

How do I know I have a calling?

One of the things that is critical if you want to be a missions worker, is a sense of calling. It motivates and energises you, it sustains you through the difficult times. The sense that you know God has a task for you, or a place for you to be, is essential if you're going to be effective in your ministry. Yet it's also something that's extremely hard to define. It varies from person to person, and depends on how they relate to God, and on the type of church they're part of. Some people feel they have prophetic words spoken to them, others have a vague sense that something is right, or a deep empathy for a place or a people. Who is right? Well, they all are, because a calling is as unique and personal to you as your relationship with God. But here are some pointers as to how you may know something is 'right'.

Lifelong interest. A lot of people who work in missions have had an interest from an early age in a people group or a country. Is there somewhere you've always wanted to go, ever since you were a child?

Your skills and experience. Do the things that you have learned and done equip you to bring something special to a mission field? When you come across a list of personnel vacancies, do you think 'I could do that'? Or do you have a connection with a particular place?

The advice of your friends. As you share your plans for missions work with your family, friends, what is their response? Do they generally support your plans, or think it's a bad idea? If a large number of praying Christians feel something is God's plan, it may well be. *In abundance of counsellors there is victory* (Proverbs 11:14)

The input of your church leaders. It is important to note that the biblical model is for the local church to be the sending church. Your leaders will need to confirm your calling. (See also *What do I do if my church leaders don't support me?*).

Biblical inspiration. When you read the Bible, do you find certain verses jumping out at you? Do they fit a pattern? What is God telling you through this?

Connection. Have you got links with a place or a people that interests you? When someone writes to you from a certain country, does their vision set alight something in your soul?

'Coincidence'. Do you find yourself regularly encountering people from the same place, or organisation? Does a certain place keep getting mentioned on tv or in conversations?

God speaking. While Christians may disagree on exactly how God speaks, we do at least agree that God communicates with us. Do you have a feeling that God is asking you to work in missions?

Circumstances. Is what is happening in your life leading you to a turning point? Maybe you've recently been made redundant, or your children have left home. Perhaps you've come into some money. These may be ways in which God is freeing you up to serve him, and what seems like a personal tragedy may actually be a new beginning.

Conviction. This is an inner sense of certainty, a belief that something is right. It will be central to you discerning a calling.

If many of these factors point in the same direction, not just one or two, and if you are prayerfully seeking God's will for your life, this may constitute a calling. But don't go on a whim, or a hope. Make sure you have a solid conviction that this move is right for you!