



Welcome to our Fall Spiritual Study - "Called"

Our study series this Fall is about listening for, receiving and responding to God's call in our lives. Our sense of "call" has everything to do with choosing a direction, a vocation and a lifestyle.

Remember as you were growing up people asked "what do you want to be when you grow up?" That answer may have changed many times as you grew. How do you answer that now? Often we think discovering who we are really meant to be is a monumental task. Perhaps, you have always had God given ideas and talents that just took time to uncover.

This fall, our series is intended to help each of us and all of us discover the compelling stories of faith as they unfold in scripture. What can we learn from such a rich heritage? All of us want to harness the energy and happiness which comes from knowing God's call.

Together we will consider how through the Spirit's leading, we are called into areas of service and compassion as the Church of Jesus. Together, we offer a portrait of God's kingdom here on earth.

A prayer for our shared journey-

Lord, give us ears to hear you, minds to know you and hearts to love and share you. Through Christ we pray, Amen.

Called - Week 1 - Getting Started

Scriptures: [Gen 2:18-24](#), [3: 9-13](#); [Ephesians 4:1-7](#)



Think how many times a day you are called by name or a "hey there" or you answer your phone. This happens so often we may not think twice, although how and who calls may determine your response! Think about how often as a child you called out for a parent or as an adult have called upon God. Think now about a God who knows -you- and calls you by name! Throughout scripture and throughout history, God calls men and women to a life of joy and belonging; to a life with God.

"Let your life speak" is a Quaker saying that might cause us all to wonder what it means. Let YOUR life speak...let your LIFE speak...let your life SPEAK. It is a provocative saying to be sure - one which itself speaks about call and vocation.

This saying became popularized by a scholar, teacher, author and Quaker, Parker J. Palmer, in a book by the same title. This Quaker wisdom began a journey which encouraged him to change his understanding of God's call and his sense of vocation. A question to ponder - Is the experience of being called by God necessarily a life long journey?

From Chapter 2 of "**Now I Become Myself**" in **Let Your Life Speak, Listening for the Voice of Vocation** - "Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice "out there" calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice "in here" calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original self-hood given me at birth by God".

Watch the Video with Parker Palmer. Does Palmer offer a new and helpful perspective for you?

Our biblical heritage shows us that men and women have been called by God and "employed" by God since the beginning of time. Their vocation was to worship, love and serve God with all their heart, mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves. God given gifts and talents along with God's promise of presence enabled people to do far more than they imagined. Then and today God's people are able to combine a life of call and vocation.

'Call' as a verb means to give someone or something a specific name. It can also mean to cry out or call out. In the Genesis creation account ([Gen 2:18-24](#)) the man called out the names of all the animals and birds and his new companion.

In [Gen 3: 9-13](#), God calls out to the man and the woman in the garden in the cool of the day, after they have eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

'Called' as a noun refers to a summons, to call for someone's attention. We may think of God's call in our lives as that which comes outside oneself, beyond us and perhaps requires a great re-direction.

We think of God speaking or summoning men and women to leadership through out scripture. In the Old Testament alone, the word call or called is used nearly 900 times and the result is a staggering list to behold:

Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Deborah and Barak, Esther and Mordecai, Ruth and Boaz, David, Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, Hosea, Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and on it goes.

In the New Testament we find the terms of call used nearly 300 times. For example we have the stunning calls of the '12', of Peter as the founder of the church, Mary and Joseph, Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan Woman, Saul who became Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, Timothy and on it goes. What a heritage!

Sharing Thoughts and Gaining Clarity

- What are the first things that come to your mind regarding the word "called"?
- What does it mean to you?
- How has or how does God get your attention?
- Do you have a story in which you can describe an experience of God's call to you?
- What are you responsible for naming?
- Have you ever felt "called out" by God?
- What is your understanding of vocation? The early Latin defines it as 'voice', summons or call. Vocation as we use it in contemporary terms refers to career, occupation, mission.
- We tend to distinguish it as something apart from God's call to us, perhaps even very secular in our minds because it is our occupation or career.
- What do you love doing and can spend hours doing it without the worry of drudgery and exhaustion?

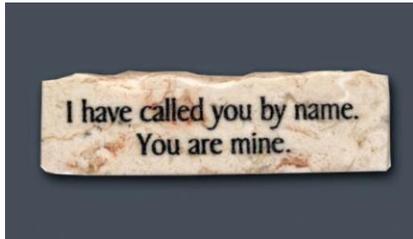
Close this time of study by reading together [Ephesians 4:1-7](#)

What we gain from this lesson is how God calls forth and uses our innate talents and gifts for his kingdom work.

Week 2 - Called by Name

Scriptures: [1 Samuel 2: 1-10](#), [3: 1-21](#) ; [Luke 2:1-46](#)

The call of Samuel as Israel's first prophet is a tender story. It is a story of a mother's longing, hope and finally her prayer of praise. Hannah's song is almost a blueprint for Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, from Luke 2. Both women trust the Lord to do a new thing through their sons, at different times, but with the same issues of being led astray. In Hebrew, Samuel's name means "named of God", or "God is exalted".



- Take time to read Hannah's song like a psalm or a prayer. What stands out to you?

What we learn from her prayer is who God is and what God desires. We gain a perspective of how we can contribute to God's Kingdom portrait.

Samuel appears to be the only son of Hannah. She is married to Elkinah, . His other wife, Peninah was able to bear children. Hannah prays to God to hear her plea for a child whom she will return to the service of the Lord if so blessed. Overheard by the old priest Eli, she receives a blessing and soon is with child. Hannah's song of praise speaks of both her devotion to God and of God's righteous provision. We gain a sense of what we are called to be a part of.

The books of Samuel, 1 and 2, recount the first kings and prophets of Israel. 1 Samuel marks a transitional time in the people of God from the days of judges to the time of the kings and their prophets.

This is a story of calling and selfless vocation. From this story we encounter the God who calls people of all ages and circumstances. Samuel is a mere boy and mirrors others who responded early - such as King David, Jeremiah, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Timothy. The Apostle Paul came to his call late in life and the disciples spanned multiple age groups. Samuel never the less offers a statement that might serve as a daily prayer for each of us - "Speak Lord, for your servant hears".

The word of the Lord was dim in the days of Samuel. The religious leadership was under fire because the sons of Eli were straying from the faithful practices of God's Covenant people. Samuel was given to the house of Eli at the sanctuary in Shiloh. Hannah promised that he would become a Nazarite, one who is set aside for such service and vows to lead a pure life (as described in [Numbers 6:1-21](#)). Samuel would become known throughout Israel as God's prophet.

Consider that it still took old Eli to interpret to Samuel that he was "hearing" God speak. Eli may be an imperfect example of religious tradition but he was still a keeper and disseminator of knowledge about God. Samuel had regard and respect for him. Any one of us can even unwittingly serve as an "Eli" to someone and thereby respond to God's call of keeping God's word alive, known and lived.

Sharing Ideas and Gaining Clarity

- We could also say the word of God is rare in our time. What factors contribute to this situation?
- What factors can reverse it?
- How was Samuel instrumental?

Samuel shows us a remarkable trust that developed over time first with his mother and then as an apprentice to Eli. Samuel naturally runs to Eli with his questions. It is remarkable that Samuel grows to understand that God does indeed speak - to those that listen. God will then guide the actions of those who listen and trust, trust and ask, trust and listen and listen again and act.

- Name two Eli's in your life.
- To whom have you been an Eli?
- What do you feel your God given gifts and talents are?
- What do others say to you about you?
- Have you been willing to go to others with your questions of faith and direction?

In the book entitled "**Called**" by Mark Labberton, how we are called is illustrated in Chapter 5. He reminds us that "Jesus does not say, "Believe me", but rather "Follow me". If we are going to pursue God's call, it is an act of trusting and following - of behaving and living in ways that are reflected in our life and purpose.

In Chapter 6 entitled "**To Whom and What are We Called**", we are reminded to distinguish between first things and next things. First things are matters of character and of faith, of obedience and of influence, of priorities. With confidence, we can daily pursue these first things as our primary vocation.

"Next things' move us in particular contexts of work or ministry. This is where the convergence of gifts, talents, education, opportunity, passion and more draw us toward jobs of service that can seem deeply rewarding. What matters is to be truly and fully clear that the call of 'First Things' is primary. Yet the temptation is to make the next things, first things."

Samuel's listening ear and open heart would surely help us all to distinguish between first and next things in a time when God's word is rare.

Allow the video of this Casting Crowns song to be a time of devotion.

Week 3 - Called From Bondage

Scriptures: [Isaiah 43:1](#); [Jeremiah 29:11](#); [Romans 6:15-18](#); [Romans 8:28-32](#); [Romans 8: 35, 37 - 39](#); [Galatians 3:27-29](#)

Bondage is a strong word. Biblically and historically bondage refers to slavery. Someone or something has power over you and control over your life.

Today we have lots of scripture readings in order to gain a sense of God's promise to us, what holds us back and what calls us into freedom.

The great story of the Exodus describes the imposition of slavery upon a whole people. In this case, God's people. Slavery and the journey to freedom defined Israel's identity and was pivotal in their worship life. Their freedom also gave them new experiences of bondage - new temptations and choices.

The Apostle Paul took this idea of slavery and bondage and creatively twisted it to reflect a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In Paul's great theological treatise of Romans, he says that even God's law in and of itself isn't enough to "set us free".

Freedom?

- What are we being set free from?
- Who or what is our captor?

Paul says that even more than any earthly power is the role of sinfulness; of placing ourselves in the center of our universe and removing God from his rightful place. Being slaves to sin can bind us to every earthly temptation, power or need.

Paul helps us to understand that God's intention for our lives is well being and one which is based upon our relationship with God and God's people. [Jeremiah 29:11](#) describes this well and has offered great encouragement as from the days of old.

We discover that God seeks to set us free from everything that hinders; everything that stands in the way of living in joyful obedience with God. We are unshackled from our limitations, our burdens, our walls, our false securities, in essence our sinfulness; so that we may receive the gift of love in Jesus Christ, his gift of abundant life and there in the gift of the grace.

Joan Chittister wrote a book about God's call entitled '**Following the Path, The Search for a Life of Passion, Purpose, and Joy**'. That's quite a title! Don't we all want the life that offers us those gifts rather than realities of bondage, of slavery?

In Chapter 5, "**Learning to Hear the Call**", she states, "We must come to understand that the residual dissatisfaction with life as we have shaped it for ourselves, is the very essence of what we name 'call.' Clearly, it is at the moments of dissatisfaction with life as we know it now, that the door to the future swings open for us."

God calls us to a relationship that moves us from where we were to a different place of deeper meaning, satisfaction and relationship. We are moved from "being stuck" in familiar patterns that block our future and the quality of our life with God.

Like Paul, God calls us to do this in the world for others. Together we are to offer a caring portrait of God's Kingdom. Listen to author Brian McLaren's challenging words in the video below.

Sharing Thoughts and Gaining Clarity

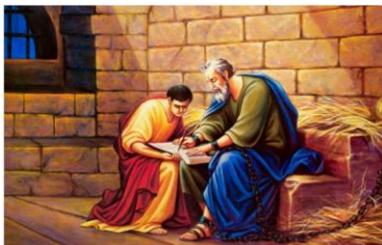
- What do most people you know say that they are "slaves to"?
- What are the powers of bondage today?
- How are they different than in Paul's day?
- What holds people back from experiencing new meaning, purpose and joy in God's call?
- What are some examples of what it means to you that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ?
- How does it affect your "first things" and your "next things"?
- How does this make a difference in your understanding of vocation?
- What activities this week will give you joy?

Paul is a great teacher of what it looks like to serve the Lord with all that you are and ever hope to be. Here was a man who underwent a dramatic change of life purpose and identity. While it brought him hardship and persecution, it brought him profound joy and compelled him to persevere.

Week 4 - Called to Life

Scriptures: [John 8: 12](#); [1 Timothy 1:12-17](#); [2 Timothy 1:3-7](#)

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."



With descriptive affection, the Apostle Paul writes to his "son in the faith" Timothy. He wants him to know what it has meant for him to be called from a life of darkness to a life of mercy and love. The nature of God is to call us to life, a life of relationship with him.

In the two letters to Timothy, we learn of Paul's dramatic transformation and of his hope for a beloved "son". See the description below. ([1 Timothy 1:12-17](#))

"I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Jesus Christ...Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst....that Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."

Imagine how Paul's words might have impacted Timothy, for Paul shares the way his life was transformed because of a life with Jesus. Not only the quality of his life changed but his perspective and purpose were mightily changed. With Paul we consider how Jesus is at work within us, moving us from our lesser selves to discovering our best selves and best gifts.

We may feel our own story to be less compelling than Paul's, but the important truth to discover is God's empowering gift of life at work in us. This is a gift meant for all people to embrace.

The video below speaks to this very thing.

A little fun with language-

The Greek New Testament uses three words for the word '**life**'. *Bios* refers to our physical life while *psuche* refers to our soul and psyche. The third term is what we see in the gospel of John as well as what Paul is describing. The third word is '*Zoe*'. *Zoe* is 'life' which connects us beyond mind and body to the everlasting life of God. Paul understood this to be a gift which comes from God and resides within us, yet binds us to life with Christ in an on-going and transformative way.

Let's take a moment to examine the little word "to" as in Called to Life. It is a preposition which indicates movement from one place or condition to another. Secondly "to" means in order to achieve or accomplish something.

- I am going to take a walk.
- Are you studying in order to pass the exam?

In Adam Hamilton's book about the life of Paul, entitled, '**The Call**', each chapter describes an aspect of our being called to life. Note the titles:

- Called to follow Christ
- Called to Go
- Called to Suffer
- Called to Love
- Called to Give
- Called to be Faithful

The combined titles offer a helpful and realistic perspective of being called. This is enlightening when we ponder that God is calling us from all that holds us back or down -- to light and life! Jesus entered our world in order that we see God at work and come to know God. We then grow into a relationship that transforms, guides, upholds and lasts. **ZOE life!** We might see our whole life journey as a continual process of moving toward God; toward a stronger relationship with God who comes to us in Jesus.

Sharing Thoughts and Gaining Clarity



Do you have a memorable story of coming out of a dark place into light? Such as a vivid memory of passing through a tunnel...

Examine the photos below. What feelings or thoughts do they bring up, for you?



Do they help you reflect upon being called from darkness to light?

- What does it mean to you to have "the light of life"?
- What makes you feel fully alive?
- What do you enjoy doing for hours without tiring?
- How does what you have a passion for inform your sense of calling?
- What might it mean for you to be "called" to life?
- How does the story of Paul and Timothy help you gain understanding for your own life?
- What gives your life hope and purpose?
- What are ways that you share this with others?

Week 5 - Called to be the Body of Christ

Scriptures: [Psalm 95: 1-7](#); [1 Corinthians 10:14-17](#) & [12:27-31](#)

In our earlier lessons we have considered God's call from a personal perspective. We are each known, gifted and loved. Our great vocation is to love God and serve him with our lives. Our 'calling' is the specific ways we share our gifts and talents.

God's call extends also to us as a people, as a community, as those that gather in Jesus name. In the new testament we describe this as the Body of Christ, the Church, the community of believers.

Here is a delightful video that portrays 1 Corinthians and the importance of our shared calling - **The Body of Christ.**

What is God's call to the Church? How do we listen for this?

This will be the focus of our next few lessons.

The Scriptures are our first reference book. There in we learn of our rich heritage as God's people, from Genesis onward. We discover how our lives "are to speak" by seeking to live out the guidance of such things as the Ten Commandments ([Ex 20:1-17](#)) or The Great Commandment ([Matt. 22: 34-40](#)) or the Golden Rule ([Luke 6: 31](#)) We learn of Jesus life and what it means to follow him by emulating his example. Today, the Bible is always available to us, even with many translations and study helps.

Whether we can read or whether we choose to study there is always God's invitation to gather and to worship; to be known and to belong. This is when we come to know who we are, whose we are and what we are to do as God's people. We share this news with every generation. Together we practice serving and sharing, especially so we can "take it on the road."

In worship we begin with praise and recognition of God's grace. We are known, gifted, loved and forgiven in order that we will do the same with and for others. In worship we celebrate what we have and consider how to share with others. We ask God's blessing on our endeavors and are strengthened by being us and we! These words from Psalm 95 really say it all.

*Come, let us bow down in worship,
Let us kneel before the Lord our make; For HE is God and we are the people of God's
pasture, the flock under God's care. [Ps. 95:6-7](#)*



of

The Presbyterian tradition has long held a job description for the Church known as the Great Ends of the Church. They are listed below. This statement of the great ends of the Church, slightly edited in the Book of Order, came from the United Presbyterian Church of North America, which united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States America in 1958.

The statement was then made a part of the Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as the body (Presbyterian denomination - PCUSA) is called.

- The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind
- The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God
- The maintenance of divine worship
- The preservation of the truth
- The promotion of social righteousness
- The exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world

One of my favorite lines has always been "The Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World." It calls to ones imagination a large display or exhibition of portraits which are visible for all to see. These portraits are beautiful images of the Body of Christ in all its diversity, possibility and activity. People who gaze upon them exclaim at the wonder and hope that is offered; marveling at the reflection of God's intention for the Kingdom to be present here on earth.

Mark Labberton presently serves as the president of Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, CA. He has been a pastor, preacher, teacher, author and has spent years being involved in global mission. Daily, he addresses next generation educators, pastors, missionaries and counselors at Fuller. He has a passion for the vitality of the Church of Jesus Christ near and far.

In his book, "**Called**", he articulates the challenges before the Church, the Body of Christ in a "post-modern, post-Christian, multi-religious landscape". He says this in Chapter 3, entitled, "**The Primary Call**": "Christian orthodoxy must not bury it's head and keep saying its creeds without us asking ourselves what is meant and what is heard when we make fundamental affirmations of faith. How the church communicates its message, how it tells "the old, old story", and why and how that story matters today is all part of the work the church needs to do. How churches organize themselves and whether they snap, crackle and pop in a way some think they should is not primarily about money, size or technology. The issues are basic: will the church embody and articulate its only legitimate identity? Will God's people live as followers of Jesus?"

Our vocation is here and today.

The vocation of every Christian is to live as a follower of Jesus today. In every aspect of life, in small and large acts, with family, neighbors and enemies, we are to seek to live out the grace and truth of Jesus."

Sharing Thoughts and Gaining Clarity

Do you have a personally meaningful image or description of the Church, such as the Body of Christ or the family of faith? How does it help you get your mind around God's call?

In the psalm, we are given a pastoral image of God's care and provision for us. How does experiencing this lead one to 'worship'? Lead us to worship?

- What are you willing to do to expand the church of Jesus Christ?
- What are you uncomfortable in doing?
- What should we at Knox, as a church/body of Christ be doing?

- What does BEING the Body of Christ look like to you? Paint a word picture or point to examples you have witnessed.
- Why does it matter if you are disconnected from the Body of the Church?
- To whom does it matter?

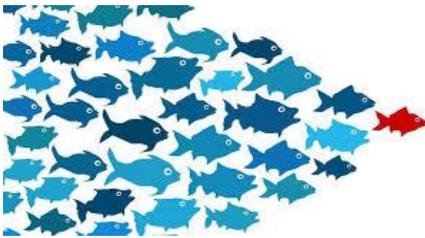
A prayer for the Church – see video

Week 6 - Called to Lead

Scriptures: [1 Kings 17:1-24](#); Hebrews 12:1-2



We frequently see this vision out our window at church. The children from each class of Knox's Children's Day Out program go out for a stroll as often as the weather permits. You may notice the interesting rope which is being used to join everyone in a united effort. The teachers take turns up in the front or at the rear and each child has a ring on the rope to call their own.



When most of us consider a call to lead, the first response may be to look around front to back, side to side and say, "You talkin' to me?" Offering leadership can be both exhilarating and terrifying.

The picture of our children's program offers another view of leadership; especially in the church. Much of what we are called to do as the Body of Christ is achieved with shared leadership. We are willing to do our part, grab ahold and get going, because we are all connected first, to Jesus and secondly, to one another.

This spiritual connection empowers us and carries us forward in a common direction. No one is left behind for all have some leadership gifts and talents to offer. These combine to make a witness or a kingdom portrait to the world. Our effort in Christ helps us to discover greater strengths or rediscover forgotten talents.

Our *Hebrews* passage is a long standing scripture of encouragement and invitation. You see, our spiritual rope in Christ is actually a whole lot longer than anything we can physically touch or see.

Hebrews 12: 1-2

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, [a] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Doesn't knowing this help our willingness to lead in some way? We have so many others who have paved the way and offered examples in our lives. Have you ever found yourself saying, "if so and so can do that, than maybe I can to!" The possibilities come into view before us. Images of Jesus and his disciples as well as the early church come to mind as "training" communities of life together and life for others. God has given us a Spirit of power. Let's remember its source!

Rachel Held Evans is a Christian author, blogger, journalist and a New York Time's best seller. In the video below she helps us remember that the Church in any age will need leaders who depend on Christ's resurrection power.

The Church is definitely called to offer leadership in the world. We need to be a light set on a hill for people to see; a lighthouse for people to be drawn toward; a place of refuge and safety, of healing and learning, of sharing and serving, of joy and hope. The Body of Christ does have a physical space that it inhabits. And so the Church as that 'body' of many, inhabits a place which is truly meant to be a mission outpost.

Before concluding this lesson, turn to the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. Take time in reading it. This is a priceless example of God using unlikely persons, in unexpected places or times to accomplish small miracles together. Both Elijah and the widow offer themselves just as they are. They are in fact employing God given gifts and opportunities. It is a humble story of what trust in God can do.

Sharing Thoughts and Gaining Clarity

On a scale of 1 - 10, 10 being the highest, what number would signify how you see yourself as a leader?

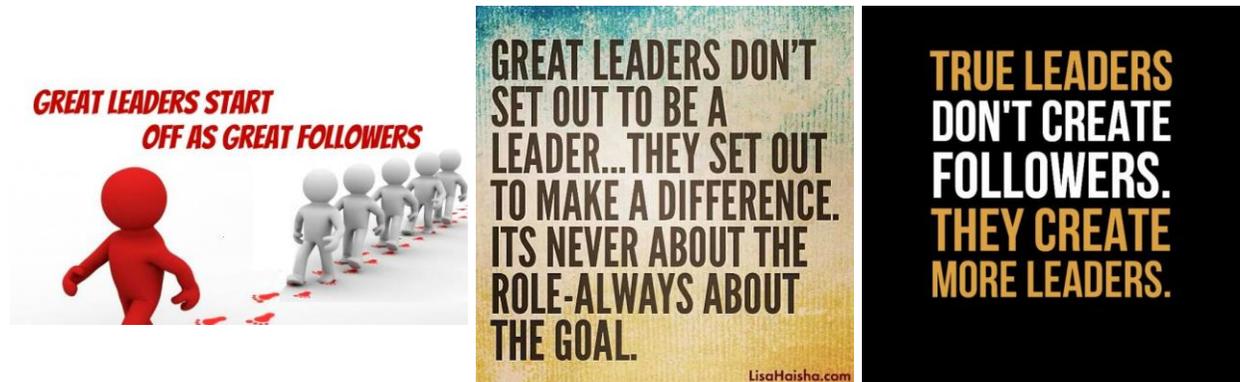
- What traits does a good leader have?
- How does leadership offered in Jesus name affect our openness and our ability to serve?
- Is leadership in the church synonymous with obligation?

Step away from the pervasive, corporate, business models of leadership offered in our society today. Lay down the rubrics of analysis paralysis, data research, marketing ingenuity and the numbers game for now. Reflect rather on the the way Jesus formed leaders with his disciples.

- How would you describe what he did?
- What did Paul do?
- Where should the church look for a model of leadership development?

- Imagine that rope from our picture once again. What 8 -10 people would you invite to your Knox leadership rope and why? What do you think their answer would be if asked?
- What is the church's responsibility to "raise up" new generations of kingdom leaders?

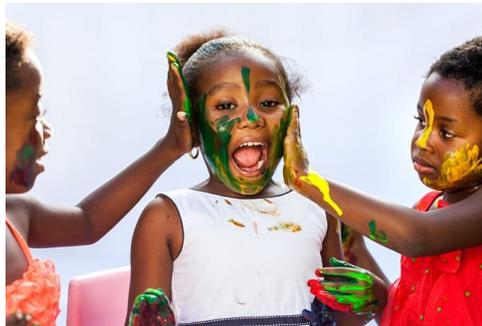
Which picture below do you resonate with? Are they contradictory?



Week 7 - Called to Flourish

Scriptures: John 4: 1- 42 (27-42); Ephesians 4:1-7, 14-24; I Peter 2:1-10

Joan Chittister asks the following questions in her book, "**Following the Path**". In chapter 7, entitled **Purpose and Passion: The Essence of Call** "Am I really alive to the world around me or am I just going through the motions of being alive?"



God calls us to flourish. Flourish?!

This word comes from the old Latin meaning 'flower' or 'to flower'. We can see in our minds eye the flourishing colors of Spring blossoming brightly after winter's lingering gray. What a beautiful image to hold of what it means to have fullness of life. To be called to flourish is to grow, thrive, prosper, do well, burgeon, increase, multiply, proliferate....just to name a few descriptive synonyms! It is a life of perpetual seed time, cultivation and harvest.



- To live a life in which we flourish...is it too much to imagine?
- To share a life as called believers in which together (as the body of Christ) we flourish...is it beyond the Church's reach?
- To portray life as God intends it for the whole world...is it more than we are willing to bear?



The Gospel of John would tell us 'this life' is always near. It is as close as Jesus Emmanuel, God - with - us. Jesus comes, stands in our midst and calls, bidding us to drink his offer of living water.

Chapter 4 of John has the only account we have of Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. This 'chance' meeting was so extra-ordinary in biblical times. The words of their interchange persist in being extraordinary even for our time. This water of which Jesus speaks is so teeming with life that anyone who drinks it will never thirst again and it "will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life". Jesus declares that he is the Messiah and his coming is the impetus for abundant life.



He brings food that will nourish a thriving people, whom if they emulate him, will be fed and filled by doing the will of the one who sent Jesus to be God - with - us.

That one lowly Samaritan woman remains in our heritage and in our hearts as fire because she shared her story. Her humble, imperfect, authentic story was just enough for others to hear and become curious. Their native human curiosity brought them to meet Jesus from whom they learned there really is more to life than we can even imagine or ask for. (Eph 3:20-21)

Ephesians is Paul's great letter to a community in need of encouragement and renewal. They had few material needs and flaunted the latest gimmicks, the greatest library of knowledge, the most recent scientific advancements and awe inspiring architecture. In truth, having seen it first hand even 2000 years later, Ephesus couldn't have been more like the time in which we live!

Paul reminds the Ephesians of the life to which they are called and why and how and where they are to flourish as new creations in Christ. "You know better", you can hear Paul declare, "Do this and by all means don't do that...you now know better! Get with the program. You couldn't have more Spirit if you asked for it. You have all God's gifts of power, belonging, purpose and hope! Now get out there and be imitators of God, as beloved children". (Eph 5:1). The emphatic tone in Ephesians sounds much like a highly regarded football coach.

Conclude today's study of scripture with 1 Peter 2:1-10.

Let me (Deb) share with you my lightning bolt, burning bush, voice breaking through the heavens experience. The good Lord knows for me, it wasn't the "Blues Brothers"!

I remember the first time I (really) heard and then read 1 Peter 2:9-10 as a young seminarian. My upbringing in the church, my years of college and community service, my self limiting anxieties and all my imperfections came together; joined into a cohesive and beautiful puzzle. I never understood myself in the same way ever again. I always felt I would have a place and a purpose, no matter how far I was from family or dear friends. No matter the season, it was and is truly possible to "flourish".

Sharing Thoughts and Gaining Clarity

What have you learned about our vocabulary of called, calling and vocation from this study?

Do you have a moment that you can share in which you experienced God calling you from one place to another, from one understanding to a deeper one, from fear to trust?

- Describe what it looks to you for the church as the body of Christ --to flourish?
- What is your part in that "flourishing"?

God has provided all the tools and gifts we need.

- What are they?
- What stands in the way of employing them all?
- What do you think of the following quotes?

Malala Yousafzai

Authentic grit is the passionate pursuit of hard goals that awes and inspires others to become better people, flourish emotionally, take positive risks and live their best lives.



Jacques Phillippe, Called to Life

"Live! I want you to live! Here is the first and the most fundamental call to us from God. When life seems too hard to bear we must hold tight to this (God's) word, and will to respond to the call, choose to live and welcome life as it is, with all its burdens and sorrows. In the end, this confident acceptance will bring us to see life as an immense gift."

Mark Labertton, Called

The God made known in Scripture and incarnate in Jesus Christ desires flourishing people in a flourishing world. This is God's intent and commitment, and God created humans to flourish by collaborating with him in that endeavor... it tells the long story of how God relentlessly pursues us in faithfulness and love. God shares with us, out of the flourishing communion of Father, Son and Spirit, the overflow that is our hope and salvation... You and I are to be the tangible evidence of God's intent for and pursuit of the world today. You and I. Together. The church. This is our calling as followers of Jesus.

You will conclude this study with a short video of Adam Hamilton that is inspiring, based on the call of Paul. Your leader will have a copy or a copy can be picked up at Knox. Due to copyright we are not able to post on the web.

A little something fun in the form of a challenge--

Below is a video from the Revs. Brian and Micaiah Tanck. They are a clergy couple in Scottsboro, Alabama serving at Scottsboro Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Many of you will remember Brian as hailing from Knox and both served as interns at Knox. They put out a challenge to their congregation last Lent which we thought was very fun and helpful, so we are sharing it with you. As a way of going forward from our study, we hope you will take the challenge as part of your 'being called'!

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