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## *What is the Call Upon Your Life and How Are You Responding?*

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Former Alabama running back and one season with the San Francisco 49ers, Glen Coffee, explains choosing faith over NFL football. Glen Coffee abruptly retired from the 49ers at the age of 23.

Glen says the following in an article that appeared in the Birmingham News, Press -Register and Huntsville Times.

Coffee had been "wrestling" with the decision for a while according to this article. "I feel like it's His will. It's something that I really felt like I shouldn't have entered the NFL in the first place. I don't know what call God has for my life, but it wasn't football, I'll be happier, not necessarily because I'm without football, but because I'm letting him do his work, whether it was leaving football or leaving something else, another job, it doesn't matter. I'll be happy because I'm following His will".

Glen Coffee has come to the conclusion that God has another plan for his life at the age of 23.

Baptized in 2007 while attending the University of Alabama, his path away from football began. In the midst of his Crimson Tide career, he found Christianity and embraced it. He started accepting speaking engagements to spread his faith. "Religion spurred his decision to leave pro- football.

The prophet Jeremiah was 12 or 13 when he was serving at Shiloh, and the call to be Yahweh's prophet came to him. Jeremiah's life's work was to "pluck up and to break down, To build and to plant" (Anchor Bible pg. 687).

As Jeremiah "'s call became clearer to him, it is known that he was becoming a man of profound religious faith, but his personal piety- also impiety is balanced by a deep involvement in the religious life of his nation. He prays for himself, but he also prays even more for others.

When we respond to the call upon our lives, there is a reformation that takes place. The re-formation, the change is sometimes apparent only to those intimately involved with the details. Other times the call and response to the call is very public and CNN worthy.

When you think about your own change and what that has meant in your life and in the lives of others that you have affected and influenced, there is a light, a beacon that is apparent where ever you may be. There is sometimes a series of events that occur that only those who have their spiritual eyes open will take notice and build upon, sometimes without you ever knowing.

Those in your immediate world may wonder or even question why you do what you are doing. But the call becomes something that is very personal. It becomes a beacon, a light that one knows not for sure where it will lead except God.

Does this call upon our lives begin before we were in our mother's womb?

Are we in responding to the ministries for which we have gifts been pre-destined and we are simply following the path upon which we have been set by God?

"Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I

consecrated you;" The prophet Jeremiah was very concerned about rewards and punishment. Good and evil, faithfulness and disobedience." (NRSV, pg. 960)

Glen Coffee decided to forego millions of dollars in our consumer driven society and set aside the adulation of millions of fans in order to devote himself to the "Common Good." His seeking of the common Good is allowing him to begin to delve into the deeper and spiritual meaning of God's call upon his life.

He is continuing the work of building for the common good to have a closer relationship with God and to live as God has called him to live. His choice of walking away has resulted in widespread speculation from thousands. Perhaps others would never have considered what Glen has chosen. Some have even referred to his action as being foolish and short sighted.

Jeremiah was seeking a new and more enduring relationship with God. This relationship building was not only for himself, but for the nations that he was leading, for Judah and for Israel.

Harvard educated Thomas Verny, M.D. wrote a New York Times bestseller over 30 years ago entitled *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*. Dr. Varney states that the "Origins of human consciousness, the growth and development of the unborn and newly born child and the shaping of the human mind begins in utero."

What happens to us in terms of our responses and feelings is based on the discovery that the unborn child is a feeling, remembering, aware being and because unborn children are aware of what happens in the nine months between conception and birth, molds and shapes personality. Drives and ambitions are highly influenced in very important ways according to Dr. Verny. This of course is not news today, and probably was not headline news then. However, God knowing us before we were in our mother's womb is a different story all together.

The prophet Jeremiah's vocation was given to him before he was born- before he was formed in embryonic state, before he came forth from his mother's womb. His pre-destination was not in the sense to salvation or to damnation. The destiny that matters in Jeremiah's case is "his calling," his vocation.

He responded to the call at such a young age, 12 or 13 to speak the words of God as a prophet.

Glen Coffee is going to return to The University of Alabama to complete his final year of education on the undergraduate level and continue in graduate school. That is his plan. I am sure that many are laughing and have basically written him and his career off. He, in their eyes, is no longer a valuable commodity.

Jeremiah was worried that he was too young to respond to the call upon his life even though he had the lineage of priests and prophets going before him. His worries were deemed irrelevant however the issue was not what he could or could not do, but that this activity was totally under the initiative of God.

As we continue to respond to the call of God upon our lives, we were encouraged to respond with an openness and a trust that is not always obvious. What is obvious oftentimes is an urging that causes us to make decisions that we would not readily make. This, I dare say, occurs because we are seeking peace and understanding as we embrace a place for the common good.

My plans before responding to the call upon my life was to retire my wings, perhaps have them mounted in a shadow box, hang up my uniform, close my teaching manuals as a flight attendant instructor, tell those who may have called seeking employment, that I was no longer a part of the delta core in human resources and put my standard practice manuals away and turn off my computer. And then say fare thee well. Fare thee well, as I flew off into the sunset, as the younger generation assumed the reins, and I passed the baton of "my work is done" and here is the key to my metal desk. I would continue to encourage them as others were encouraging them in pursuing their careers

I had visions of Perry and I traveling across the seas, and stopping where we pleased and staying for as long as our hearts desired. My plans since our children were educated and they were/ are on their own, were to watch others still within the Delta core continue to build their careers as they went to their respective places of career building. Always being in the traffic in the air and on the ground to fulfill their dreams, professionally.

But, somewhere along the way I decided to listen to that voice that was nagging me inside like a slow drip of a faucet that

had worn a place inside of me at the very pit of my stomach. So I bargained with God.

Certainly I will get some training and read some theology and comprehend other's theology because Jesus isn't enough and yes God, I will certainly embrace Anglican studies with Bishop Frank Allan and the Rev. Dr. Ted Hackett in liturgy class and participate in CPE, Clinical Pastoral Education with Ted Hackett and Rev. Nancy Baxter. And yes God, I will do what I am suppose to do at the Diocesan level under the tutelage of the Rev. Canon Charlie Roper leading us. I will do all of this while my old friends are headed off to some favorite place to relax and converse.

Yes God. I will make new friends that I have to explain myself to and live in the library and enjoy all of the stresses of academia that I was done with years prior.

Back in the early nineties when I walked into Trevor Arnett Library at Clark-Atlanta University and Pitts theological library at Emory university looking for the card catalogue, this somewhat wary person at the desk from my perspective said, " here let me show you this." Everything is on computer now." He might as well have patted me on the head.

Yes God. I will follow your lead. But you see, as far as I was concerned I was still in charge. I was in control. I will do this, but there is no way that I will wear a clerical collar and tell others about my personal experience of wanting to share my life with others. Especially with people that I don't know and they don't know me. And what is the meaning of common good anyway?

I will not speak with my mouth and say "God is good and I love and praise you and I seek your will for me in my life." No way. And beside God, have you forgotten? I am Episcopalian and have been for a long time.

But you see, in seeking inner peace, in seeking to listen and to talk about the glory of God I had to lose myself. You see in doing what I believe to be the call upon my life I had to say "alright you win." I choose to serve you God and thus your people for the common good.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you, I appointed you a prophet to the nations, Jeremiah."

Jeremiah you are to "pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Glen Coffee has chosen. He is responding to the call.

Our little ones here at St. Philip, are responding to the call in learning at a very young age about "Godly Play" in their curriculum. It is an excellent curriculum and it is exciting.

We are encouraged and invited to continue to respond to the call upon our lives where ever we may be. If God knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb, God certainly knows us now and God is our friend. Right?

And our true friends don't lead in the wrong direction, do they? Right?