

# How can I be sure God wants me to go?

It's always hard to discern God's will, since many of us believe that when we talk about a 'calling', we are talking about a bolt of lightning from heaven, or a powerful prophetic word, or at the very least an unshakeable conviction that we have a God-given, all-consuming mission. But many of us don't have those experiences, so does that mean God doesn't want us to go?

Of course not. And while it's important to have a sense of calling if mission is something you're intending to dedicate your life to, short-term mission is often about investigating that calling. So it's actually more important that we try things out, push on doors, take opportunities and see what God does with us. Perhaps if we're not called after all, doors may close, finance may not appear, or for some other reason it will not work out. The important thing is that you are prayerfully taking steps to serve God.

So in the absence of the angel Gabriel arriving in your bedroom telling you to go on a mission trip, here are some practical ways to work out whether God wants you to go include:

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 support your actions.

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?

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.