



# Realizing a Call versus a Burden

A testimony by Emanuel Esh

A call is the picture of one responding to a call or an order; while a burden is something a man carries which tends to load him down. Combine these two in proper order and perspective and you will have a ministry of fruitfulness.

Many sincere Christians struggle with this issue of a burden versus a call. Can a person really know if it is a call or just a burden? I believe that anyone who is wholly yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ will soon begin to realize a call of God on his or her life. Defining it may take more time.

Being a Christian for twenty-three years, I am now able to look back and see the difference between a call and a burden. It was not always clear to me. But God's call, a burden for souls, and a willingness to serve has blended together into a ministry in missions and has clearly defined a call on my life. I no longer struggle trying to find "my calling" or "a ministry". I now realize that this is God's call on my life. Neither do I wish to be a missionary in a foreign country, although I am willing to go wherever the Lord leads.

I know that the call of God was placed upon me at the time of salvation. This resulted in a burden for the souls of men around me. I had a strong desire to witness to everyone of the saving power of Jesus Christ. I felt the burden and I sensed the call.

I had been introduced to missions in Africa before I was saved and had a secret desired to go, but because I was Amish, and Amish do not fly, I just gave up on it.

But very soon after being saved, I knew that someday I would go to Africa. I thought that I would be a missionary because I had a burden for souls. And so I thought my calling was to be a missionary.

Looking back over the chronicle of events, I can now clearly see God's hand in my life. His hand was there directing me each step of the way. Sometimes it was an open door and sometimes it was a closed door.

My first trip out of the country was to Jamaica in 1990 and then shortly after that to Ghana where the church had a mission outreach. I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of both trips. Then, in 1991, from February to December, our family was sent to Montana to work among the Hutterites. We loved the time there and also loved the people. I thought God must surely be preparing us to be missionaries.

Then, in 1992, I was working in construction and building pole barns. One job was at a small local airport building airplane hangars. We spent several weeks there. One of the other workers loved airplanes and talked much about them. Stories of missionary pilots and missions stirred my desire to get involved. I thought it might be that God is calling me to be a missionary pilot.

Around that time I went to a prison ministry in Alabama. Just before I left home, I asked God to make it clear to me on this trip if He wants me in mission aviation. We arrived at the prison and sat down to eat with total strangers. I asked the guy next to me what he does and he said he flies airplanes. The next morning at breakfast, I asked the guy next to me what he does. He said, "I fly helicopters." I was sure that God had given me two clear signals that He wanted me to pursue flying. And, of course, I was very excited about it. I thought I had found my calling.

I shared with my wife when I got home and then went to my pastor. With great expectation, I carefully shared the details of what I felt God was saying to me about getting involved in pursuing my pilot's license. I was quite disappointed to find him not at all excited about it, and much more, tell me that he does not believe that I am to go to flying school nor immediately get involved. He did say that if God continues to make it clear through my authorities, I could then use that as a clear direction to go. Since he was my spiritual authority, and because of some lessons that I had learned about authority, I was able to fully trust God with my future. I did not even fret about it. I knew that if God wanted me in aviation, He would get me there.

I continued to serve the Lord with my whole heart, serving in the church whenever opportunities arose.

By this time the home church had an active mission in Ghana and was starting one in Haiti. Again I thought God was going to send us to be missionaries either in one place or the other, I just didn't know which one. Then the door opened for me to take a Missionary Medical Intensive course held in the church basement. I felt even more certain that it was God preparing us for the mission field. So I asked God to make it clear to us which place we would be going. I gave God these



two choices: (a) go to Ghana, West Africa, or (b) go to Haiti. The Lord seemed to also put in the third, which I was not too impressed about, and that was "stay home". I simply believed that God would make it clear, one way or another.

Then in the middle of the Missionary Medical Intensive course, I was asked if I would take a position on the mission board as chairman. They said they felt like I had the gifting and ability to fill that role. My first answer was, "But I feel called to be a missionary." They persuaded me with, "Serve for several years on the board and then you will be better prepared to go." I also remembered my request to God and the third one came into view. "Stay home." This was not what I wanted to hear. But I had learned to be content in whatever the Lord gives me to do. So I agreed to "give it a try". No, I agreed to give it all I had. And even though I had very little experience, I was willing. God opened a door, even though it was not the one I thought He would open.

But I have found my life calling through being open to fill the slot or the need that arises. I have been very grateful to my pastors for their guidance in this matter. Truly, I have found a life worth living, a

ministry to fulfill. I get to visit the missionaries often and am very involved in ministering to them. I also get many opportunities to travel to other foreign countries. I know I am in God's will for my life. I know that I am called of God and have a specific calling to minister in missions, mission boards, training, and in stirring up others to go. In short, I am a sender. I feel the burden for missions and mission board work. I sense the call to serve Christ Jesus my Lord with joy in this ministry. I thank God for this.

### **Four things to consider in realizing a call:**

1. You must be free from sin and wholly yielded to the Lordship of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
2. You must be under authority, first to God, and then to man. (God works through His authority structure.)
3. You must be willing to serve selflessly in any and every way and to go wherever He leads, whenever, however, and with whomever.
4. You must be willing to deny yourself the American dream and live for the Kingdom of God.

As you walk in this Christ-like manner, God will begin to use you. Through that, you will be able to fully realize your call in life. This is how God has worked in me and I know that it is not the only way. There are many others who could also give testimony of how God made His call clear in their lives.

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