

The Tests of Process¹

It's so easy for us to assign to our experiences and burdens an authority that renders them untouchable and above evaluation. Not that we should ignore or reject these things, for they may well be an important means by which God directs us. But they are not the only means, nor are they authoritative.

Experiences and burdens must be subordinated to an objective process of evaluation and qualification based upon God's Word. Wisdom sees experiences and burdens as invitations to do the following things:

- *Pray.* Do you consistently pray about your calling? A practical step: Schedule regular personal retreats where you are able to both stoke your sense of call and lay it on the altar before the Lord.
- *Pursue counsel and evaluation.* Are you actively and consistently pursuing wisdom through the counsel of men who know you and your sense of call? A practical step: Develop regular times with your pastor where you take initiative to disclose weaknesses and sins, and invite his critique and insight into your personal life.
- *Study.* Are you deepening your theological well through a systematic study of sound doctrine and biblical theology? A practical step: Ask your pastor for a book list to study, and submit to a plan to complete that study over time.
- *Mature.* Would your life actually model, in an ongoing way, the qualities we discussed from 1 Timothy and Titus? A practical step: Seek regular accountability and correction with those closest to you, beginning with your spouse (if applicable). As Wayne Grudem says, "It is not optional that their lives be examples for others to follow; it is a requirement."²
- *Get your house in order.* Often the path into calling is a sacrificial one, where a man must live lean and flexible. Are you positioned in life to sacrifice to pursue your call? I know a number of men, for example, whose ability to act on an opportunity has been blocked by excessive debt. A practical step: Get rid of all the debt you can, and stay that way.
- *Patiently persevere.* Are you committed to waiting for God to bring you into ministry rather than you seizing the next reasonable opportunity? A practical step:

¹ Excerpted from Dave Harvey, "Am I Called? Discerning the Summons to Ministry" (Number 3 in the Sovereign Grace *Perspectives* Series), pp 43–44. © 2005 Sovereign Grace Ministries. All rights reserved. This paper is made available free of charge in this format from Sovereign Grace Ministries for use by individuals, churches, or other groups. Reproduction and distribution of up to 50 paper copies of this material is encouraged; under no circumstances may a charge be rendered to the recipient. For permission to reproduce more than 50 copies, please contact Sovereign Grace Ministries. The *Perspectives* series is available for purchase at www.SovereignGraceMinistries.org.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) p 916.

Develop success in a vocation so you won't be looking to the ministry to survive in life.

These tests of process are born of biblical wisdom and experience. At bottom, they do one simple thing. They keep us on the path of righteousness, so we can leave the destination to God.