

How Do You Know What God Wants?

I don't know about you, but as soon as I became a Christian I wanted to do something *FOR* God. I was a pregnant teen who found forgiveness and freedom, and I wanted to make my life count for Him.

Over the years I found many ways to serve Him, and to be truthful it was a lot of work. I taught Sunday school, led Bible studies, and volunteered in numerous ministries in church. I found myself wanting to shout, "No, enough is enough!" I was burned out to say the least. By burning myself out, I thought I was saying, "Yes" to God.

Over time I learned that there is a difference between saying yes to my ideas vs. saying yes to God.

So how do you know what God wants? And how do you say yes?

Awareness.

God's calling to you will be different from His calling to anyone else. What is He asking of you? Ask God to make you aware. For example, in 1999 I read an article about orphans in China and my heart was stirred. Over the years I was drawn to adopt. It took many years before my husband was open to the idea, yet God made me aware of the plight of orphans long before He called me to do anything about it. It took 10 years from the time God made me aware of the situation until we brought a baby girl home. But it all started with God making me aware of the need.

Forgiveness and Freedom.

Looking back at my life, there is a “before” and “after” aspect to working for God vs. allowing God to work in my life. What was the transforming moment? It came when I attended a post-abortion Bible Study. I faced the past sin that still plagued me and took my pain and shame to God once and for all. I realized His forgiveness, and I embraced the freedom that grace provided for me.

None of us can step forward in the work of God until we deal with the old junk that is weighing us down. We can only say yes to God when we give Him all areas of our hearts, even the areas we try to hide. Especially the areas we try to hide.

Conviction.

We can be aware of and burdened for many things, but conviction is God's call for us to do something. Conviction goes beyond your knowledge of a problem. It's a piercing of your heart, knowing that God wants YOU to do something about it. In 1998 my pastor asked if I'd be interested in helping to start a crisis-pregnancy center.

At the time I was a happy and content wife, mother and writer. I didn't “need” another ministry. Yet, as I prayed about it, God convicted me. “Yes, your articles and books are going around the world, but what are you doing to help the young women in your own community—just as you were helped?”

These weren't audible words, but God's message to my heart was clear. He wanted me to say yes to Him in this area—not because I needed another ministry but because He needed someone to love on young women who are often condemned and abandoned. Conviction helped me understand God's heart. Conviction also invited me to join God at work.

Acceptance.

The final step in saying yes to God is realizing His plans may

be different from your own. I never planned to be a pregnancy-center director, a teen-mother mentor, or even an adoptive mom. Once I accepted these callings, I found great joy in living them out. This showed me that God knew me even better than I knew myself.

We're told to "dream big" when we're young, and I did. Then I had to accept that God had even bigger dreams than I ever imagined. I also accepted the fact that if God called me to these areas, He was calling my family, too. My three children were with me often as I served at the pregnancy center. They've become close friends with some of the young moms I've mentored. And they're big brothers and a big sister to the kids we've adopted.

For so long I felt guilty that these callings were taking time away from my kids. Now I accept that God had plans for my kids, in them, too. Each of my older kids is a servant of God in his or her own way.

I know without a doubt that my saying yes to God has been a model and inspiration for their doing the same. My older kids have grown up not worrying about doing something FOR God; instead they're following God's leading and calling in various ways. They understand that following God isn't just about them but about a world that God wants us to reach one yes at a time.

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