

Listen to God's Voice, Follow His Call

We often talk about movements for the kingdom of God, but I have learned over the years how important individual people are to God's plans. All of us are on a journey, and God brilliantly connects us all in the most unexpected ways so that we can help each other along the path.

Our geography may change along with our age, but it's so important to honor the lifelong relationships that God gives to us as precious gifts. Christina Styles is one of those gifts—not just to me, but to many people. She has served on the front lines of several recent movements.

Prior to her current role caring for mothers and babies through adoption advocacy, Styles has served TheCall stadium prayer rallies, grass-roots pro-life advocacy through Bound4LIFE, and 24/7 prayer and worship at the International House of Prayer-Kansas City (IHOP-KC). When we spoke recently at Zoe's House Adoption Agency, Styles retraced the path of her journey and revealed the keys she's discovered to following the voice of God.

Matt Lockett: To say you've lived in many places over the past 12 years is really quite an understatement. Could you give us a run down and share what led you to move in each case?

Christina Styles: I grew up in a small town in Iowa, just outside of Council Bluffs. When I graduated high school, I visited Kansas City for the One Thing Conference and it kind of shook everything up in my life.

So I went back home and I got connected with this small house of prayer in Council Bluffs. Gradually I felt an invitation to return to Kansas City and be a part of the prayer movement, to be an intercessory missionary at the International House of

Prayer. I came and I joined the NightWatch team—praying with them from midnight to 6 a.m. for a year or so. Then I transitioned out of that into a more normal, healthy daytime prayer schedule.

Soon after that, I was helping interview people who were coming on staff at IHOP-KC. This one woman had finished an internship and said she wanted to continue to sow into the prayer room, and also she had been hired to work with TheCall. She jokingly says to me, “And I need an assistant and we need a couple of other people, so if you know anybody who needs a job”

My sister was looking, so I told her, “Hey, I hear that TheCall office is hiring.” She applied, she gets hired and then the woman who I had interviewed calls me and says, “I don’t know if you’re looking for a different job here in Kansas City, but I’m still looking for an assistant.” So by sheer circumstance, I get hired to work with TheCall—a team uniting the church in prayer assemblies.

Soon after, TheCall moves me to San Diego, California, for a four-month blitz to get ready for a massive stadium gathering. So I was able to serve both with TheCall and with the house of prayer in San Diego where young adults led prayer meetings every day. So I worked in TheCall office all day mobilizing California churches to come to that stadium prayer gathering, then I’d go to those small prayer meetings in the evenings.

TheCall San Diego left a big impact on my heart, and so did TheCall DC that same year. It was my first time to serve alongside Bound4LIFE, which was a thrill to me because of my own pro-life journey.

After TheCall San Diego in 2008, I moved back to Kansas City and in late 2009 I had a dream where the Lord invited me to move to Washington, D.C., to be a friend of Jesus by being part of Bound4LIFE. When I look back, that was the thread that

pulled me through that whole two years—an invitation to be a friend of Jesus on the East Coast.

I spent two years there serving God in the pro-life prayer movement. Then through a series of events, I returned here to Kansas City and am now working at Zoe's House Adoption Agency.

Matt Lockett: Think about the person who doesn't feel like they hear God in ways such as dreams or a clear word. How do you know when it's time to move or make a big life change?

Christina Styles: There is something to be said about the movement of the Holy Spirit related to inner peace. I've found that is completely apart from zeal, dreams or desires—because we can be motivated by all of those things. Through many different seasons of my life, I have made decisions out of zeal, dreams or desires and they never quite work out great.

But when I feel that God has given me a dream, spoken to me somehow or a Scripture jumps out, there is something about the inner peace and when that peace is gone. I feel like that has directed me more than almost anything else with these moves. At times I've settled in a place that I've loved and enjoyed, but for no practical reason I would find myself wanting to leave and I have no peace about staying there.

Then an opportunity, sometimes three opportunities present themselves and one of them, my heart will find peace in. Even if it does not make sense to anybody else, I feel the peace of the Lord about making that choice and I follow that peace.

Matt Lockett: Do you feel like you're living in your calling?

Christina Styles: I believe my calling is to be a friend of Jesus. My calling is to follow the Lamb wherever He goes and my calling is to not find my identity in what I'm doing or who I am associated with. So I've started leaning away from using that language of "this is my calling."

By following the peace of the Lord, I make a decision, I make a move or I make a job change. I can recognize, "This is where I have peace about this, I'm good at what I'm doing and I love it, so this is what I'm called to. So much of my history leads me to this place. This must be what I'm called to."

That makes it so hard when that season ends and another season begins, but I will be faithful to Jesus in whatever I'm doing.

Matt Lockett: Let's look back at your story. You were a young child praying in front of abortion centers with your mom, you embraced a hidden life of prayer in a prayer room, you as an adult have prayed in front of the Supreme Court with Life Tape, and you've mobilized stadiums of people to pray.

Christina Styles: (Laughs) It's kind of crazy when you break it down like that!

Matt Lockett: You worked with Bound4LIFE, coordinating with chapter leaders around the country and you did my bookkeeping. You're now working—you're driving me to tears because I see bags of donated goods in your office over here and because of the relationship with crisis pregnancy centers, you're going to make sure that all of that stuff gets to where it needs to be.

It's not just stuff for this adoption agency. You're coordinating this on a citywide level from my perspective. Are you an anomaly?

Christina Styles: No, I don't believe that I'm an anomaly. Years ago, I watched this documentary on Aimee Semple McPherson. In one of the video clips, she's preaching a sermon, giving the backstory of her childhood and trying to show that she is merely human.

She says, "I was nothing and I had nothing, and I gave my nothing to Jesus—and He took my nothing and He made

something.”

When I think about my childhood, I idolized these missionaries and these people who I would read biographies about: the common thread was a life surrendered to Jesus. So it brings me back to those words of Aimee Semple McPherson. As the church, as the bride of Christ, what do we have to offer Him?

We have nothing without Him. Everything we have, it's filthy rags. And what does He do? He clothes us in white! He exchanges our ashes for beauty. He not only does that, He makes us His bride!

Romans 8 speaks of the spirit of adoption, that the name we had and the trajectory we were on changed because of who we have become and being adopted into the family of God. I look back at my life and I see these bizarre little threads.

Matt Lockett: Tell us a couple of those moments where you saw God's plan at work.

Christina Styles: Two summers ago, I helped run the IHOP-KC Awakening teen camps and I interviewed one of the counselors and he says, “Christina Styles, I remember you.” And I don't know who this guy is! I've certainly never seen him before in my life.

So I asked, “Oh, how do you remember me?” He said, “Years ago, I started a Bound4LIFE chapter in my high school and I called you in D.C. You had these phone calls with me, helping me get my Bound4LIFE chapter off the ground. You were such an encouragement to me to take myself seriously—this dream on my heart to see my high school pray for the ending of abortion.”

One of my dearest friends is currently overseas doing missions and helping to facilitate adoptions for young pregnant women who have been taken advantage of and are homeless. My friend says to me, “I will never forget the role that you played in

my life and the very first time you took me to a Silent Siege.”

I see these little threads that often lead in different directions, and they all tie together in this storyline of how God will use a life when it’s given to Him.

Then the flip side of that is that we all know terrible stories of Christian pastors, worship leaders, ministry directors or whoever, who try to leave their story. When they lose sight of being nothing and giving their everything to Jesus, they start to believe they are something—then they lose their story, the power of their Christian witness and the power of the effectiveness of what they do. They lose all that they had to offer in their having nothing.

For the church, the lesson here is to stop thinking we’re something. We have nothing to give God except absolute surrender to who He is and what He wants to do. {eoa}

*A full-time missionary, **Matt Lockett** serves as Executive Director of Justice House of Prayer DC and Bound4LIFE International. He travels and teaches on the subjects of prayer, fasting and governmental intercession—topics covered in his new book *Prayer that Impacts the World*. Matt and his wife Kim have four children; they live and minister in the Washington, D.C., area.*

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