

Number of People Experiencing Crisis-Related Dreams Increases During Pandemic

The Wired Word for the Week of May 24, 2020

In the News

In recent months, since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, some people around the world have experienced coronavirus pandemic dreams, or "quarandreams," that are symptoms of increased anxiety, fear, stress over isolation, job and health concerns, financial losses, and worries over personal safety and that of family and friends.

Here are a few examples of the content of some pandemic dreams:

- Dreaming one has the virus or is dying of it
- Dreaming of being wrapped up in toilet paper as a status symbol, to go to a fancy dress event
- Dreaming that people are not staying the required six feet away
- Dreaming of being choked to death by a giant black snake
- Dreaming about being separated from friends or family
- Dreaming about being short of breath or having a high fever
- Dreaming about being locked up in prison
- Dreaming about being coughing on, or about coughing on others
- Dreaming about forgetting one's face mask, or about being surrounded by people who aren't wearing any masks
- Dreaming about going bankrupt
- Dreaming about losing a job and not being able to find work
- Dreaming about being chased, attacked, or killed by something dangerous that represents the virus (flying insects, monsters, mass shooters, zombies, tigers and lions, tsunamis, wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes, shadowy figures, etc.)

One woman using the hashtag #CoronaDreams tweeted that she dreamt about trying to navigate a maze to get from PointA to PointB while "trying to avoid all the UNmasked ppl" in her path.

"A lot of people are also having dreams about hands," said dream analyst Lauri Loewenberg. "They fall off, skin comes off them, they don't work." Such a dream reflects a growing fear of touching anything or anyone, because the virus is so contagious, you could easily catch it, or transmit it, and "you could kill someone," Loewenberg explained.

Dr. Deirdre Barrett, assistant professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, has seen an uptick of more than 6,000 vivid, often bizarre pandemic dreams among more than 2,500 study participants since March 2020. She herself dreamed that she was "trying to put a hood over [her] cat Morpheus' head to protect him from something toxic in the air."

The metaphor of insects such as "armies of cockroaches ... masses of wriggling worms ... grasshoppers with vampire fangs ... bed bugs, stink bugs" is very common, Barrett reported. "When we say 'I've got a bug,' that means 'I'm sick' and often 'I've got a virus.' So I think it's partly just that association," she explains. "But then a little bit deeper than just the word, I think,

is the idea of lots of little things that cumulatively can hurt or kill you is really a very good metaphor for the virus particles."

Barrett's survey results show that people closer to the pandemic threat, such as health-care workers, those living in epicenters and those with affected loved ones, tend to have more pandemic dreams, and they tend to be more severe and literal in nature. Frontline workers may dream about overloaded wards and equipment shortages or failures, about getting sick or being unable to save Covid-19 patients who are dying. "They feel like it's their responsibility to save this person's life, and yet they don't actually have much control over it, and the person is dying anyway," Barrett remarked. "That's their nightmare. It's the worst moment from their daytime experiences."

Many researchers suspect that dreams allow us to simulate stressful real-life situations, to help us work through our fears and prepare to handle similar challenges in our waking hours.

Barrett said that occasionally someone has a happy dream in which "they go and find an elixir in their medicine cabinet that cures it, or they find a doctor who has a shot that will cure it."

According to Dr. Kelly Bulkeley, a dream researcher and psychologist of religion, many dreams born of the Covid-19 pandemic have been "unrelentingly nightmarish," especially for those with little experience with "crisis-related dreaming."

But some people learn to adapt and solve problems, be open to options, and change the trajectory and outcome of their dreams. Bulkeley suggests that people who are "less attached to the status quo and more comfortable amid the uncertainties of radical change" tend to carry those strengths into their dreamworld, which makes them more successful in resolving problems in that context.

Barrett and other dream researchers caution that images in dreams may or may not symbolize something literal (as in flying insects representing the coronavirus). Instead, some images may represent an abstract concept, as when dreaming of a car crash may suggest that the dreamer feels that life is spinning out of control, not that the dreamer necessarily fears having an actual car accident.

Bulkeley adds that dreamers who can anticipate potential disruptions in their lives and who can envision possible responses to a "collective crisis" may avoid "overwhelming feelings of terror, helplessness, or vulnerability." In their dreams, they maintain emotional equilibrium for the most part, as they observe what is happening objectively, take proactive steps to respond appropriately to the crisis, assist other people in need, and plan for the future. These dreamers view the crisis as a challenge that's within their power to manage and solve.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[The Pandemic Is Giving People Vivid, Unusual Dreams. Here's Why. *National Geographic*](#)
[What Pandemic Dreams May Come. *Harvard.edu*](#)

[Boredom and Anxiety Add Up to Vivid Pandemic Dreams. *NPR*](#)

[These Are Anxious Times, and Dreams Help Process Anxiety. Some Tips for Dealing With](#)

[Coronavirus Pandemic Dreams. Norton Healthcare](#)
[Not All Pandemic Dreams Are Nightmares. Psychology Today](#)

The Big Questions

1. Have you noticed any differences in your dreams since the coronavirus outbreak? What, if anything, do your dreams express in the midst of the pandemic? What are your emotions when you wake up?
2. Are you having multiple versions of the same dream since the outbreak of the pandemic? Some researchers say that recurring dreams can indicate unresolved issues in your life. Can you identify any issues that keep bubbling up in your dreams? If so, how can your faith help you address them?
3. How might God be using your dreams to help you understand your experiences in the midst of the pandemic? What new conversations with God might the content of your dreams suggest you should pursue?
4. Do you have a dream you've never revealed or discussed with anyone? What prevents you from sharing it?
5. After TWW team member Dr. Jim Berger taught a class on "Dreams of the Nativity," a 90-year-old man in attendance described in detail an unforgettable dream he had had when he was 16. Do you recall any dreams that were so real, so vivid, that you can't forget them? What did you feel upon waking from them? How did you interpret them?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Job 7:2-4, 13-14

*[Job said,] "Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like laborers who look for their wages,
so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.
When I lie down I say, 'When shall I rise?'
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn. ...
When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,'
then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions ..."* (For context, read 7:1-16.)

After Job suffered the tragic death of his ten children and the loss of his livelihood (Job 1:13-19) and health (Job 2:7-8), he expressed his anguish in soliloquies such as this one. In his pain, he anticipated that his death was near at hand, and that the future held nothing good in store for him

anymore (vv. 7-10). In fact, he was ready to die, rather than continue to suffer in his anguish (vv. 15-16). Even in the night, he found no relief, only night terrors to torment him.

Questions: Have you been having unusually vivid and/or bizarre dreams since the Covid-19 outbreak? What do you think such dreams reveal about what's going on in your life and how you are feeling about what we are experiencing?

Song of Solomon 3:1-3

Upon my bed at night

*I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him, but found him not;
I called him, but he gave no answer.
"I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek him whom my soul loves."
I sought him, but found him not.
The sentinels found me,
as they went about in the city.*

"Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" (For context, read 3:1-5.)

While the author of this passage doesn't use the word "dream," the opening phrase, "Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves" seems to suggest that the speaker is dreaming of searching without success for her lover. Finally, the two are united and she clings to him as if to never let him go (v. 4).

In the context of the pandemic, when parents and children, lovers, friends, spouses and siblings are often forced apart for extended periods of time, and may even die alone, without their loved ones near, this passage has added poignancy.

Of course, this poetic book speaks to romantic love between two humans, but it has also been interpreted as describing the deep emotion that can exist between God and people.

From Genesis 3:3-9 and Jonah 1:1-4 and 17, to Luke 15:3-10 and 32, and 19:10, we find examples of God seeking out the company of human beings.

Questions: Do you long to be in God's presence with the same passion that you might have for the presence of a human whom you love? Is that possible, or desirable? How is your love for God similar to and different from your love for human(s)?

How do you seek after God? How do you feel when you can't seem to find God? When you are suddenly reunited with God after feeling alienated or isolated?

How is God's longing and love for human beings similar to and different from human longing and love? How might it help you during the pandemic to know that God is seeking the lost, to restore and reclaim?

Genesis 41:15-16, 25

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." ... Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do." (For context, read 41:15-36.)

When Joseph was incarcerated in Egypt after being falsely accused of a crime he had not committed, Pharaoh had twin dreams with parallel metaphors that conveyed the same meaning. In the first dream, Pharaoh saw seven fat cows feeding by the Nile River, who were set upon by seven thin cows, who ate them. But after they ate, the thin cows looked just as ugly as before. In Pharaoh's second dream, seven plump ears of grain grew on one stalk, but seven withered ears of grain swallowed up the seven plump ears (vv. 17-24).

Joseph explained that the seven fat cows and seven plump ears of grain represented seven years of plentiful harvest, that would be followed by seven years of very grievous famine, represented by the seven lean cows and seven blighted ears of grain (vv. 26-31).

Furthermore, Joseph said, the fact that Pharaoh had two versions of the same dream meant that God had set these events, as it were, in stone (v. 32).

But Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was not all doom and gloom. He also proposed a plan for how to prepare for the coming famine. He urged the Pharaoh to select a wise leader and crisis response team to handle the logistics of disaster preparedness, the rationing and stockpiling of food reserves during the plenteous years and redistribution of grain in the lean years (vv. 33-36). So Pharaoh's bad dreams led to the conservation of resources, curbing of consumption, and putting away "for a rainy day" what would be needed later.

Questions: How might some coronavirus dreams reveal what God is about to do or what God might want us to do? How might they carry within them seeds of hope or solutions to problems we need to address?

Psalm 127:1-2

*Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.
It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved. (For context, read 127:1-5.)*

The psalmist emphasizes that the Lord is the true source of stability, security and peace, whether for the home and family, or for civil society. Unless we have a God we can trust, all our efforts to achieve those things will be for naught.

God is ready and willing for us to join him in building loving families and protecting communities. But strong relationships can't be created if we leave God out of the equation. We can't even get a peaceful night's sleep as long as we are tied up in knots by anxiety.

Questions: What can you do if you are troubled by nightmares or bad dreams? How can you tap into restful sleep that the Lord gives to his beloved, as this passage says?

For Further Discussion

1. In various biblical passages, God speaks to people in dreams, which may be riddles that need to be solved (Numbers 12:1-8), or warnings to be heeded that people may not perceive (Job 33:14-18). In other passages, people claim to have heard from God in dreams or visions, yet tell lies in his name (Jeremiah 23:23-32). God makes a distinction between those who speak the word of the Lord faithfully and those who speak human words that have no power or value and do not profit the people.

Is there a word from the Lord in the midst of the pandemic? Would you recognize it in a dream? How could you be sure it came from the Lord?

2. Discuss this, from novelist Todd Strasser: "It's weird when you wake up from a bad dream and everything is still bad."

3. Comment on this, from TWW writer Joanna Loucky-Ramsey, who reported a dream she had last Saturday: "I was in a fancy hotel with my beloved dog Yoda, who died nearly 12 years ago. For some reason, Yoda's room was in a different wing of the hotel.

"In my dream, I fell asleep for several hours, forgetting that Yoda needed to be fed and exercised. When I woke up and realized I hadn't seen him for hours, I panicked. I felt guilty for not caring for him properly. I loved Yoda with all my heart. It was unthinkable that I could ever forget him, but in my dream, I did.

"Then I had to navigate a number of obstacles to find him. I couldn't find the right room number or key to his room. I had to take one elevator down several stories, then a different elevator up to another floor, and find my way through an empty, dark maze, with no hotel staff around to help me.

"In my dream I can see themes suggestive of social isolation, confusion and longing to see those we love from whom we have been separated. I'm not sure if I ever found Yoda in my dream. The dream reminded me that in my humanness and creatureliness, I cannot love perfectly, no matter how much I want to do so or how much effort I put into loving others. That part of my dream was sad.

"I woke up thinking about this verse: 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you' (Isaiah 49:15). The reminder of God's unfailing love encouraged me, that God's love is way stronger than mine. So I found the dream comforting, in spite of my own failure."

4. Are you familiar with any of these resources on dreaming? If so, can you share something you gleaned from any of these sources about dreams?

- *Dreams*, by Carl Jung

- *On Dreams*, by Sigmund Freud
- *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, by Morton Kelsey
- *The Other Side Of Silence*, by Morton Kelsey
- *Spiritual Dreaming: A Cross-Cultural and Historical Journey*, by Kelly Bulkeley
- *Dreamwork: Techniques for Discovering the Creative Power in Dreams*, by Jeremy Taylor
- *Dream Interpretation: A Biblical Understanding*, by Herman Riffel

5. South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote in his book, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*: "I have a dream,' God says. 'Please help Me to realize it. It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts, when there will be more laughter, joy, and peace, where there will be justice and goodness and compassion and love and caring and sharing. I have a dream that swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, that My children will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family, My family.' ...

"God's dream envisions more than mere equality. An equal you can acknowledge once and then forever thereafter ignore. God's dream wants us to be brothers and sisters, wants us to be family."

Tutu explains that Jesus brought together "all sorts and conditions of women and men, rich and poor, slave and free, Jew and Gentile -- all these came to belong in one fellowship, one communion. They did not regard one another just as equals, That in itself would have been a huge miracle, for a slave to be accepted as an equal by his former master. No, they regarded one another not just as equals but as sisters and brothers, members of one family, God's family. Extraordinarily, a once-apprehensive Ananias can actually call a former persecutor of Christians 'Brother Saul.'"

We recognize that Tutu is using "dream" here more in the sense of a vision for the future than of the wanderings of the mind while asleep, and we are not suggesting that God "dreams" the way humans do. Nonetheless would you agree with Tutu that God has a kind of dream or vision for humanity and the world? If so, what does that dream look like? And what might constitute a divine nightmare?

6. Respond to this, from TWW team member Stan Purdum: "One dream image that many people report having is that of being somewhere in public and suddenly discovering they have no clothes on. According to dream researchers, that may be symbolic of feeling vulnerable, or of your fear that others will recognize that you are not as confident as you appear. (We clergy have our own version of that dream. It's standing in the pulpit preaching and suddenly realizing we have no clothes on. Perhaps that represents our fear that the sermon really isn't good enough or doesn't have enough substance, and that people will see through it.)"

Responding to the News

If you have been troubled by bad dreams during the pandemic, consider which of these steps researchers say might help you to reduce stress and create better sleep patterns:

Before going to bed, AVOID:

- TV, the internet and grim news reports, especially about the pandemic

- Excessive alcohol or caffeine
- Sleeping pills

Before bedtime, DO:

- Establish a routine with consistent hours for sleep and other activities
- Gentle stretching
- Regular exercise
- Meditation
- Have fun!

Try "dream mastering." Before you go to bed, create and rehearse a new script for the dream you want to have. Imagine whatever was terrifying in the dream as something harmless. Shrink the monster to the size of an ant you can squash, or give yourself a super-power, like invisibility, so the monster can't find you, or create a tool like an anti-monster spray or vaccine or antidote for a monster's poison. How do you want your pandemic dream to be different? What could you change in your dream to produce a better dream outcome?

Barrett suggests: "Think about what you would like to dream -- maybe a favorite person you can't be with during this time, maybe a beautiful spot that makes you feel happy and peaceful. ... visualize that person or place. Or you can put some photograph of what you're trying to dream about on your nightstand so you look at it as the last thing before you go to sleep. If you have a particular favorite dream you're focusing on, you might try to replay that in detail before falling asleep. ... And then, as you're drifting off to sleep, just tell yourself you want to dream about that topic."

Prayer (suggested by 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 Peter 5:7, Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 11:28-30, Colossians 3:15, Galatians 5:22-23)

O God of peace, knowing that you care for us, we cast all our anxiety upon you, as you have commanded us to do.

Jesus, Prince of peace, we who are weary and loaded down with heavy burdens come to you in response to your promise of rest for the soul. Help us to be willing to learn gentleness and humility from you during this stressful time, and show us that by serving together with you, we will find that promised rest. And may your peace rule in our hearts.

Spirit of God, produce your fruit of peace in us, that we may live in peace with one another and with God. Amen.

Other News This Week

Klapper Is Senator's Chief of Staff by Day, EMT by Night

The Wired Word for the Week of May 24, 2020

In the News

New Jersey is second only to New York as a Covid-19 hotspot, and so, back in March, when New Jersey's Gov. Phil Murphy put out a call for retired and inactive medical professionals to return to their former work to help in the battle against the pandemic, Matt Klapper, 37, chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, was one who answered the call.

Earlier in his career, Klapper had been a professional firefighter and crew chief for an ambulance squad in Summit and nearby Springfield, two northern New Jersey towns.

He's continuing his day job as Booker's chief of staff, but now, each night, he goes to work as an EMT volunteer with a New Jersey ambulance squad.

Thus, each 24 hours has a kind of symmetry for Klapper: managing a 50-member team working during the daylight hours on getting aid from the federal level for the coronavirus-driven needs of constituents in his state, and after dark, responding to emergency calls -- many of them for people infected with the virus -- as part of an EMS crew.

To avoid infecting his parents, wife and 17-month-old son, Klapper has moved into a friend's pool house, but he sometimes joins the family for dinner, though with him eating out on the deck, with a window between them.

"The most impactful thing of having these dual experiences was just seeing the expanse of how this virus is hurting people," Klapper said. "There are millions of first responders who are going to be answering these calls for months, if not longer. This is something that doesn't stop at the door of work. It is going to come home."

Sen. Booker supports his chief of staff's decision to work in his EMT role after hours, and accepts that sometimes, Klapper has to hang up on him to respond to an immediate emergency.

"You heard about him playing the, 'Oh Cory, I can't talk to you right now because I'm saving lives,'" the senator said with a laugh. "How many times is he going to use that card on me?"

With his staffer so intimately involved in the first responder role, Booker hears about the needs of that group as well. Recently, Booker, a Democrat, along with Sen. Charles E. Grassley, a Republican from Iowa, introduced a bill to amend federal law to make emergency medical workers who contract the coronavirus eligible for the same death benefits as those who die in the line of duty.

Klapper is hardly the only volunteer who's pitching in during this worldwide crisis. Across the country, many retired or inactive doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, paramedics, school nurses and other medical personnel have stepped forward to help their colleagues treat and care for victims of the virus. Some medical students near graduation have joined the effort as well.

A survivor of the coronavirus himself, medical doctor and senator Rand Paul (R-KY) volunteered at his local hospital to assist in patient care.

Beyond medical personnel, many citizens have contributed by rounding up PPE, providing food or places to stay to frontline workers, or doing other tasks to lift some of the load on the medical community.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[His Day Job: Cory Booker's Top Aide. His Night One: E.M.S. Volunteer. *The New York Times*](#)
[Top Booker Aide Serving as EMT at Night. *The Hill*](#)
[NJ Puts out Call for Retired Paramedics, Doctors, Nurses to Assist During Covid-19. *EMS1.com*](#)

The Big Questions

1. In what forms and by what means do God's calls to service come to us?
2. If you think you might be being called by God to some task, what are some good ways to distinguish a divine call from a passing notion? In short, how do you determine if you are being called by God? Is it okay to act even on a passing notion? Why or why not?
3. When have skills you needed in a former job but which you don't use in your present employment become a source of God's call to you?
4. Many of the things God calls us to do involve sacrifice on our part. Does every call from God require sacrifice from us? Why or why not? When a sacrifice is required, in what ways might such sacrifice be rewarded?
5. Does God have a call for every Christian? Are all callings equal, or are some "higher" than others? Is a call to temporary service necessarily less of a call than one to ongoing service? Explain your answers.

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Isaiah 6:8

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!" (For context, read 6:1-13.)

This is from the incident where Isaiah heard God's call to be a prophet. Isaiah, after acknowledging his perceived shortcomings, nonetheless realized that God still wanted him to serve, and responded to God's question about who would fill the needed prophetic role, saying, "Here am I; send me!"

While Isaiah's call was to a task that would consume the rest of his life, the same kind of response is what's needed when God calls us to even temporary roles. At some point, we need to perceive 1) that there is a real need, 2) that we have some ability to address that need and 3) that God may be calling us to service, even if only for the moment.

Questions: Since there are many needs in the world, how do you determine which ones God may be calling you to address, even if only temporarily? Have you ever felt a calling from God that you ignored? Is it too late to do something about it now? Why or why not?

Judges 6:14

Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you." (For context, read 6:11-24.)

During a time when Israel was oppressed by the Midianites and Amalekites, God called Gideon to rescue Israel. Gideon first knew of God's intention for him when God sent an angel to commission him, but Gideon did not immediately realize that the figure was an angel. So when this stranger told Gideon he was to be Israel's deliverer, Gideon wasn't at all sure he was hearing from God.

What's more, though known as a "mighty warrior" (v. 12), Gideon did not see himself as equal to the task. God then said to Gideon, "I will be with you" (v. 16), but it seems that Gideon still wasn't convinced that this stranger was, in fact, God's representative, so he asked permission to bring him a present of food. Given permission, Gideon brought the food, and the angel caused it to be consumed by fire coming forth from the rock on which it had been placed. That convinced Gideon of the angel's identity.

The story suggests that God is not angered by our need to test whether a perceived call is actually from him. Indeed, he is likely pleased when we take his summons seriously enough to assess it prayerfully.

Questions: Does every call need to be tested? That is, are some needs so pressing and immediate that their very proximity to you is in itself a call that needs not assessment but action? Explain your answer.

1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace ... (For context, read 4:7-11.)

A "gift," in New Testament language, refers to a talent or skill, but with the added assumption that God has given it to the recipient so that it can be used in service to the church and to others. To use one's gift(s) in that fashion is to be a good steward "of God's varied grace." "Varied" here means "diverse," suggesting that using our gifts in service to others conveys various forms of God's grace to those who are helped by our gifts.

Questions: What attributes do you have that fit the definition of "gift" as stated above? What grace of God might the use of that gift convey in the present health crisis?

Exodus 39:32

In this way all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; the Israelites had done everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses. (For context, read 39:32-43.)

This verse is referring to the completion of the tabernacle, which was a portable center for sacrifice that the Israelites carried with them during their time in the wilderness. God gave specific instruction for its construction, adornment and furnishing, and craftspeople from the Israelite tribes contributed their skills and labor to create the structure and all that was in it. Two multi-skilled men, Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 35:30--36:2), were asked to supervise the work of the others.

This was a divine calling, not only for Bezalel and Oholiab, but for each artisan and laborer involved, but it was a time-limited calling. Once the task was finished, with everything done "just as the LORD had commanded Moses," the workers were released from their calling.

The Bible includes other examples of time-limited callings as well, including the people called to build the temple (both Solomon's temple and later the post-exilic temple), and those called to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day.

Questions: Should we value longer-term callings more than shorter-term ones? What is the value, for instance, of volunteering to help during an emergency versus making a career of emergency service? Compare and contrast the two. How do we know when we are called for a season rather than for a lifetime?

What ongoing calling did the workers who built the tabernacle have even after their project was completed?

For Further Discussion

1. Respond to this: The noted preacher Will Willimon tells of receiving a frantic phone call from the parents of a young woman. The parents thought the young woman was throwing away her life, and they requested that the pastor talk some sense into her. So the pastor asked the young woman what had happened. She told him that she had decided to drop out of pharmacy school and devote her life to working with the children of migrant farmers. What in the world had motivated her to do such a radical thing? "It was your sermon yesterday that started me to thinking," she replied. In the sermon, Willimon had talked about how God wanted us to do something important with our lives. She had decided that ministering to the children of migrant farm workers was something important and fulfilling she could do with her life. After a long silence the preacher stammered out, "But Anne, I was just preaching!"

The pastor was just preaching. Anne was just attending church with her parents while she was home on break, but something happened in that service. Anne perceived a change in calling, from helping people through medicines to helping people in a different way. She changed her identity, security and status -- not to mention her priorities! Yet in that change in service, she found more fulfillment.

2. In Acts 20:35, the apostle Paul quotes Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" -- though he must have had a source that hasn't survived into our day, for this saying does not appear in any of the Gospels. Nonetheless, do you consider the saying to be in the spirit of Jesus' teachings, and if so, how does it apply to the topic of this lesson? In what ways, if at all, has this statement proven true in your life?

3. Discuss the implications of this thought from Mother Teresa: "I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world."

Responding to the News

Responses to this news will most likely be personal, as you perceive a need and consider what call of God might be present in that perception.

Prayer

O God, thank you for the call you make to us all to be disciples of Jesus. Where we have individual callings beyond that, enable us to discern them, and make us willing to respond. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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