

Uncle Sam Says “I Want You!” Instead, God Asks Who Will Go

I worked in the non-profit world for 46 years and met some pretty wonderful people during that time. Many were motivated employees but even more were volunteers – people who donated their time, skills and energy for a worthwhile cause. What each person brought to the table were the gifts that God had given them. Some had great people skills. Some had natural leadership abilities and could motivate others to work together for the common good. Some were skilled at a particular task while others brought wisdom. Others had connections in the community that helped the organization fulfill its purpose. They were great volunteers who made the organization better fulfill its purpose.

We have all heard the punch line of the familiar bible story: “Here am I. Send Me.” What many of us miss is the first part of the passage. The more complete verse says, *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8).* What many of us overlook is that God did not ask Isaiah to do anything. Isaiah *overheard* God talking. It was a choice. Isaiah’s heart was prepared to serve. So, he volunteered.

A conclusion we can reach from this story is that God doesn’t come to us with a flash of lightning, roll of thunder or a booming voice. He places in our path an opportunity to serve and the willingness in our heart. It is a choice, not a directive. There is no finger pointed in our face. God doesn’t say to any of us – “Now you go.” He doesn’t force His will on any of us. He didn’t with Isaiah either. Isaiah was in the presence of God when he overheard the need, and he answered the call.



If we want to know what God wants us to do we also need to seek God’s presence in our life. Then we will be able to understand the needs God wants us to address. A great example is when Jesus was recruiting His disciples. The men were in the presence of Jesus and responded to the need. *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” (Matthew 4:19).*

During World War I the U.S. Army needed people to defend the cause of freedom. “Uncle Sam Wants You” posters were everywhere 100 years ago. People looking at the poster could see a finger pointed directly at them, accompanied by an intently serious “Uncle Sam” looking them directly in the face. There was no military draft at that time. As a result, our country was protected by people willing to volunteer, risking their life for the cause of freedom. God doesn’t have a draft either. He desires closeness with His people so that they will see how they can use the skills and abilities gifted to them to do good things in His name. At my YMCA, chamber and the church I have clearly seen how people have been motivated by faith and empowered by God to do great things “in his name.”

Don’t sit on your hands hoping that God will point His finger at you, saying “I want you.” He doesn’t work that way. God wants you but the choice is clearly yours. Serving is a choice, not a command. Instead, be open to serving the needs of others because of your faith. Live in the presence of God, letting Him warm your heart. Then, in perfect freedom, you can say, “Here am I! Send me.”

Question: Can you name some times when you felt God’s call to do something to help others? Where do you volunteer in your community? Are you listening for His call?

Prayer: Dear Lord. You understand the needs in our family, our community and our world. You have prepared us for this moment. Warm our hearts so we will be willing to step up in service to you. Amen.