

Answering the Call

By Tony Guerrero

Some of you may know the story of Ira Sankey. Ira was, to put it in modern terms, D.L. Moody's worship leader. His calling was not one that came to him through divine revelation, but rather came as somewhat of a shock. At a particular meeting in 1870, he was asked to lead the singing. When the meeting ended, Moody interrogated him, inquiring about his job, family, living situation. Sankey told Moody that he was married, had two kids, lived in Pennsylvania and was a tax collector for the government, to which Moody replied, "You will have to give that up." He didn't really ask Sankey, but basically told him that he was going to begin leading the singing regularly for Moody's evangelistic meetings.

The story of this tax collector being told to drop everything and follow someone into ministry sounds somewhat familiar. Hmm, where did I see that before? Oh, yes, Matthew. And, of course, Peter, Andrew, James and John, the fishermen.

The Invitation

I have often been puzzled by the sparse information offered in the Gospels about how these men were called into ministry. Jesus basically just walked up to them and, without even so much as a "hello," said "Follow Me," to which they each just dropped everything and followed Him. I have wondered, is there more to the story? Did they already recognize Him as a great teacher and prophet? Had they previously developed a relationship and we're only hearing about the formal invitation? Was there more dialogue than what is reported in the text? Did He divinely compel them? Of course, focusing on these unanswerable questions keeps me from facing the real question—what would I have done?

Let's face it, if anyone, especially anyone I didn't know, came up to me and said, "Drop everything and follow me," I'd roll my eyes and never even consider the thought. I'd probably laugh at him when he turned away.

Music or Ministry?

Most of us consider ourselves "called" into ministry. But I am constantly aware that my calling into music ministry is a somewhat easy one because I love making music. In fact had I never found Jesus or ministry, I'd likely still be making music. So, if I've been called, it probably wasn't really into music as much as ministry (although, of course, I fully understand that it was all in God's plan for me to be a musician in the first place). But min-



istry comes in many forms, and here is where it gets challenging. Would I drop everything I love to pursue a different ministry if I felt called? As much as I'd love to say "absolutely," the truth is I would probably fight it.

But, unlike the way the apostles' callings seem to come from out of the blue and from an apparent stranger, I don't have the luxury of claiming not to know the inviter. I do know who Jesus is. I know He is the creator of the universe, the King of kings, the Son of God. I know all this, yet I still face the daily challenge of pursuing God's will for my life over my own.

New Reformation

There is a trend in the Church these days that will likely challenge many of us in this way. Speaking about this trend, my pastor, Rick Warren, says, "The first reformation was about what we believe, but this new reformation will be about behavior. It will be about the Church—individually and congregationally—becoming more than just hearers of the Word; they will become doers of the Word." We are being called to go into all the world in new and bold ways—to care for the sick, to evangelize, to be Christ's hands and feet. In fact, this is the first generation for whom going into all the world is actually a real possibility. When the apostles were told to go, there was no physical way for them to actually do so. Now, with modern technology and travel, we are actually able to go anywhere, and all that is missing is our actual decision to go.

This is truly a new day in the Church. We can actually fulfill the Great Commission in ways never imagined by previous ages. Missions and evangelism are no longer just the domain of missionaries and evangelists but are now (and really, always have been) the responsibility of the whole Church—including musicians, worship leaders, singers, tech specialists, in fact every person irrespective of individual gifts, skills or talents. It's time for us to understand that "music" ministry is really just a part of what we've been called to do.

If all this is true, suddenly our cushy little lives of music ministry are open for a new look. Is it possible that God wants more from us? Might we be called to do more than prepare a song list and rehearse the band? And what will we do if, or when, that call comes?

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