

What to do if your church leaders don't agree that you have a calling

This is a challenging situation which a number of people find themselves in. The immediate reaction might be to leave the church and find one that is more sympathetic. Or to simply strike out on your own. We've all heard of people who've done this successfully, but this might not be the right response from you.

Your church leaders (presumably) know you well, and should be listened to. They are in that position because they have the maturity to make godly decisions, and they are responsible to God for your spiritual wellbeing. That doesn't mean they'll always make the right decisions, but they should at least make them responsibly.

Get to know them better. Perhaps they don't know you that well after all. This could be quite common if your church is large. Make sure that you attend meetings, and are active in the church, so that they can get to know you better and understand where you're coming from .

Continue to develop your calling. The fact that you can't go, doesn't mean you can't be involved. Pray for the country/ministry/people. Support others who can go. Attend conferences. Go on short-term visits. Seek out overseas nationals in this country to minister to. Keep your dream alive, and demonstrate your commitment to it.

Help them develop a passion for missions. Sadly, some churches just don't have a heart for missions. They aren't aware of the need to spread the good news worldwide and don't want to lose people with good ministries here. So help them. Talk about it. Try to organise mission events. Ask if a representative from a mission agency can come and talk to them. Ask them to come on a short-term visit with you – that could really change someone's perspective!

Pray that God will help them make the right decision. The elders meeting together confirmed the calling of Barnabas and Saul as the result of a revelation. Pray that the same thing would happen to your church leaders, if he really wants you to go.

If they continue to feel you don't have a calling, listen to them. As much as it may hurt you to hear it, they may be right. Not everyone is called to go, and there may be very good reasons why you're not one of them. Ask them to explain their decision fully. There may be valid reasons why your character and gifting don't suit you for life as a mission worker. The knowledge you gain from a frank response might help you to take action so that you become the right person.

If you do feel you have to find another church, remember it is going to take you a long time to build up relationships there to the point where you can be sent by them. Although it may be harder, you might actually be better off working with your existing church than starting again from scratch.