

Confirming the Call

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By Michael Goodling

February 16, 1999, my 35th birthday, was probably the worst day of my life. Since I knew 35 was the maximum age limit to enter world missions, my dream of becoming a missionary died that day.

God had called me to missions as a student at Central Bible College. However, the mission field where I had an open door at that time was not open to Assemblies of God missionaries. Soon after that our son, Jordan, was born. When I graduated from CBC, I had school loans that prohibited my entering missions. So, I became a missions-minded pastor, but continued to keep the dream of becoming a missionary in my heart. I threw myself into raising money for special missions projects, supporting missionaries and educating children and youth on BGMC and Speed the Light.



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I should not have lived past 10

In the summer of 2002 I took my first missions trip to Mexico. The call to missions began to stir again. But once again, along with being over the age limit, my call seemed to be taken away the following year. At age 39, I began to suffer severe memory loss to the point of not knowing how to get home or who was on the church board. A brain MRI revealed the marks of six mini-strokes. After a brain catheterization and other tests, they discovered I had a congenital heart defect. Three doctors verified that I should not have lived past 10 years of age.

Three more mini-strokes would occur before I had a procedure called CardioSeal which successfully installed implants in my heart chambers. God had spared my life for a reason. The call.

I returned to Mexico in 2004. In April of 2005, while in Mexico again, I was teaching at a pastors' conference. During a time of worship I lifted my hands to God and said, "Lord, wherever you want these feet to go ... they will go."

After I returned home I was invited to go to Ghana, West Africa, with Matt Wilkie and a [Book of Hope](#) team. Accepting the invitation, I landed in Ghana

in September 2005. As soon as the plane touched down I had this strange sensation that was hard to explain. I felt like I was home.

It happened again in 2007 when I took another missions trip to Kenya, Africa. I was home. I had also just learned that the age requirements for becoming a missionary had changed and the mission field was wide open for me.

A child who might have leprosy changed my life

While in a meeting in Kenya, a young boy pressed up against my leg. Without looking down, I put my arm around him. The other children gasped in horror! I looked down to see that he had large patches of white skin with bloody edges, much of which was peeling and falling off. Some speculated he had leprosy. I didn't care. I hugged him tighter and determined to be content to die of whatever this disease was. I could not be content to know that this child would die in the streets without a hug, a human touch or ever knowing he was loved. That one single moment changed my life.

Next, I stood at a fence on the compound of the Mathare Children's Development Center. Inside the fence were two healthy young boys in uniform, smiling and having fun, who had just eaten a hot meal. On the other side were five starving children with sad faces. I never felt so helpless in all my life. The call was growing stronger.



Michael speaking to children in Ghana in 2005.

Washing my "beautiful" feet

I came home from Kenya and asked my wife to begin praying about full time missions in Africa. Shortly after that a woman from the church came to our home. Trembling, this 60-year-old woman brought a basin of water and a towel. She asked me to take off my shoes. When I did, shaking, she gave a message in tongues. Then she loudly proclaimed, "There they are Lord! There are the feet that will touch the world! How beautiful they are" (See Isaiah 52:7)! Then she undid her waist-length braid which held her long blond hair and she washed my feet and dried them with her hair. I had never been so humbled in all my life.

Confirmation through dreams

A short time later, on a Sunday morning in July of 2007, as we pulled into the parking lot at the church, I paused for a few minutes and told my wife that the night before God had showed me in a dream that we were with children in Africa. It had awakened me at 1:30 a.m. When I finished telling her about the dream I told her to keep praying, and if she did not feel the same way I did about missions in 30 days, I would never speak of it again for the remainder of our married life.

As we walked to the church door we noticed an envelope taped on the door with my wife's name on it. Inside was a letter from a woman who did not attend the church. She wrote how God had awakened her the night before at 1:30 a.m. with a dream where she saw us working with children in Africa. She described word for word what I had just told my wife in the parking lot. A confirmation of the call.

On September 11, 2007, we had our interview with the district superintendent and missions director. On September 20, 2007, an e-mail arrived from the district saying they had given us clearance to proceed with a missions application.

Confirmation through a preacher

That same day my wife was on her way to Ohio to attend a Tommy Tenney meeting. I called to tell her about the e-mail and told her to say nothing to the women she was with or to show any reaction to my call. As Tommy Tenney began his message to a crowd of 750, he stopped and looked directly at my wife. "An e-mail will arrive," he said, "or perhaps already has arrived, that will change the direction of your life in the space of 12 months." Then he continued his message. Once again God was confirming the call.

Confirmation through debt payment

Next, God sent a woman to my church office that shocked me by asking how much personal debt I had. She said God had revealed to her that He was sending me to Africa as a missionary and that she needed to remove the last obstacle that could stop me from being approved as a missionary.

I said it would take \$31,000 to clear my credit report. She later returned to my office with eight blank checks signed for me to send to my creditors. More



confirmation of the call. We had no choice. We were compelled by God with no obstacles remaining.

After a long, thorough process, we were approved by the Assemblies of God World Missions board on November 4, 2008, as special assignment missionaries to the Kingdom of Swaziland, Africa. My dream that began 21 years earlier has come true. God called me and, through these long years, never forgot me. Now I know how Abraham and Sarah felt waiting 25 years for their promise to come true.

God will not forget you

For the pastor who is thinking about quitting, remember the call. For the young person leaving college burdened with financial concerns and a new family ... remember the call. For the new missionary who doesn't know how it's possible ... hold on to the call. God remembered us and saw us through and He will not forget you.

Michael and Darlene Goodling are AGWM missionaries to the Kingdom of Swaziland, Africa.

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