

Pastor Sailer's Page

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VOLUNTEER OR DRAFTEE?

How does God recruit us for His service?

The Church is the greatest volunteer organization in the world...or is it? Very few laypeople are paid for the time they give in service to the Lord and His Church. (Any ushers been paid lately? What about you greeters? How about the Acts of Faith group who performed the skit last Wednesday evening? And what about you who bring treats for Sunday School or Bible study? Did anyone hand you \$10?) Yes, from this perspective of not being compensated for your efforts, the Church is fueled by the energy of its volunteers.

Some years ago, Bruce Wurdemann, who at the time was working for Lutheran Hour Ministries, passed along the following story. His words make me stop and reconsider the issue of volunteerism in the Church. Here's what Bruce wrote –

One day several years ago, I set out on a quest. I was leading a workshop on recruiting and working with volunteers in the church and wanted to find Biblical examples of volunteers. Now that sounds easy, but it isn't. Moses doesn't work – he tried to get out of the job that God called him to do. Saul hid in the baggage when they tried to make him king. David wasn't with his brothers when Samuel went on the hunt for the next king.

The New Testament didn't yield any real volunteers, either. Not one of the disciples applied for the job. Paul had to be stopped in his tracks on the road to Damascus. Timothy and Titus seem to have been recruited.

The closest I could come to a volunteer in the Bible is in Isaiah 6:1-13. Isaiah found himself in the very throne room of the God of the Universe.

In the midst of angels flying around, buildings shaking and hot coals cleansing unclean lips, Yahweh would ask, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" I'm about to find my volunteer! Isaiah's response is, "Here am I. Send me!" A Biblical volunteer! But wait. There wasn't anyone else there! Are you really a volunteer if you're the only one around when someone asks for volunteers?

I've come to the conclusion that there are no true Biblical volunteers. All are draftees. All, like Isaiah, are "men (and women) of unclean lips." All are in need of God's cleansing grace. All of them and all of us have been brought to God's throne of grace not by their own volition, but by the action and activity of the Holy Spirit. It strikes me that there are, therefore, no true volunteers in the church today. We've all been drafted, recruited, called into this Church. We've all been given special gifts that can and should be used in grateful service to our God and to our fellow man. My service in His Church is a grateful response to Him for the forgiveness he earned for me in Jesus. Isaiah isn't the volunteer I was searching for. Neither am I. Come to think of it, there was one volunteer – the One who voluntarily gave up His life for me! I thank God for that Volunteer!

Thought-provoking words, aren't they? Well, whatever you are – volunteer or draftee (and I lean heavily toward regarding you as a draftee) – I am grateful for your service in our congregation. We are a congregation rich in people resources, folks who willingly give of their time, talents, and treasures to make a difference here, near and far.

Thank you for your service, you draftee of the Lord, you! God has made use of you in wonderful ways to accomplish His will and enrich our lives through your service.