

6 Stages of the Call of a Change Agent



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In 2011 I published a book entitled, *Change Agent: Engaging your passion to be the one who makes a difference*. During my research for this book I studied the lives of those God called into service to Him who accomplished significant things for God's Kingdom. I discovered six unique stages God often took His servants through in their spiritual pilgrimage toward becoming God's change agent. I realized that I, too, went through these same six stages. These stages are

1. **Recruitment through Crisis:** God initiates a personal encounter with the change agent, often through a personal crisis.
2. **Character Development:** God takes the change agent through a series of character tests designed to develop humility and trust.
3. **Isolation Period:** A time of separation from past dependencies to realign values to a biblical economy.
4. **Personal Cross:** God brings the change agent to experience his or her personal cross often through a betrayal.
5. **Problem Solvers:** Change agents become problem solvers through invention and entrepreneurship.
6. **Networks:** Change happens as a small number of change agents band together to use their time, talent and treasure for a greater cause.

Henry Blackaby, in his very popular Bible study *Experiencing God*, states that fulfilling our purpose has more to do with what God is doing with us than with what we are doing without Him. We are joining God in His agenda, not simply going out and doing a work for God. We are responders of His invitation to join Him. God always works through human beings to accomplish His work on planet earth.

Stage 1 – Recruitment - The Role of Crisis and Divine Circumstances

Stage 1 of our six stages reveals that God often recruits His change agents in the midst of a personal crisis.

- King Saul is recruited to be king after losing his father's donkeys, jeopardizing their business.
- David was thrust into a battle with Goliath.



- Moses has an encounter with God at a burning bush.
- Paul is struck blind by Jesus on the Damascus Road.
- Peter is invited to walk on the water in the midst of a storm.

We see this in modern-day examples as well.

- Martin Luther had a conflict of soul when his traditional view of God contradicted what the Bible said about salvation by faith.
- Martin Luther King was thrust into a cause for racial equality when a woman refused to give up her seat on the bus.
- Pilgrim's Progress was written when John Bunyan was thrown into prison for 12 years for preaching the gospel.
- William Wilberforce took up the cause of fighting slavery in his nation after trying to reconcile slavery and Christianity.

God initiates a personal encounter with His servant often through a personal crisis. Martin Luther did not grow up thinking, "I want to be founder of the Protestant Reformation." It is often more a result of a *circumstantial calling*. The person responds to a situation into which he or she was thrust.

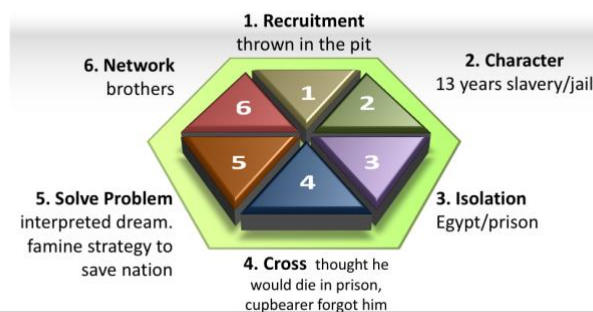
David was thrust into a situation where Israel was unwilling to fight Goliath. This was not acceptable in David's mind, despite his youthful age. He responded, and now you and I know the rest of the story. God described David's life this way: "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.'" David became a nation builder.

Martin Luther was struggling with his own personal spiritual condition when he discovered the idea of *saved by grace*. This led to greater revelation, which compelled him to speak out about what he saw in the Scriptures.

Before long he became an affront to long-held religious traditions that impacted spiritual power bases in the Roman Catholic Church. He was thrust into a movement before he knew it.

A seven-year crisis in my life put me in circumstances that allowed me to see the hand of God personally in my adversity. One time I was on the island of Cypress, and a man came up to me and said, "God had to remove your finances to reserve the reward He has for you in heaven." I had never met the man, and he could not have known that I had just lost \$500,000 in the previous year. Divine circumstances can

Joseph's 6 Stages



change the course of our lives.

Others have had a direct and personal encounter with God. God still speaks to His servants and creates circumstances by which they are recruited for His purposes.

Stage 2 – Character Development

Preparation for being God’s change agent almost always involves character development. God takes the change agent through a series of character-building tests designed to develop humility, trust, and intimacy with God.

God does not test us to find out what we will do; He tests us to let *us* know what we will do. This is one way we get to see how faithless, unloving, or uncommitted we are to Him or another person. We get to see how we respond to those who treat us badly. We get to see if we are going to pout like little children or embrace the experience as one who needs to grow up. What comes out of you when you are squeezed?

David knew that God tests His people. “I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness.” David didn’t pass several tests. He flunked the test with Bathsheba—his child died, and he had a lifelong generational bout with lust and sexual problems in his family. He flunked the test on numbering the troops—seventy thousand people lost their lives because he did that. David was one of the few leaders in the Bible whose sins did not disqualify him from achieving his ultimate purpose. This was due to his repentant heart and his extravagant love of God, which came from his heart.

Joseph also had some tests. He was tested to see if he would retaliate against his brothers for betraying him and throwing him into a pit. He forgave them. He was tested sexually when Potiphar’s wife decided she had to lie with him. He fled, but he still got prison time for being righteous. He passed that one. He was tested with an extended time of isolation in prison to see if he would persevere and experience God’s presence in his circumstance. He passed that one too. He was a model prisoner. God’s Word says, “But God was with him.” Finally, Joseph was tested to see if he would be a good steward with the position, power, and influence God gave him. He passed with flying colors. His tests led to an 81-year assignment to be a nation builder, being second in command over Egypt.

Character development and testing is designed to prepare us for greater things.



There is no other way to find out how we will do without real world experiences to test our mettle. David understood this when he said, “Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle” (Ps 144:1). There’s no place like the battlefield itself to find out how we are going to do.

James tells us that testing is designed to develop patience and perseverance, which matures our faith. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (JA 1:2-4).

Stage 3 – Isolation

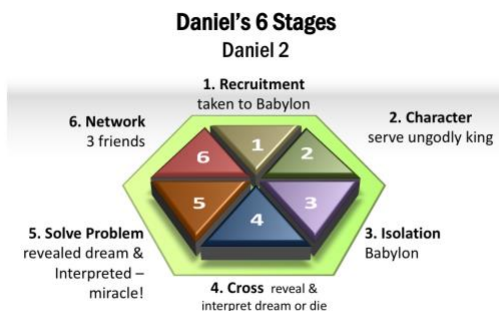
Stage 3 of our 6 stages is the Isolation Stage. God often isolates the leader to turn messes into messages and messengers. His leader is often isolated for a season for God to do a deeper work and speak things into the leader’s life. Jesus had 40 days of isolation and fasting. Moses had 40 years of isolation to the desert. Paul was sent to Arabia for three years before he began his assignment. Often what God speaks in the desert to the leader is a message he later speaks to God’s people.



Pilgrim’s Progress was written because of 12 years of hiddenness in a jail cell. Nelson Mandela was hidden for 27 years before he became the “Joseph” of his nation. The apostle Paul wrote many letters from his prison cell. John the apostle wrote his vision of Revelation in total isolation on the Island of Patmos.

This is often the way of God. The prophet Jeremiah understood isolation: “While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guards, the word of the Lord

came to him a second time. Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3). Notice that while Jeremiah was confined the Word of the Lord came to him. Sometimes God intentionally hides His people for a season to accomplish a deeper work in order to craft a



message through that life. “You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence” (Ps 31:20).

Job tells us “He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into the light” (Job 12:22). Isaiah tells us God will reveal secret things in hidden places from our time of hiddenness: “I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel (Isa 45:3).

If God sets you apart for a season, know that He will turn your time into a time to receive a message in order to be His messenger.

Stage 4 – The Cross

Our fourth stage of a call from God is the Cross Stage. God usually allows a graduate level test that brings the leader to the end of himself which is usually a betrayal of someone close to him/her.

There appears to be an unwritten spiritual law that God seems to be a requirement of leaders that He uses significantly in His Kingdom. I call it the *graduate level test*. This test contributes more to a leader coming to his own personal cross than any other activity.



Many who have matured in their faith journey needed help to get to that maturity. There are certain experiences God allows in our lives that are designed to bring us to the absolute end of our carnal lives in order to allow Christ to fully live through us. Even the best of saints is unable to crucify his flesh by himself. *We might be able to put two nails into our own cross, but it always takes someone else to drive in the third nail.* And that usually involves some kind of betrayal in the life of the leader. Most of the great leaders in the Bible had some form of betrayal.

- For Moses, it was Korah,
- For Job, it was his three friends,
- For Jesus, it was Judas.
- For David, it was Absalom.
- For Joseph, it was his brothers and Potiphar’s wife

Betrayal is God's graduate level course for leaders. Joseph would have never been made prime minister of Egypt had he not passed the test of forgiveness with his brothers. Job would have never been restored had he not forgiven his three friends who wrongfully judged him. David would never have been the leader he was without betrayal. Jesus would never have become the Savior had He not forgiven Judas and taken on our sin. He also needed Judas to fulfill his role in putting Him on the cross.

Stage 5 – Problem Solving

Our sixth stage of a call from God is Problem Solving. Those God often uses are brought into situations to solve a significant problem.

Jesus was influential as a leader because of His willingness to solve a problem in the life of every person He met. Each time He solved a problem, His level of influence grew and his authority among the people grew as well.



His first problem he solved was for Peter. Peter was having a really bad day at the office. He was not catching any fish, and for a fisherman that means no money and no food for the day. Jesus tells him to cast his net on the other side. The result: more fish than he could handle.

On another occasion Peter could not pay his taxes. Jesus told him to go catch a fish. There he would find a coin in its mouth, enough to pay his taxes. He solved the prostitute's problem and kept her from being stoned. Jesus solved the problem of Lazarus's death. He brought him back from the dead. He solved the prostitute's problem of being stoned. Look at each encounter of Jesus with others and you will often find a problem He solved first.

Jesus and the disciples came upon a large group of people and Jesus stood atop the hill above Galilee. The people were very hungry. The disciples were asking how they could feed the people since they were miles from a town that had food.

Jesus told them to feed them. That was a strange instruction from the disciple's perspective. They had no money to buy food for 5,000 people. They only found a boy with five loaves of bread and two fish. They brought it to Jesus. He prayed over the fish and loaves and the baskets began to multiply,

enough to feed 5,000 people with leftovers. When a man came to Jesus who was blind, Jesus put mud on his eyes and he was able to see after he washed the mud away.

God raised up Johannes Gutenberg to invent the printing press so that the Word of God could be spread across the world. Today, we see incredible growth in social entrepreneur initiatives around the world. Blake McCloskey decided to help put shoes on orphans by creating a business model that gave one pair of shoes to an orphan for every pair sold. His giving on the front end of the sale solved a problem for an orphan and is now a global company called Tom's Shoes.

The point of these stories is that Jesus did something that every servant of God should do to have greater influence – solve a problem. Sure, you may not be able to do the level of miracles Jesus did. But you can solve problems in your workplace or in the lives of people you know. You might give them an idea to make their life better. You might solve a business problem for your employer. You might provide a connection that would solve a problem for someone.

Culture does not care who solves their problem; they just want their problem solved. If you can be the catalyst to solve their problem, you will have greater influence in the life of that individual.

Several church communities across the nation are bannng together to solve problems in their communities. One group of churches decided to have a citywide volunteer day to clean up the graffiti on their buildings in their city. Another group repaired and painted the public school buildings that were in disrepair. One group of business and church leaders went to their mayor and said, "What are the top 3 biggest problems in our city?" They began mobilizing business leaders and churches to begin tackling the problems. The result: the city leaders began to call upon these people to help them solve other problems. That's called influence.

Do you want to have more influence? Start solving problems. Then you will become the most popular person in town and be recognized as a leader known for serving others and solving problems.

Stage 6: God works through Networks

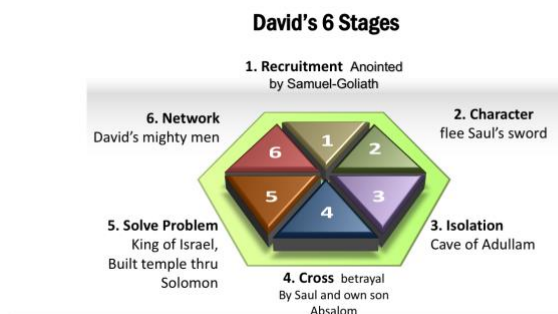
"I am a strong individualist by personal habit, inheritance, and conviction; but it is a mere matter of common sense to recognize that the State, the community, the citizens acting together, can do a number of things better than if they were left to individual action." – Theodore Roosevelt¹



The sixth stage of the call of God in the life of a leader involves networks. One of the great values of God we see in the scripture is the need for groups of people to come together to unify for a cause greater than any single person could accomplish. God values unity through networks of people to model John 17:21-23 which reveals Jesus' prayer to be one as He and the Father are one so that the world might believe in Him.

God reveals this value in the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each member of the Trinity has a particular role to play. When Jesus decided to start His worldwide mission, he recruited 12 disciples to accomplish his task. Interestingly, these were recruited from average men in the workplace, not the clergy. Jesus spent three years pouring into these men and building unity among them for a common mission. Of course, God uses women too! That happens to be one of the fastest growing segments in the workplace.

Daniel had a small group of men he relied on to share the burdens they had as men living in Babylon serving an ungodly king. When Nebechanezzar told Daniel that he



had to tell him his dream and interpret it or he would die, he immediately went to his core circle of friends to prayer together. That group was Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego. God answered their prayer and Daniel's life, and the

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Man In The Arena: Speeches and Essays by Theodore Roosevelt*

men in his administration, were spared. And, God's name was uplifted in the kingdom as a result of this miracle. Notice that Daniel solved a problem for his employer and his team.

One of the most noteworthy groups that made a difference in a society was the Clapham Sect, a group of Christian influential like-minded leaders connected to the Church of England. They were social reformers based in Clapham, London at the beginning of the 19th century. They were a network of friends and families in England, with William Wilberforce, an aristocrat who came to Christ at 28-years old as their leader. His good friend John Newton, who was a converted slave trader and author of the famous hymn, *Amazing Grace*, convinced him to stay in politics to model his faith in the public sector. Wilberforce's life was filled with one moral and religious project after another over a forty-year period. His life was dramatized in a 2007 movie production from Walden Media entitled *Amazing Grace*. Wilberforce became God's nation builder by collaborating with others.

Recognizing these six spiritual stages of God's call on a life can help you understand the role each stage plays in your call. These 6 stages represent God's trumpet call to you to embrace God's process so that you can fulfill God's purpose and destiny for your life to be His change agent. Each leader was an answer to something God had in mind He wanted to do on the earth and chose that leader to accomplish. Are you available for God to use you?

Os Hillman is president of Marketplace Leaders and author of Change Agent and TodayGodIsFirst devotional and 18 other books on faith and work-related topics. To order Change Agent visit www.TGIFBookstore.com