

Overview

The invitation of Jesus is simply to 'follow me'. As we seek to live as disciples who follow, we have to work out our own sense of calling or vocation. We want to explore a broad understanding of the word vocation which can apply to everyone and makes sense of following Jesus in our work and daily life. In this session we will explore what having a calling or vocation means and particularly, how we can work out how best to follow as the unique person we have each been made to be.

This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions.

Facilitator

Welcome everyone to the session. Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members. Offer a quick overview of this session, which is the first in a series of 5.

Facilitator

Introduce the question. Invite people to think for a minute about the word 'vocation' and the different contexts in which it is generally used.

Question

Where or how have you heard the word 'vocation' used?

Facilitator

Draw out the range of responses from the group. These are likely to include the following ; vocation = non academic (e.g. NVQ), relates to particular professions (e.g. nursing, teaching, childcare), ordained ministry or religious life, a job or a career (e.g. 'vocational guidance'). Re-state the aim of this session which is to explore 'vocation' in its widest sense.

Facilitator

Introduce the following pictures. A larger full colour version of these pictures are available as a separate download, copies of which can be printed for the group members to share. Invite the group to look at the images and think about which people are traditionally thought of as having 'a vocation'.

Usually responses identify numbers 5, 12 and 14 as the way the church sees vocation. Numbers 2, 4, 6 and 7 are often thought of as representing 'caring roles' with a strong sense of vocation. Numbers 1, 8, 9 and 10 are seen as neutral work, whereas 3, 11, 13 and 15 may cause some discussion about the nature of the work and its value

Discussion

Which of these people traditionally are thought of as 'having a vocation'

A separate handout with the larger, full colour versions of these images is available.

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12



13



14



15



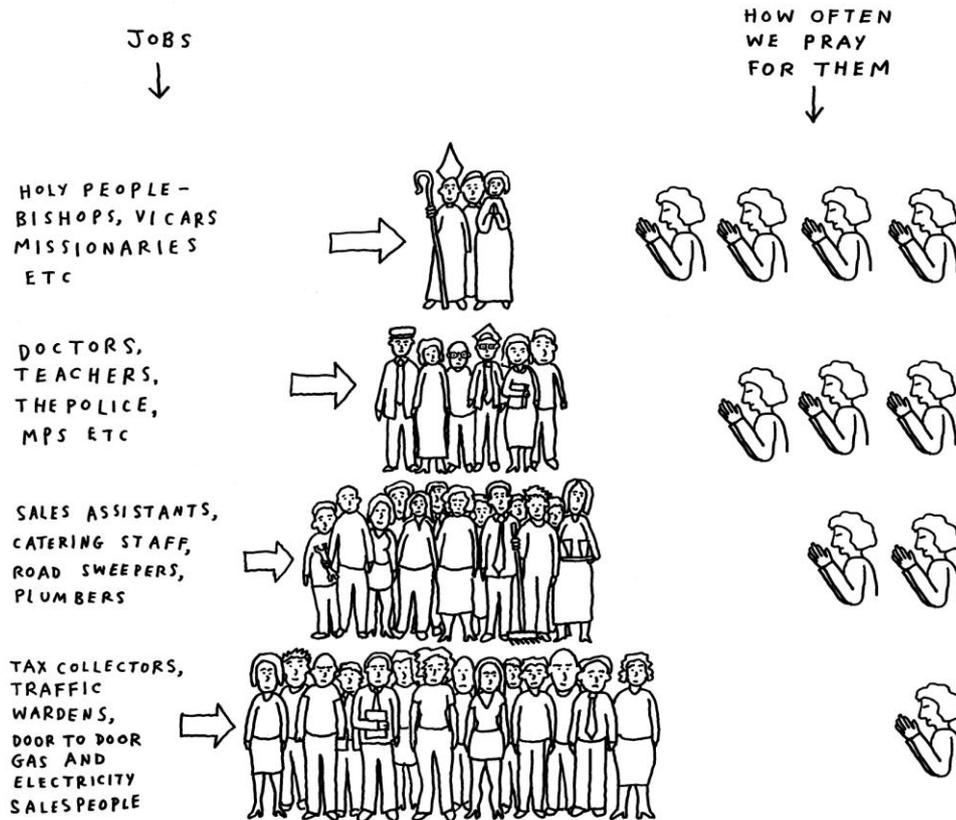
Facilitator

Explore with the group what is helpful or unhelpful about how we traditionally see the idea of vocation. What impact does this have on people who might think that they don't have a vocation?

Facilitator

Introduce The Hierarchy of Vocations cartoon and ask the group to reflect on how this relates to their experience of how the church typically views the vocations of ordinary people. Ask the group to reflect on what they hear during the intercessions, for example – who is included? In what order?

A HIERARCHY OF VOCATIONS



©Dave Walker

Discussion

Does this view seem familiar? What does this imply about how the church typically views the vocations of 'ordinary' people?

Facilitator

Ask the group to think about the 'hidden message' that is given out to those who are working in ordinary jobs.

Facilitator

Up to this point, we have been thinking about vocation and how it is defined by specific jobs or roles. As we go through the session, our aim is to see vocation as something that is not limited or defined by specific roles or jobs..

Facilitator

Introduce the next question. Invite the group to spend a minute or two thinking about this question. It may be best to encourage people to work in pairs.

Question

What does it mean to have a vocation or calling?

Facilitator

Invite each member of the group to share their responses; you may need to go round the group several times to gather all responses. Encourage the group to look at the list of 20 responses from other groups, and identify any points which have not been raised.

Comparison

Here are some responses from previous groups who have considered this question

1. Acknowledgement and deepening understanding of becoming the person that God has made me to be
2. A calling by God to a specific task
3. A burning desire to give of oneself to others and sharing talents
4. Reason you were made –what you are here to do
5. God’s calling might not even be church based
6. Being called by God, others and yourself to be someone you might not be now
7. It takes time to discover it - a journey with God
8. A gift from God to be discovered and engaged with
9. Searching for that task / my song / situation / that makes me feel most fully alive
10. Having a calling to make a change and serve your community
11. Helping people to work with God
12. To show the presence of Christ in your life to the world - finding the way to go and the place to show it
13. Sense of purpose and direction
14. Allowing yourself and your skills to be used
15. Having a role in the ministry and mission of the church and in your life
16. Working together as the body of Christ – team work
17. To make a change in the world
18. Appreciation of God’s purpose in my life
19. To give something of what God has given to me and to open that to others
20. A call to reveal God’s love to the world

Facilitator

Invite the group members to highlight the statements in this list which most reflect their understanding of vocation and have a general discussion about any points people want to raise or about new insights which this may have given.

Activity

Highlight those statements above that you feel are most like your understanding of vocation.

Facilitator

Introduce the perspective 'Vocation' from 'An Altar in the World' by Barbara Brown Taylor. Read this through. When you have finished, invite the group to think about the question below – give them a minute or two to gather their thoughts.

Perspective

Vocation

“Earlier in my life, I thought there was one particular thing I was supposed to do with my life. I thought that God had a purpose for me and my main job was to discover what it was.....

Then one night when my whole heart was open to hearing from God what I was supposed to do with my life, God said, “anything that pleases you”

“What?” I said, resorting to words again “what kind of answer is that?”

“Do anything that pleases you,” the voice in my head said again, “and belong to me”.

At one level that answer was no help at all, the ball was back in my court again, where God had left me all kinds of room to lob it wherever I wanted. I could be a priest or a circus worker. God really did not care. Whatever I decided to do for a living, it was not **what** but **how** I did it that mattered. God had suggested an overall purpose but was not going to supply the particulars for me. If I wanted a life of meaning, I was going to have to apply the purpose for myself.”

“Do anything that pleases you,” the voice in my head said again, “and belong to me”.

*From 'An Altar in the Word' by Barbara Brown Taylor
(Canterbury Press 2009)*

Question

What do you find that is helpful or unhelpful in this passage?

Facilitator

Ask the group to comment on what they find helpful or unhelpful. People are most likely to comment on the realisation that vocation has to be worked out – it is not handed to us on a plate. Highlight the idea of 'belonging to God' and ask people what they feel this means.

Facilitator

*Introduce the What and How activity, which builds on the Perspective above from Barbara Brown Taylor - 'it was not **what** but **how** I did it that mattered'. This activity aims to encourage the group to focus on **how** they engage in their different roles. Invite the group members to make a list of some of the different kinds of activities they do in their life (e.g. their work, leisure activities, family, church etc). List these in the left hand column. On the right hand column, invite the group to list how they go about these activities (e.g. purposeful words which show the particular characteristics which they bring to these activities). For example ; 'What' might include work, family life, community interests, hobbies etc. 'How' might include terms such as hospitable, reconciling, peace-making, nurturing, patiently etc..*

Activity

What and How

In the quotation above, Barbara Brown Taylor differentiates between ‘what’ and ‘how’ ; “it was not **what** I did but **how** I did it that mattered”. List all the different aspects of your life in the left hand column – ‘what’ you do. On the right hand column, think about words which best describe particular purposeful characteristics that shape how you do things.

What do you do?	How do you do it?

Facilitator

Invite each group member to share some thoughts from their **What** and **How** lists. Explore in what ways it helpful it is to think about the distinction between What and How in terms of our vocation or calling.

Facilitator

Introduce the next question. Invite the group to summarise key points which have come out of this exploration on vocation which relates to their discipleship in Christ.

Question

As I follow Jesus on Monday, what does this activity tell me about the kind of person God is calling me to be?

Facilitator

Invite the group to consider this point for reflection during the week. It is likely that the places where people felt most alive are closest to their calling. We will explore this theme again in the next 2 sessions

During the week, you might like to reflect on :



Facilitator

Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session.

Ponder

What did you learn from this session, and what difference might this make to your discipleship?

Facilitator

Ask group members to share quickly 1 or 2 points and reflect back any common themes or issues that need to be explored elsewhere

Closing Prayer

Lord,
Whatever we build,
Give us a glimpse of glory.
Whatever we make,
Give us a sense of wonder.
Wherever we travel,
Give us a sense of reverence.
Whoever we meet,
Give us a sense of awe.
Whatever we do,
Give us a sense of achievement.
Whatever our situation,
Give us knowledge of you.
Help us to see that everything is in your care
And that you allow us to share in your glory

From 'Powerlines: Celtic Prayers About Work' by David Adam (Triangle, 1992)

SESSION OUTLINE

Think about refreshments – beginning, middle or end? We would work on the assumption that refreshments will take around 15 mins in addition to the following time framework.

The suggested timings below are based on a group of between 6 and 8 people – timings should therefore be adjusted if there are more or less in the group.

The timings given for discussion are flexible and can be reduced / extended as time allows. It is always better to ensure that there is adequate time at the end for final reflections and planning the next session, even if this means cutting discussion short.

Time for each element of the session is given, in addition to a 'counter' for the time taken up to that point, ending at 1 hour 30 mins.

5-10 mins (10 min)	<p>Introductions – ensure all group members know each other</p> <p>Distribute worksheets to all group members</p> <p>Introduce the topic using the topic overview</p>
5 mins (15 mins)	<p>Make notes on worksheet for the following questions, share answers with group:</p> <p>Question : How have you heard the term 'vocation' used?</p>
5 mins (20 min)	<p>Activity : Look at the photographs – which of the following people have traditionally thought of as having a vocation?</p>
5 mins (25 min)	<p>Look at the cartoon.</p> <p>Question : Does this view seem familiar?</p>
10 mins (35 mins)	<p>Question : What does it mean to have a vocation or calling?</p> <p>Compare responses with the list</p>
10 mins (45 mins)	<p>Perspective : Vocation</p> <p>Discussion and question : What do you find that is helpful or unhelpful in this passage?</p>
15 mins (1 hour)	<p>Activity : What and How</p>
15 mins (1 hour 15 mins)	<p>Question : As I follow Jesus on Monday, what does this activity about the kind of person God is calling me to be?</p>
5 mins (1 hour 20 min)	<p>Introduce reflection for the week, and final ponder</p>
5 mins (1 hour 25 min)	<p>Practicalities for next session (venue, who will lead etc.)</p>
5 mins (1 hour 30 min)	<p>Closing Worship</p>