

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

August 21, 2014

God Told Me To

Whenever I hear somebody saying that God is telling them to do something or other, I always think, "Uh-oh, got a crazy one here, I better be careful." It reminds me of the "Son of Sam" murder where a guy claimed that God was talking to him through a dog and told him to commit a murder. Yet there are many rational, sane people who act on what they believe is God telling them to do or say. In fact, there is a video series of 10 lectures by Mark Virkler called, "How to Hear God's Voice," which I am currently showing in the prison chapel.

I must confess that I, too, have been commanded by God to do things. No, I don't hear a disembodied voice issuing commands ala the Old Testament. Hearing God's voice for me most often entails urges or ideas springing from within me, prompting me to act. The first instance occurred in 2010, when I became a Christian. I had tried to write poetry in the past but didn't seem to have any talent or ability to do so. Yet when I felt "called" to write poems, I found I could write poems. Over the last 4 years I've written hundreds of poems, posted many of them on this blog and have had dozens of them published. God told me to.

Even though I became a Christian, I was reluctant to attend any services. I was too wary of who I'd encounter at a service or what others would think of me. But in early 2012, I felt God urging me to attend services - something I didn't think I wanted to do. But I started attending and found that once I got comfortable with it, I liked it. God told me to.

I had numerous legal actions pending against the parole commission for refusing to parole me. I was committed to fighting tooth and nail for my freedom. As I battled the parole commission in court, I kept getting the distinct feeling that God wanted me to let it go and turn it all over to Him. Clearly something I didn't want to do. But I finally gave in and dropped all my court actions against the parole commission and felt a great surge of relief. God told me to.

For the last year, I have felt a strong urge to start drawing - another talent I tried unsuccessfully to develop in the past. It felt just like the urge to write poetry. Finally, a few months ago, I started learning to draw. Much to my surprise, I can draw. It will take lots of practice to become good at it, but just being able to draw anything is a marvel to me.

God told me to.

As I spend more time praying and reading the Bible I find myself more in tune with that inner voice which can often guide me down the correct path when my ego is clueless. I suppose some people who do not relate to the world in this manner will play devil's advocate and ask what happens when God tells you to hurt or kill someone?

Don't be ridiculous. First of all, I spent many years wallowing in evil. By now, I certainly know the difference between the messages of love I get from God and the messages of hate which used to motivate my actions. If some inner voice tries to tell me to do something contrary to the teaching of Jesus, I know right away that is not God showing me His will in my life. Everything is based on love: God's love for us; our love for each other.

Most recently, I feel God telling me to find a church to attend upon my release from prison. Have I been granted a parole? Nope. Do I know when I'm getting released? Nope. But it is not my place to question God. If He tells me to find a church, then He must have a very good reason. I put my faith in Him and will do His will to the best of my ability. Why? Because God told me to.