

IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN THE U.S.

Winter 2014

CALLED

TO FOLLOW JESUS

PLUS: Taking
your calling
to work

AND Is there a
difference between
calling and career?

THE VIEW FROM HERE

When I learned that the Winter 2014 issue of *In Part* would focus on the theme of calling, I'll admit I began my editorial work with a bit of trepidation. In my experience, the word "calling"—especially in church circles—is often used to describe the work of those individuals whom God has set apart for professional, vocational ministry: pastors, missionaries, bishops, and others. It's never been a word I've associated with my own career aspirations or personal achievements. While the life decisions I've made—to pursue graduate education, to accept new job opportunities, to marry, and to have a child—have all been bathed in fervent prayer, I must be honest: none was shaped by a clear, explicit direction from God.

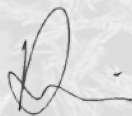
I suspect that some readers of *In Part* can relate to what I've confessed above: to frustration over God's apparent silence about my future, to confusion over God's will for my life and work, to resignation that the language of "calling" might not actually apply to me and to the day-to-day routines of my work, family life, and community involvements.

However, as I began my work on this issue of the BIC magazine, I stumbled upon a book that slowly transformed my thinking. In *Living Faith: Embracing God's Callings* (Cascadia, 2012), Mennonite scholar Keith Graber Miller writes in helpful and practical ways about the true meaning of calling and of God's will for the lives of His people. Graber Miller's main point is simple, but tremendously profound: that the "primary calling of all Christians is simply to be followers of Jesus Christ."

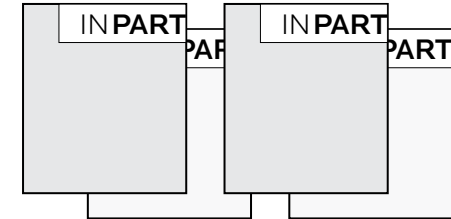
He explains, "To be "called" and to be "Christian" are essentially the same thing. To be called is to see all of the world, and to see our lives, through God's eyes, and to live faithfully as disciples of Jesus."

Essentially, Graber Miller is saying that our journey of discipleship *is* our calling as Christians. God does not "call" us to a specific career or line of work. Instead, God calls us to be faithful disciples in any and every context, and then offers us the freedom to turn our God-given talents, skills, and passions into whatever career we choose. As a result, our daily work—whether as a pastor, a painter, an architect, a stay-at-home parent, a nurse, or a garbage collector—should be infused by the love for God and for neighbor that are natural outcomes of a life yielded in obedience to Christ (Luke 10:27).

This issue of *In Part* seeks to unpack this idea that to be "called" is to follow Jesus by loving God and loving neighbor. My hope and prayer is that this issue of *In Part* helps our entire church family to reflect more deeply and more faithfully on our primary calling as followers of the Risen Lord.



Devin C. Manzullo-Thomas, guest editor



A NOTE TO READERS The Brethren in Christ Church in the U.S. is evaluating how best to steward its communication resources. Therefore, beginning in 2015, *In Part* will switch from a quarterly publication schedule to a twice-yearly schedule, appearing in readers' mailboxes in spring/summer and fall/winter. As always, *In Part* will continue to share the compelling stories of faith from across our BIC community.

Now I know *in part*; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. *I Corinthians 13:12*

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IN MOTION

Ever wondered . . .
what's calling?

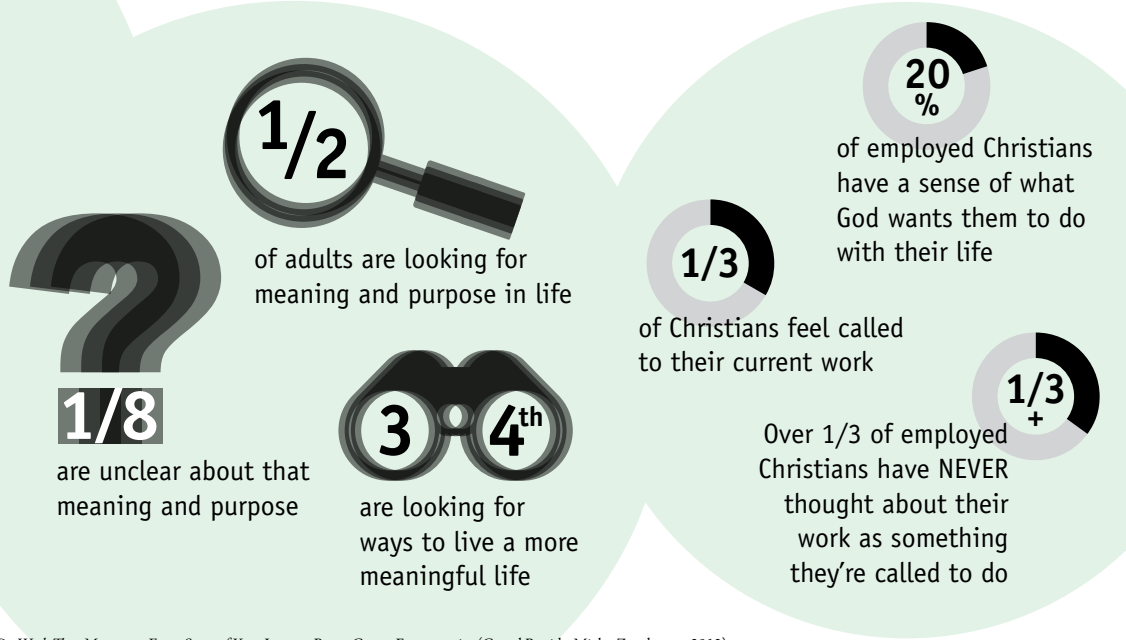
call·ing
| 'kôliNG |

NOUN:
a strong, God-given urge toward a particular way of life; a vocation

USED IN A SENTENCE:
While God may call individual Christians to specific careers or forms of service, the primary calling of every Christian is to follow Jesus by loving God and loving neighbor in all aspects of life.

The Search for (Eternally) Meaningful Work

From teachers to burger-flippers, janitors to doctors, lawyers to stay-at-home parents, everyone wants their work to matter. Christians in particular desire to invest their day-to-day toil with eternal significance. But statistics from the Barna Group, an evangelical Christian research firm, suggest that few of us find our work meaningful—and that only a handful of Christians think of their work as a God-given “calling.”



Statistics from Bob Goff, *Multi-Careering: Do Work That Matters at Every Stage of Your Journey*, Barna Group Frames series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2013)

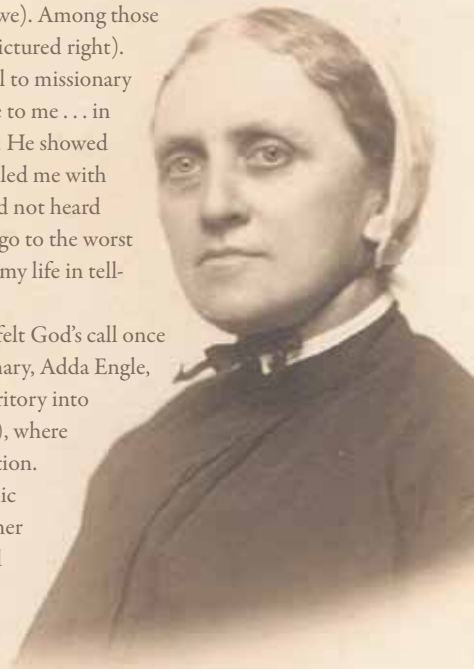
FOCUS FULFILLING AN EXTRAORDINARY CALL

In November 1897, the first BIC missionaries—five in total—set sail from the United States to carry the Gospel message to Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). Among those five pioneers was H. Frances Davidson (pictured right).

Davidson would later describe her call to missionary service in vivid language: “The Lord came to me . . . in the midst of other plans for the future. . . . He showed me Christ lifted up for a lost world. He filled me with an unutterable love for every soul who had not heard of Him, and with a passionate longing to go to the worst part of the earth . . . and spend the rest of my life in telling the story of the Cross.”

After nine years of service, Davidson felt God’s call once again. So she and another woman missionary, Adda Engle, trekked 485 miles through unfamiliar territory into Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia), where they established another BIC mission station.

At a time when women held few public ministry roles, Davidson was revered for her indomitable desire to serve wherever God might lead. As she declared in one of her final diary entries: “My Lord, I want to do Thy will in my life. . . . Live out Thy precious life through me and through me touch other lives.”



TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

NO BOUNDARIES

Christ’s call to limitless love of God and neighbor

by CYNTHIA A. WELLS

“Good fences make good neighbors.” This dictum from poet Robert Frost’s “Mending Wall” is rigorously debated among high school and college students. Is it necessary to build fences between adjacent homes? Are barriers meant to keep things in or prevent them from getting out? Do walls build community or breed isolation? Do we distance ourselves from others in barricades of self-protection? Do fences help neighbors get along—or don’t they?

If Jesus were to weigh in on the question, fence and neighbor wouldn’t be in the same sentence. We sense this clearly in Luke 10, when Jesus aims to break down the boundary the lawyer wants to place around the call to faith. The lawyer’s question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (vs. 25) seems motivated by a desire to determine exactly what baseline parameters are required. Jesus invites the lawyer to answer his own question based on what he sees in the law. The lawyer responds, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (vs. 27). Jesus affirms that he has given the “right answer” and simply says, “Do this, and you will live” (vs. 28).

The lawyer’s retort—“And who is my neighbor?”—is telling (vs. 29). He’d clearly rather “justify” himself than consider changing his way of life. Jesus responds by sharing the story of

→ **FOLLOWING JESUS:** We value whole-hearted obedience to Christ Jesus through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.



Photo: ©iStockphoto.com/DNY59 (fence) | brzusinski (hands)

the Good Samaritan, who is deeply moved at the sight of an injured man, and who defies social convention to bandage him, take him onto his own animal, bring him to an inn, and cover the costs of his care (vs. 30–35). Rather than literally answering the lawyer’s resistant query, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus illustrates how to *be* a neighbor.

It’s easy to find ourselves thinking like the lawyer: searching out the minimum requirements of our faith, placing boundaries around the call to follow Christ. Jesus, however, unconditionally beckons us to be a neighbor. Our ideal of neighbor is embodied by the Samaritan, who disrupted his schedule, opened his wallet, and ignored social norms to show love and mercy. In short,

the Samaritan gave *all* of his heart, soul, mind, and strength to loving God and neighbor. We too are called to overcome the dividing lines that limit our ability to follow Jesus. We are called to a vocation of radical discipleship—a total tearing down of the boundaries we construct or which society imposes. We are called to transformed lives rather than to interpreting Jesus’ words to fit the confines of our comfort level. We are called to break down the walls that keep us from completely embodying our primary vocation as Christians: to love God and neighbor.



Cynthia A. Wells is mom to Gabe, a member of Grantham (Pa.) BIC, and a professor for students at Messiah College, a BIC-affiliated school in Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee

RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL WITH WHOLE-HEARTED DEDICATION BY LYNN THRUSH

Moses was a very long way away, but not far enough nor remote enough to be outside God's sight and call. When Moses led his herd of sheep into the Sinai Peninsula, to what was known as the mountain of God, God called to Moses: "Moses. Moses!" (Ex. 3:4). Out of the vast space of the desert, out of the long years of toil as a shepherd, Moses heard God's special call to lead the people of Israel.

Zacchaeus was the wrong kind of fellow in Israel: not only a tax collector for the Roman Empire, but a *chief* tax collector—a man of great affluence at a time of great need. When Jesus came to town, Zacchaeus wanted to see this great teacher, but because of his short stature he could not see over the assembled crowd. Fortunately, he was in good enough shape to climb a nearby sycamore tree, and that's where he heard the call from Jesus: "Come down immediately; I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5). As a result of this visit, Zacchaeus learned that loving God meant loving his neighbor. Ultimately,

he divested half of his possessions to the poor, and to those whom he'd defrauded in his tax collector days he paid quadruple restitution.

God calls all of us to love God supremely and to love our neighbor as ourselves. He also calls us to special assignments of ministry and service. In each case we are to fully embrace God's call, and that embrace is called consecration.

Consecration and God's call

Consecration is our response to God's call, our affirmation of and commitment to God's purposes for our lives. In other words, consecration is a response of whole-hearted dedication to God's call.

Whole-hearted dedication is hardly a strange request when called to a mission or task. In fact, lots of enterprises—both sacred and secular—ask for such devotion. For instance, my children's decisions to join the high school marching band required major commitment. Consequently, it was very difficult for one of our sons to participate in both soccer and band; both organizations asked for whole-hearted dedication.

In a way, consecration is akin to marriage vows. Because marriage is so comprehensive, so important, and so sacred, it warrants vows signifying whole-hearted dedication to the marital enterprise. We seal these vows with a statement of lifelong obligation: "Til death do us part." So it is with the purposes of God: In order to fulfill the work to which God has called us, consecration is required.

Acts of consecration

Our life in Christ includes many acts of consecration. Baptism is an act of consecration in which one affirms fidelity to the lordship of Christ. Joining a church in membership is another such act wherein one affirms loyalty to the body of Christ. More specifically, those who agree to fulfill a specific ministry in their church for a particular term of service also go through an experience of consecration. When one signs up to serve, attends the required training, and receives prayer on his or her behalf in undertaking the assignment, one enters into the experience of consecration. He or she affirms and commits to whole-hearted dedication to God and His purposes.

Acts of consecration prepare us to fulfill the primary call of all believers: to follow Jesus by loving God and loving neighbor. In April 1952, Bishop Jesse Lady challenged young couples of the Upland (Calif.) Brethren in Christ congregation to go out to some of the smaller churches in the surrounding communities and serve there. Les and Dorothy Guengerich sensed God was speaking to them, and after a time of praying together they decided to travel to nearby Chino and serve the Brethren in Christ congregation there. For the next 62 years, Les and Dorothy served as laypersons in what is now called the Gateway Community Church. Their consecrated service has given life to the congregation.

Acts of consecration also prepare us for specific ministry assignments. A few

years ago, Donna Harvey came to our church in midlife and renewed her decision to follow Christ. Along the way, she found herself drawn to a variety of ministry roles, including leadership roles. She began to prepare herself, consecrating and fully dedicating herself to God's purposes. That process of preparation culminated in her ordination to pastoral ministry, a service in which I participated, at the direction of our bishop. That service of consecration acknowledged her whole-hearted dedication to God's purposes, now expressed through her pastoral ministry.

Alertness to the Spirit and the flesh over time

Consecration is not an event of commitment that happens only at the beginning of one's calling. Instead, it involves lifetime alertness to the Spirit and the flesh. The story of Judah's king Asa is instructive here. Asa had a long tenure as king, 41 years altogether, with remarkable accounts of consecrated trust. Yet somehow, over time, Asa's consecration waned. Tragically, after 35 years of serving as king and trusting in God, the king lapsed. He relied on the king of Aram rather than the Lord God (2 Chron. 16:7), treated his subjects cruelly (2 Chron. 16:10), and consulted pagan physicians rather than turning to God for healing (2 Chron. 16:12). When Hanani the seer tried to confront Asa on his disobedience, Asa had the man imprisoned.

As King Asa's story demonstrates, consecration is to be a lifetime reality in which we remain sensitively alert to promptings of the Spirit and keenly alert to the desires of the flesh. Accept-

ing counsel from other believers and resisting earthly temptations helps us to remain obedient to God's call in the long term. Ultimately, the consecrated life demonstrates endurance and faithfulness in living out God's calling. We stay alert to drift and resist thinking that says, "I deserve better treatment," or "I've served my time," or "I don't have to take this anymore."

Consecration of every aspect of life

For many years the Brethren in Christ sang the hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be." Its lyrics offer a comprehensive prayer, to be sure:

*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee!
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

The hymn writer goes on: take my hands, my feet, my voice, my money, my time, my will, and my heart. The

message of the song is that in consecration we give God every aspect of ourselves—from our material resources to our very bodies—in whole-hearted service. The consecrated life holds nothing back. Such dedication is realistically necessary given the intensity of dilemmas we face in life and the fact that our commitment to God is "til death parts us."

Whether to a specific task of leadership like Moses, or to a general love of God and neighbor like Zacchaeus, God calls each and every one of us. In every case, the proper response to God's call is consecration: whole-hearted dedication to fulfilling God's purposes, a dedication that is life long and all-encompassing. As we seek to be faithful to God's call today, let us echo the words of the hymn writer: "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

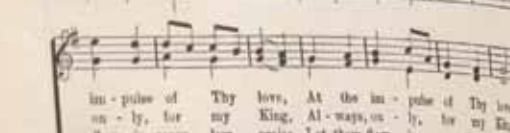


Lynn Thrush is senior pastor of Gateway Community Church (Chino, Calif.), where he has served God and neighbor in consecrated pastoral ministry for 23 years. He and his wife, Carol, have four adult children and two grandchildren.

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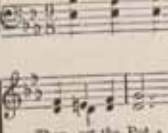
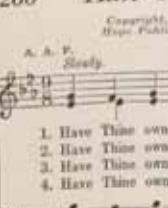
FRANCIS R. HAVERGAL

C. H. A. HALL



CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE

260 Have Thy Will, O God





TAKE YOUR CALLING TO WORK

by JOHN ELTON PLETCHER

Zach's architectural career has lost the razzle-dazzle of earlier years. He wonders if designing fancy, high-priced buildings holds any lasting significance. Perhaps God wants him to respond to a "higher calling."

Maggie owns a mobile veterinary clinic. She loves animals, but deep down, she despises their pesky owners. Amid her frustrations, she wonders if there is any eternal consequence to her daily work with critters.

Ben, a seasoned doctor, sits in yet another board meeting at the hospital, stroking his goatee and twisting what little hair is left on his head. He wonders if all the wrangling *ad nauseam* over administrative minutiae could possibly have heavenly value.

How can Christian mechanics, painters, designers, lawyers, pastors, stay-at-home moms, and math

teachers—or people in any career—discover God's perspective on their daily work? How can they carry the primary call on their lives—to follow Jesus by loving God and neighbor—into their places of work? And how, in so doing, can they contribute to God's mission in the world? Scripture actually reveals quiet truths, often missed amid the frenzy of our preconceived notions and busy lives. If properly applied to our attitudes and actions, such truth can both strengthen our sense of significance and motivate us in healthier ways for the work God assigns us.

The Bible at work

From cover to cover, the Bible echoes a resoundingly positive view of work. Such biblical perspective conveys empowering implications for our own

workplace approaches. Prior to humanity's fall and the resulting curse, work was all good. Genesis 1:26–28 announces the *imago Dei*—the powerful truth that we are made in God's image and hold intrinsic value. What's more, because we are made in God's image, we are uniquely called to reflect His kingly creativity and bring it into our own work. The ancient Hebrew word for *work* conveys rich layers of meaning—including labor, worship, and service.

Adam and Eve's fall and the resulting curse brought about ugly work outcomes (Gen. 3:17–19), but the God of redemption intervened. His plan involved full-scope redemption, the saving of humans as well as the whole of created nature—a process of restoration repeated throughout Scripture and continued today. And, as scholar Darrell Cosden points out in his book

The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work, our work is included in the reach of God's gracious salvation.

Christ probably knew the workplace and its business people quite well, living the bulk of His life as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). Many of Christ's parables shed light on the dynamic relationship between God's kingdom and the ordinary work of Christ's followers. Jesus' classic parable of the "talents" shows that the reward for good work is more work (Matt. 25:14–30). According to theologian Ben Witherington, God is delighted when we do work well, for His glory, matching His purposes. Jesus even declared that His Father was always working and would reveal even greater works (John 5:16–20).

The Apostle Paul declared that creation—which includes ongoing creative works, both God's and ours—is groaning in anticipation of full redemption and glory (Rom. 8:18–22). Our salvation by grace through faith includes God's marvelous new creation and plans for us to do good works (Eph. 2:8–10). Since the original creation included the *imago Dei* and our co-creative work, we can understand such glory to include eventual redemption of tangible work in the New Creation (Isa. 65:21–23; Rev. 21–22).

Highs and lows at work

But, let's be real; we all *still* groan. The longing in Ecclesiastes 2:22 expresses our raw quest for significance: "So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety?" (New Living Translation)

Amid such frustration, the classic approach has been to dichotomize our thinking and compartmentalize our actions. For centuries, people have chosen to split their sacred calling from their secular work, resulting in a great divide. Certain roles and tasks get labeled as high (church services on Sundays, global missions work, and pastoral

roles). Others are deemed low (farming, fixing cars, constructing buildings, and leading a sales team).

God offers us a more holistic vision. For Christians, calling includes all of life as holy vocation. Christ called us to love the Lord with all we are (Matt. 22:37–38) and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Paul insisted that we glorify God in whatever we do (1 Cor. 10:31). Our faith in Christ should have a direct impact on *how* we work every day. We are called to boldly integrate all of life, to serve others for God's glory.

**GOD IS
DELIGHTED**
when we do work
well, for his glory,
**matching his
purposes.**

Missionaries at work

More intentionally integrating our work and faith leads to profound fulfillment of mission. Our daily work actually plays an amazing role in the *missio Dei*, God's mission in this world. When Christ-followers overcome the dualistic thinking of "church" and "work," we can begin to view the daily workplace as our primary mission field.

In *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Christopher Wright argues for greater understanding and application of the *missio Dei*. Such integration will produce a more missional approach in our own workplace stories. Daily work can be infused with a service orientation that truly matches Christ's call to love our neighbors (Matt. 22:39)—including clients, customers, and business contacts—in more profound ways. Theologian Miroslav Volf, in his book *Work in the Spirit*, suggests

we can actually serve in our everyday jobs in more energized ways, based on our spiritual gifts. With new life in Christ, we now fulfill God's original mission as His co-workers. We "rule and reign" as He originally intended. We help create new culture, and we partner with Him in His kingly, redemptive plans for a new kingdom (Matt. 5–7). Kingdom workers enact justice, right wrongs, heal the sick, feed the poor, and cultivate human flourishing.

In addition, glorious work in the here and now leads to further opportunities for more effective witness. Relationships can be cultivated over time and lead to conversations of eternal consequence. Curiosity can be piqued. Co-workers and other work associates can ask questions, opening deeper and wider conversations regarding the life-changing hope found in Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

Moreover, when we embrace and embody God's mission in our everyday jobs, our work can make Christ more and more famous! The outcomes of our daily work glorify God and have lasting significance. As we offer stellar products and services, reflecting our original Creator, we are in fact fulfilling our call to love God with all we have (Matt. 22:37–38).

Faith at work

Deep down, we all feel those frustrations with Zach, Maggie, and Ben. So we each must ask: *Will I purposefully take my faith calling, strengthened by biblical truth, into my daily workplace so God is glorified?* When we do, we discover a marvelous match-up of our efforts with God's redemptive mission. Every Christ-follower can become a workplace missionary. Will you passionately take your calling to work?



John Elton Pletcher is lead pastor of Manor Church (Lancaster, Pa.). He explores the spiritual dimensions of our everyday work in *Henry's Glory: A Story of Discovering Lasting Significance in Your Daily Work* (Resource Publications, 2013).



CALLING

Stories of everyday people loving God & neighbor in extraordinary ways

ALL of us have a calling: to follow Jesus by loving God and loving neighbor. And *ALL* of us live out that calling wherever we go—in our workplaces, our homes, our neighborhoods—and among everyone we meet, including our co-workers, our families, and the members of our communities.

In the following essays, people from the BIC Church share stories of living out their everyday callings in extraordinary ways. Their reflections remind us that in *ALL* we say and do, we have the opportunity to reveal Christ's limitless love and grace to those around us. At our jobs, among our families, and in our neighborhoods, we *ALL* live out our calling—to the glory of God.

by Rachel Diaz



Attorney Rachel Diaz meets with a client in her office in Miami, Fla.

My mother put me in piano lessons when I was five years old. And though I learned sonatas and waltzes, Beethoven and Mozart, I was learning to play piano to serve the Lord. My mother has always been involved in every facet of church life, and so she thought it would be a good plan to have a piano-playing kid. “Churches always need a piano player,” she would say. From an early age, I understood that the purpose of being a pianist was to serve the Lord.

One day, years later, I decided to go to law school and become an attorney. And though I was learning Constitutional law and legal procedure, due process and civil rights, I was learning it all to serve the Lord.

My decision to practice immigration law was simple. I was born and raised in the U.S. while living in Hispanic culture. Everyone around me seemed to be from somewhere else. My church had people from all over Latin America. The immigrant and the immigrant experience were as common as anything else at church. Being an immigration attorney was an obvious fit.

Today I serve people from our BIC church family who need guidance and help with their immigration matters. I represent undocumented men, women, children, and families. Everyone's situation is unique, yet every story has the same plot and every person the same plea. The pain and fear and desperation of so many people weigh on me. I pray, “God, please give me grace. Give me wisdom. Give me favor to be of help.”

One of the many times I have prayed this prayer has been in the case of David*, a 22-year-old young man detained in immigration custody for being in the U.S. without documentation. He's been there since October 2013. We prayed every time we met. We prayed every time we went before the judge.

I filed paperwork. I prepared for trial. Together, we went before the judge knowing we would not have a successful outcome. We prayed after we lost our case. I was overwhelmed with sadness thinking of all that losing his case meant for David's present and future.

He'll be sent back to his country in a couple of weeks. He'll be returning to a country he doesn't want to return to, and leaving a country he doesn't want to leave.

But before he leaves, we will pray.

David didn't get the outcome he so desperately wanted, but Jesus showed up and met with him every time we prayed.

Sometimes practicing law is like practicing the piano: It's hard, and I don't always want to do it. But I do it because the Church always needs people to help the “least of these.” I am an attorney so that I can serve the Lord.

Rachel Diaz serves as an attorney with the immigration program of Menno-nite Central Committee East Coast in South Florida. Along with her husband and two daughters, she attends La Roca Firma BIC (Hialeah, Fla.).

* For reasons of confidentiality, this individual's name has been changed.



Meadow and Jeff Piepho of Salina, Kans., with their children

Last week I received a call from our foster care agency: There's another child in need of care. He's two years old and mom was arrested. It's only for three days. Can we take him? I think about my hectic schedule, my other responsibilities, and the five children we're already raising. Then, I think about the little boy's soul. Yes, we can take him.

And so I find myself scrambling for diapers and clothes, praying that the little guy won't send my house into chaos—and hoping that I won't become too attached in the short time we have him. Because, for each of the 43 children we've welcomed, a little piece of my heart breaks. I think, "Break my heart for the things that break yours, Lord!" In fulfilling God's call to foster and adopt, I'm finding that a broken heart is inescapable.

For years, my husband and I have been on this wild ride and have experienced the greatest blessings and deepest pain—sometimes simultaneously! Countless people have said they could never do what we do. My response is usually, "You *could* do what I'm doing! You just have to decide that the risk of a broken heart is worth helping a child. As adults, we can choose to take that risk; the broken-hearted children in state care don't have a choice."

God's call is that we help the orphan; He makes that clear throughout Scripture. I like to think that God especially loves foster care, since He entrusted His Son to an earthly foster dad (of sorts). And today the need is so great that it cannot be ignored: According to the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, over 400,000 children are currently in state foster care in the United States. Those reasons keep me going when being a foster parent gets difficult.

And it is difficult. But it seems that when the situations get more extreme, there are more opportunities for touching people for Jesus. The great thing about my job as a foster parent is that I can talk about Jesus to every one of my "clients." Not only that, but we've had the opportunity to share the Gospel with biological parents, whose rock-bottom circumstances lay their hearts bare and their messy lives wide open. So many of them are in need of a parent, too.

I recall one teen girl who stayed in our home for less than 24 hours. I became convicted that I hadn't told her about Jesus yet, so with an officer on the way to pick her up and tears on my cheeks, I remember rushing into her room and saying, "Please trust Jesus! Don't put your trust in people; you've seen how they have let you down time and time again. Jesus is the only one you can truly trust."

My heart breaks for her and for the other children in care who have been let down again and again by parents, by the system, by others who turned a blind eye. My great desire and calling is that these precious ones would know that Jesus loves them, that He is worthy of their trust, and that He can heal their wounds. Isn't that what we all need?

Meadow Piepho and her husband, Jeff, founded Revolution BIC (Salina, Kans.) ten years ago. Raising five children (ages 3–8), leading a foster care/adoption support group, and volunteering in the public schools also keep her hopping. Sometimes she sleeps.



"For active love is a harsh and fearful thing compared to love in dreams. Love in dreams thirsts for immediate action, quickly performed, and with everyone looking on. Whereas active love is labor and perseverance, and for some people, perhaps, a whole science."

—Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

These words have haunted me ever since I first read them as a first-year student at Messiah College, a BIC-affiliated school in Mechanicsburg, Pa. I recognized myself in Dostoevsky's description of dream love; I still do. But I also yearn for something better. I am conscious of being called by God to the harsh, fearful, and utterly beautiful reality of active love—the love Jesus showed us on the cross—and this passage has served as a reminder of His calling in my life.

Dostoevsky's words were also among those echoing in my heart when I accepted the call, following three years of seminary in privileged Princeton, N.J., to plant a new congregation in an impoverished neighborhood of Dayton, Ohio. Anyone who is foolish enough to move from a place like Princeton to a neighborhood full of poverty and crime is likely to need such reminders. I am tempted every day in this difficult context to substitute dream love for the real thing. I still lust for dramatic, noble-seeming actions that would issue in quick results and easy answers for the hurting and broken people around me. Dream love, however, can heal no one and solve nothing. It is a counterfeit—an empty copy of Jesus' love, which always expresses itself on a cross.

It was that love that took me from Princeton to East Dayton. And that love, I'm discovering, is no discrete commitment. It has no limits and sets no boundaries. It carries obligations and costs that cannot be measured in advance. It continues to give in the absence of reciprocation. It surrenders every demand for control and accepts into itself the pain of uncertainty. It is, above all else, patient.



Every other attribute of love—its kindness, its selflessness—can be temporarily imitated. But only Jesus' love has the ability, day after day, over many years, to love an unloveable person quietly and without thanks or recognition.

I've only lived in this neighborhood for a little over two years, and yet that has been long enough for me to discover my lack of patience and poverty in love. But here is the good news: Though my love is pale and dreamlike most days, the inexhaustible love of God, made visible in Jesus, still stands and shines with the radiance of a thousand suns over my life. It shines over my little church and this hurting neighborhood, warmly illuminating everything. His love calls me forward, promising to recreate itself in me and, through me, to recreate itself in others.

It caught hold, one night, of a weeping heroin addict whom I held in my arms after she crumpled in despair onto the sidewalk outside my house. I felt inadequate and at a loss. I had nothing to give her, I thought, and no way to help her. I prayed the name of Jesus over her, offering nothing but His love. What a foolish thought—love *only*. The love of Christ works miracles every day! It has, does, and will always suffice. That same woman has been free of drugs for over a year now, is on the honor roll as a full-time college student, and is nearly ready to regain custody of her daughter—all thanks to the active, inexorable, unbreakable, fearsome, and holy love of Jesus Christ. She still struggles every day, but the love of Christ struggles with her, strong enough to tame her chaos and heal her wounds if she will only keep submitting to its awesome power.

Jesus' love is a summons to die *and* the gift of life. It cannot be the latter without also being the former. By God's grace, I will continue to die into and live through His love until, one day, I wake up in a world made new by its power.

Zach Spidel is the site pastor for The Shepherd's Table (Dayton, Ohio), a daughter congregation of Fairview (Ohio) BIC. Among other things, he enjoys reading, biking, and baking. You can read more of his writing at LIKESHININGFROMSHOOKFOIL.WORDPRESS.COM.

by Zach Spidel



Zach Spidel pastors The Shepherd's Table, a BIC congregation in East Dayton, Ohio.

TO THE POINT

CALLING *or* CAREER?

Is there a difference between our “calling” and the everyday work we do at our jobs? Voices from our BIC community help us to distinguish between “calling” and “career.”

“Whitworth College professor Gerald Sittser offers a helpful distinction between ‘calling’ and ‘career.’ He defines ‘calling’ as a theological word that refers to ‘a God- given purpose to use one’s time, energy, and abilities to serve God in the world.’ The word ‘career’ is not theological; it refers to a ‘particular line of work that a person does that earns an income, requires education and training, and keeps society running.’ The two words overlap. Career is often central to how a person fulfills his or her calling, but it is only a part of a person’s vocation, and sometimes it plays only a very minor role.

Vocation is a fluid concept. It refers to a life journey filled with successes, disappointments, joys, sorrows, and surprises. Life is not a straight line, and we often discover that it is the crook in the road, the hill up ahead, or the unexpected vista that truly enriches our lives. . . .

Regardless of careers or other roles, the Apostle John expresses our primary vocation when he tells us that we are called to love God and that God abides in us if we abide in love (1 John 4:16). . . . The joy of life’s journey comes from the opportunity available to each of us to experience, experiment, and explore the possibilities, all the while trusting our God to use our failures and successes for good. We are all pilgrims on a journey seeking to fulfill our unique calling as servants of God.”

—Kim S. Phipps,
Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, Pa.)

This excerpt was adapted from Kim’s article in the Winter 2002 issue of *The Bridge* magazine, with permission from the editor.

“A calling is not based on a job title. It is the work in which you know God wants you to be doing; in fact, God seems to have shaped you for it. The work or task seems to fit you like a glove. It seems God created you for it. It could be anything: barber, financial planner, pastor, housewife, custodian, mechanic, and so forth.

As author and priest Brennan Manning writes in *The Wisdom of Tenderness: What Happens When God’s Fierce Mercy Transforms Our Lives*, ‘Everybody has a vocation to some form of life-work. However, behind that call (and deeper than any call), everybody has a vocation to be a person to be fully and deeply human in Christ Jesus.’ With this in mind, we can all enjoy our callings.”

—John Melhorn,
Faith BIC (Essex, Md.)

PARTING WORDS

A MINISTRY OF DIRTY DISHES

Remembering that everything we do is for the furthering of God’s kingdom

by PERRY ENGLE

Most every evening around 6:30 I think of Nicolas Herman. This is generally the time of day when I help my wife, Marta, clean up the dinner dishes. She has already done the heavy lifting of buying, preparing, cooking, and presenting a meal that is both extravagantly tasty and wonderfully healthy. After dinner, all I have to do is rinse the dirty dishes and place them in the dishwasher.

Nicolas Herman was a French veteran of the Thirty Years’ War. After being injured in the war, he ended up in a Carmelite monastery in Paris. He didn’t have the necessary education to become a cleric, and so he resigned himself to being a lay brother. He spent most of his years at the monastery washing dishes and repairing sandals. Once there, Nicolas took the lofty religious name of “Lawrence of the Resurrection.” People who knew him simply called him Brother Lawrence.

Brother Lawrence wrote about the spirituality of everyday tasks. His little book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, is a collection of his writings compiled after he died in relative obscurity in 1691. In his reflections, this man who never attained the position of pastor or priest told of experiencing the presence of God in tasks as mundane as washing dishes.

One of his most famous sayings refers to time spent in his kitchen: “The time of business does not with me

differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees before the Blessed Sacrament.”

Brother Lawrence has always inspired me, not just because I’ve always disliked washing the dishes (which I do with a passion) but because he reminds me of the profound calling on the lives of ordinary followers of Christ. We understandably celebrate the roles of those who are called to work within the context of the Church—pastors, bishops, and others—but we often fail to appreciate the calling of the 99 percent of people who work outside of the Church with extraordinary commitment to following Jesus. Teachers, business people, janitors, truck drivers, and stay-at-home moms and dads are all called into ministry by God.

The point is that every single one of us has a calling, and everything we do is for the furthering of God’s kingdom.

Brother Lawrence would teach us that it’s not about vocation, but *invocation*. It’s about inviting God into every duty, job, position, or act of service. It’s



Photo: ©iStockphoto.com/RyanJLane

about every believer embracing the joy of following Jesus no matter where God has called them, or how great or insignificant the task.

Said Brother Lawrence, “We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.” So every evening around 6:30, when I’m rinsing and scrubbing dishes, I remember Nicolas Herman—a.k.a. Brother Lawrence—and the little things I’m doing “for the love of God.”

Even though I still dislike doing dishes. Always have, and probably always will.



Perry Engle believes that the greatest invention of the Industrial Age is the automatic dishwasher. When not obsessing about major appliances, Perry serves as bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Regional Conferences. He and his wife, Marta, and their family live in Ontario, Calif.

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NIKKI GRANT



STEP Honduras 2013–14

Trinity Life Church (Sherkston, ON, Canada)

“During my STEP experience, I connected with a lady who ran a children’s home where we were volunteering. We started talking and she asked me to come and intern with their home for as long as I was able to. So, two months after completing my STEP experience, I returned to Honduras for three months to serve again. During my time at the home, I helped the kids with homework and spent time with the directors and their children. I was also able to connect with the church I had attended during my time with the STEP program.”

STEP Honduras 2013–14

Cowboy Church (Henrietta, Texas)

“STEP is an adventure, but it’s also a growing experience. During my time in Honduras I learned many things: how to evangelize in different ways, how to speak a new language, how to mix concrete with a shovel, how to live in community with God and with others, and how to work and live as a team. Being so isolated from the norms of North American life, I also learned how to rely on God as I never had before. I learned that I was weak, but He, in turn, is strong.”

KRISTIN JOHNSON



ERYCA TESTERMENT



STEP Colombia 2012–3

Westside Christian Community Church
(Springfield, Ohio)

“I would encourage anyone who has even the slightest bit of interest in ministry to experience STEP. The experience is life changing and has opened so many doors for me. God is at the center of this ministry and He is in the business of changing lives for His glory through STEP!”