



DAVE KISTLER

Greatly Used of God

George Washington Carver was born in 1860 to a mom who was a slave and a dad who died before George was born. His mom was so poor that she couldn't afford a pencil for her son. So, at age 7, he designed his first invention—a pencil holder that would allow him to grasp the only writing instrument he had, a 1/4 inch long pencil. He used that invention and pencil for years. Because of his mother's rich faith, George was saved at an early age. He taught himself to read. At the age of 12, he left home to attend a black school. So eager was he to learn that while other children played at recess, he stayed inside to study. At the age of 17, he applied to a small college. But, he was turned away when the school learned that he was black. Not until the age of 30 was he granted entrance into a small college. A teacher at the college facilitated his enrollment into Iowa State College because of his easily recognized brilliance. Upon graduation at the age of 34 with a degree in botany, he immediately became a professor at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. George had such a thirst for God that he repeatedly prayed the following prayer, "Oh God, teach me all about your universe." When, according to his own testimony, God impressed on him that his request was too big for him, George adjusted his request to, "Then teach me about something more my size--the peanut." God granted him his request. Carver discovered over 300 uses for the peanut, two of which were paint and ink. He also discovered 175 uses for the sweet potato. Late in life, he was approached by Thomas Edison with an offer of a salary of \$100,000 to work in the research and development office of his business. Carver turned him down, choosing to remain at Tuskegee, stating, "The greatest gift a man can give is to pass on to the next generation the things he has learned." Incidentally, Carver is listed at the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture as "one of America's greatest scientists."

George Washington Carver was a man with virtually no advantages in life. He had none of the things that most consider, today, to be essential for success. Yet, he was the consummate success and was GREATLY USED OF GOD. We should note that being used of God has nothing to do with one's race, skin color, education, etc., but has everything to do with some basic requirements that God asks of all those whom he uses. What are those requirements? In Acts 16: 1-14, three basic requirements appear.

First, to be greatly used of God, one must PERCEIVE ACCURATELY. According to chapter 16: 1-7, Paul makes the right decisions regarding both PERSONNEL and PLACES. In 16:3, Paul selects a young man to accompany him in ministry. All the Scripture says of this decision is "him would Paul have to go forth with him." No mention is made of how Paul discerned that this young man's involvement was God's will. In verses 6 and 7, the Bible says that Paul was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia" and that ministry in Bithynia was also not "permitted." Instead, Paul was directed to Macedonia (16:9). There is no specific mention of HOW God "forbade" him to preach in Asia or Bithynia. It seems evident that God spoke verbally to Paul only twice during his ministry, at his conversion on the Damascus road and during his instruction in the deserts of Arabia. Here, in chapter 16, there is no mention of God speaking audibly to Paul. Yet, he PERCEIVES ACCURATELY what God wants him to do and not do. How does he do this? And, how does a Christian, today, discern God's will in areas where the Bible has not given specific instruction? The answer is two-fold. One, to know God's will, one must be WILLING TO OBEY. In John 7:17, the Bible says, "If any man WILL DO HIS WILL, he shall KNOW..." That is, to PERCEIVE ACCURATELY God's will, one must be totally willing to obey what God is going to reveal. God never shows His will to the causal or carnal who wants to know in order to decide IF he will do it. Willingness to obey is a requirement for God to reveal His will. Two, to PERCEIVE ACCURATELY what God wants, one must WALK IN THE SPIRIT. I Corinthians 2:12 says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we may KNOW the things that are freely given to us of God." John 16, also states that the Holy Spirit was given to "guide us into all truth." An intimate relationship with the Spirit of God is absolutely essential for us to know what God wants. When I married my wife over 22 years ago, I confess that I knew very little of who she was and what pleased her, other than leaving the toilet seat down and not bringing visitors home unannounced. However, after years of walking with her in closeness, I have learned not only her likes and dislikes, but how she thinks and what she wants. So it is with the Spirit. When we walk with Him in intimacy, we will have no difficulty knowing what he wants of us. As I was considering these truths, little did I know that I would experience a living example of perceiving accurately God's will. On August 25th, our city of Hickory experienced a tragic murder, kidnapping, car-jacking and suicide, all in just a few

hours. Little did I know that I would end up being a player in those tragic events. On the morning of the 25th, I had a 9:30am appointment at my mechanics for some work on one of my cars. On arrival at the garage, just a few minutes late, I noticed a man leaving the garage driving a 500 SL Mercedes. He appeared scruffy and atypical of the normal owner of that type vehicle. Also, as I drove past him, I noticed that he glared at me with a wild expression. Other than taking note of his expression, I thought no more of it. However, seconds later, I noticed my mechanic frantically running out of the garage trying to discover where the driver had gone. It was at that point that I realized that the unlikely driver had stolen the Mercedes and had done so after pointing a gun at my mechanic's head. Instantly, I urged the mechanic to hop in my car so that we could pursue the assailant. As we drove frantically looking for him, we notified the police of his theft. Within minutes, the Hickory police called back telling us that they were tailing him and attempting to pull him over. About fifteen minutes later, we were told by the police that a shootout had occurred and that the thief was dead. Not until later in the afternoon did we learn the entire story. This man began a rampage at 8:00am by shooting and killing his estranged wife at her place of employment. He then proceeded to kidnap his mother-in-law and drive her across town toward the garage. She escaped while he ditched his car and began looking for another one so that the police could not find him. It was at that point that he randomly walked into the garage to steal the Mercedes. Ultimately, when pursued, cornered and shot by the police (after he took several shots at them), he took his own life by a gunshot to the head. As the police were interviewing each of us for their report, an officer said, "You men (the mechanic and me) are very fortunate individuals." Because this man had already killed prior to stealing the car, he had nothing to lose and would have thought nothing of shooting and killing again. The officer went on to say that my late arrival probably kept me from startling the thief and prompting him to shoot both me and the mechanic. Here's the clincher. On my way to the garage that morning, I had an overwhelming sense that I needed to stop by a short order restaurant and pick up a soda before going to the garage. That stop delayed me no more than two minutes and probably saved my life. The "accurate perception" was nothing less than God speaking and revealing His will to protect me. Many have been the times when I have sensed similar "leadings" of the Lord, but never have I seen it so poignantly. To be greatly used of God, we, as Paul, must PERCEIVE ACCURATELY.

Second, to be greatly used of God, one must PURSUE AGGRESSIVELY. Years ago, I heard a well-meaning preacher counsel his young preachers to not actively "seek to do city-wide crusades" but rather to "let them come to you." While that may sound noble, it is definitely not how Paul approached the gospel ministry. Note Paul's approach to opportunities for ministry. When he'd perceived what God wanted him to do, he PURSUED it AGGRESSIVELY. Chapter 16, verse 10, says, "after he had seen the vision, immediately we ENDEAVORED to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering (lit. "absolutely convinced") that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." In Acts 17, while Paul waited for his two traveling companions to join him in Athens, "his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (17:16). As a result, he had to make his way to the marketplace to declare the gospel to them. This is nothing less than aggressive pursuit of the will of God. This is Paul's manner of life. Note also, that once in the region of Macedonia, Paul made his way directly to Philippi (16:12). His motivation for doing so was that Philippi was the "chief city" of that region and "a colony." Being a colony meant literally that Philippi was a "little Rome." Culturally, economically and governmentally, Philippi was a carbon copy of Rome. Reaching this significant city meant the potential to reach thousands with the gospel. Later, Paul expresses that he must see Rome also. His passion was the AGGRESSIVE PURSUIT of men and women with the gospel. We, too, must PURSUE AGGRESSIVELY if we desire to be greatly used of God.

Finally, to be significantly used of God, one must PRAY ARDUOUSLY. In verse 13, of chapter 16, it says that "on the Sabbath day, we went out of the city by a river side, where PRAYER was wont to be made." The small group that had gathered there to pray was made up entirely of women. Yet, these women got what was important--ARDUOUS PRAYER. Later in the chapter, as Paul and his companions were going to prayer, a demon-possessed girl encounters them. The point is, things happen when God's servants pray. Paul had grasped this third, but most critical element of being greatly used. When H.O.P.E. Ministries began, we spent long, necessary hours organizing ourselves for success in ministry. In the process, I noticed that, while we spent much time organizing, we spent very little time AGONIZING. Things just were not going well. During a distressed phone call with a dear pastor friend, I commented on the struggles we were having. He asked point blank, "Are you giving the proper place to prayer?" He went on to say, "Every man must experience the death of his dream, so that God can breathe His life into it." My dream was definitely dying before my eyes. I learned a lesson then that I never want to forget. To be greatly used of God, we must PRAY ARDUOUSLY.

Dear friend, do you desperately want to be used of God. Then, as with Paul, these three elements must be present in your life. D.L. Moody has had the following statement attributed to him, "The world has yet to see what God can do through the man who is totally yielded to Him. By the grace of God, I will be that man." Actually, the first statement was not made by Moody at all. Moody's close personal friend, Henry Varley, made the comment casually to Moody while in conversation with him. What Varley actually said was, "it remains to be seen what God could do through a man totally yielded to Himself." In response, under his breath and unaware that Varley heard him, Moody stated, "By God's grace, I will be that man." It no longer remains to be seen what God can do through a totally yielded individual, because Moody became exactly that. However, God is looking for totally yielded men today. Will you be that man (or woman) in this generation?

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