

Voluntarily

“Shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God”

1 Peter 5:2

Voluntarily—The Greek word is *hekousios* willing, without being pressed. Notice how different this situation is when compared to most church organizations and functions. We tend to press people into service through a sense of duty and obligation rather than letting God draw those whom He calls voluntarily to fit into the house that He is building. Then when volunteers do step forward, we sometimes react with zealous concern. Volunteering is not the norm, so we are suspicious. But it is the norm in God’s plan because God is putting the living stones in the right places without asking our permission.

This word expresses the true character of submission to God. It is the same thought describing Jesus’ action in emptying himself to become our Savior. There are occasions when God presses us into service, but the usual method of our heavenly Father is to allow us to make choices. God never forces Christian service. He presents the need. If we are really His children, we will model the behavior of His only begotten Son. We will place His desires before our own. This is exactly what Christ did. He volunteered for the mission to become the sacrificial lamb because love places the purposes of God before self-purpose

Think how this small change would revolutionize the church. Do we trust enough to allow God to call those He wants in the jobs to do, or are we too anxious to jump in and assign roles based on our assessment of talents? If the house is made of living stones, we will need a different kind of construction boss to build it correctly. My experience shows that too often we choose (and press into service) those who appear to have the “natural” talent for the job. A banker become the church treasurer. A schoolteacher is pressed to teach in Sunday school. The best musician is pushed to handle the choir. But what happened to letting God bring the ones He wants?

This is not our house. We are not the architects or the foreman. We are the stones. Since when did the lumber tell the builders where it wanted to be nailed to the frame? When did the plumbing tell the plumber where it should go? Volunteering is risky, but isn’t that exactly God’s way? He asks us to depend on Him because He is faithful and sufficient. Are we ready for God to put the right stones in the right places or do we still think that we had better help Him along?