playground approach. It can be difficult to discern exactly what God is doing (or wanting to happen) in a situation. Others may have a different view. There will still be some trial and error along the way.

Conclusion

We started by watching the PSD video, showing the NZ Baptist mission work in Bangladesh. We saw educational work involving the schools and business work involving the light engineering company. There are lots of other opportunities with 28 vacant visa slots. We're invited 'Join'.

- If you're a tightrope decision maker - requiring a personal word from God, you may or may not receive it. Don't miss out or avoid what God may want you involved in.
- If you're a playground decision maker - with some skills able to contribute to meeting many needs, try not to be involved in so many things, that you miss out on the one excellent thing.
- If you're a sailor decision maker - able to see that God has been working through the NZ Baptists in Bangladesh and you have some skills to contribute through one of the 28 vacant visa slots... perhaps it's time to hoist your sail, catch the wind and sail off.

Called to mission? Yes, you and I are called to partner with God in His mission. We're called to hoist our sail. In our attempts to discern God's will, we have freedom to choose a path in life. Will the path we choose (activities, lifestyles, vocations, localities, investments) enhance or decrease our participation with God in His mission?

Called to mission in Bangladesh? Let's talk further sometime.

End

Song: [Jesus be the Centre](#) - YouTube clip - no musicians needed

www.youtube.com/watch?v=EG-11kK-BpU (4m 13s)

Julian & singers - sing & visually lead - stand together on piano side of stage

Lyrics - PTO...

Benediction / Prayer

PSD info about prayer, denying ourselves and giving financially - presented in Community Time.

During PSD we're called to pray for God's blessing in our (actually His) global mission efforts. You're invited (individuals, groups etc) to pray for global mission - week days at the church, Monday 17th to Friday 28th June, 1-2pm, 7-8pm - choose a time to suit. Will you pray this month?

During PSD we're called to deny ourselves something meaningful. Going without helps us to identify (in some small way) with most of the world who are always going without something, in fact most things. About 2 billion people live on \$US 2.50 per day. Going without something also saves money, helping us to raise funds for global mission. What will you deny yourself this month?

During PSD we're called to give in support of our global mission workers and projects. Mission workers are paid in an expenses reimbursement system - costs are met and that's it. They don't make any savings. As a church we've given the following in recent years: 2014: \$12,650, 2015: \$11,000, 2016: \$9,070, 2017: \$10,500, 2018: \$10,267. We're holding steady or maybe in slight decline. Let's aim for a small increase to \$12,000. We'll do a communal response on our 4th / final week, Sun 30 June. On that day we (adults, children, families) hand in our PSD offerings / pledges. This can be (i) A cash offering, or (ii) A pledge of what we'll give (via internet banking or cash) within 2 weeks. Our total giving is eligible for 100% tax credit (specify PSD and your church offering number). Have a think, talk and pray about what you will give this month.

Song - Jesus be my Centre

Lyrics on YouTube video

Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light
Jesus

Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song
Jesus

(Chorus)
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

Oh Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus

Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus

(Chorus)
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

(Instrumental solo)

(Chorus)
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

(Chorus)
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light
Jesus

End