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## Gleanings

### The Role of Commissioning Agents



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In the past two *Gleanings*, I shared some of Billy's journey of finding his purpose in life. The first step was the transition from a hedonistic lifestyle, commonly embraced by cultural Christians of his day, to a lifestyle centered on Christ. This month I want to continue with Billy's story and focus on the role of commissioning agents.

When Billy was convicted of the truth of the Bible, Christ, and Christianity, he was moved to repent of his hedonistic worldview and embrace a biblical worldview. For Billy, this meant that Scripture should govern everything in his life.

Billy faced a career conundrum. He had been elected to public office based, in part, on his lifestyle as a cultural Christian. (Cultural Christians in Billy's day were not genuine biblical Christians and generally the culture did not think highly of genuine Christians.) Now that Billy was a genuine Christian, could he be an effective elected public official? To help discern God's will on this question, Billy sought counsel from John, a godly spiritual father.

John was holistic in his view of reality, which means he recognized God's sovereign hand in everything, including careers. John believed Christians were God's regents over creation. He believed some Christians were called to serve as public servants. John prayerfully considered Billy's dilemma and it became clear to John that Billy was called to serve as an elected public official. Therefore as one of Billy's spiritual fathers, John commissioned Billy to the ministry of public service. Billy then launched his personal discovery process to find and fulfill God's specific purpose for his life as a public servant.

While it is clear that John, as a spiritual father, served as a commissioning agent to help embolden Billy to remain a public servant, specifically what did John do?

Commissioning agents are people who have authority over us. Each of us has commissioning agents who are sovereignly placed in our lives, such as, parents, teachers, employers, church leaders, spiritual fathers and mothers, and civil authorities. The role of commissioning agents is to help us find and fulfill God's purpose for our lives. Although commissioning agents are not perfect, God sovereignly uses them to guide and direct us into his will for our lives.

In particular, commissioning agents help us to:

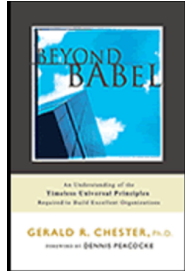
- see reality,
- properly interpret reality, and
- make better choices.

To illustrate this, consider the role of Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, in Moses' life. Jethro was a pagan pluralistic priest (Exodus 18:1,11), which means he was a priest who encouraged idolatry. Nevertheless as Moses' father-in-law, he was a commissioning agent sovereignly placed in Moses' life. Notwithstanding Jethro's pagan worldview and spiritual state, God used him to guide Moses.

Exodus 18 records a visit Jethro made to Moses. The Israelites were on their journey out of bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land. On the way, the Israelites were quite litigious with each other and required daily dispute resolution, which Moses personally conducted. Apparently this work took all day every day. Jethro observed the situation and helped Moses see reality, interpret reality, and make right choices.

*First, Jethro helped Moses see reality.* Jethro observed that Moses was absorbed all day conducting dispute resolution. He questioned Moses, noting that Moses performed all the work alone (Exodus 18:13–16). Moses appeared to be hyper-focused on dispute resolution and to have lost sight of his overall responsibility to the Israelite community. Undoubtedly, Jethro reminded Moses of his responsibility to lead the whole Israelite community.

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*Second, Jethro helped Moses interpret reality.* Jethro told Moses that his time management was not good (Exodus 18:17), the work was too much for Moses, and that if he continued, he would become exhausted and ineffective as a leader. While it was true that Moses was to be the people's representative before God and was to look out for the welfare of the people, he could not do it by himself. Jethro explained to Moses that he needed help.

*And third, Jethro helped Moses make a better choice.* Jethro gave Moses the hiring criteria for selecting helpers who would handle the routine cases. Moses would handle only the most difficult cases, which would free him to execute his other duties. He could focus on the people's overall welfare without neglecting the dispute resolution. Interestingly, Jethro recommended that Moses use the C4 principle to identify those men who would assist him (Exodus 18:19–24).

Jethro was a commissioning agent who helped Moses see reality, interpret reality, and make wise choices. Most commissioning agents, Christian and non-Christian, function like Jethro. But there are exceptions.

As mentioned above, commissioning agents are not perfect. There are times when commissioning agents do not function well. Some are even highly abusive and dangerous. For example, consider King Saul who sought to kill David, God's anointed successor to Saul. David spent a number of years fleeing Saul's attempts to kill him.

May the Lord give us grace to protect ourselves from those commissioning agents, like King Saul, who are highly dysfunctional. But don't be too quick to pronounce a commissioning agent dysfunctional. Sometimes we don't like the counsel we receive and might reject it based on our perception of dysfunction. Be careful. Pray and seek godly counsel before you flee. If you are persuaded through prayer, and your godly advisors concur, that a particular commissioning agent in your life is a Saul, then flee. And may the Lord give you grace to make these difficult decisions wisely.

Notwithstanding the exceptions, as a maxim commissioning agents are in our lives to help us see reality, interpret reality, and make wise choices.

God placed commissioning agents in our lives to help us find and fulfill his purpose. Commissioning agents have authority over us. We don't pick them; we simply recognize their role and submit to them.

Billy experienced the power of living submitted to a commissioning agent – his godly spiritual father John. Moses experienced the power of commissioning agents with Jethro, his pagan father-in-law. Neither Billy nor Moses chose their commissioning agents. These men (John and Jethro) were sovereignly placed in the lives of Billy and Moses.

Who has God placed in your life as your commissioning agents? Avail yourself of these people as God's gift to you. And may the Lord give you grace to submit to their counsel so your commissioning agents can help you find and fulfill your life purpose by helping you see reality, interpret reality, and make wise choices.

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