



Why Isn't Belief in Jesus Enough When You Are a Christian?



Session Objective

In this session, participants discover:

- How God invites all believers into Christian service in their baptisms
- That God's call to service is shaped by God's hopes and God's work in the world
- That an element of risk and adventure is involved in saying "yes" to God's call
- How the words *calling* and *vocation* are used to describe God's invitation

Faith Statement

In baptism, the church celebrates the renewal of the covenant with which God has bound us to God's very self. By baptism, individuals are publicly received into the church to share in its life and ministry, and the church becomes responsible for their training and support in Christian discipleship. When those baptized are infants, the congregation, as well as the parents, has a special obligation to nurture them in the Christian life, leading them to make, by a public profession, a personal response to the love of God shown forth in their baptism.

—Confession of 1967 (9.51), Inclusive Language Text



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What does *vocation* mean?
- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?
- What does God call Christians to do or to be?
- What does God want you to do with your life? And how do you know what that is?



Explore

Read Matthew 3:13-17 and Luke 4:16-21 and explore the following questions:

- According to these passages, what was Jesus' calling?
- What was the sign of Jesus' calling?

Read Ephesians 4:4-7, 11-12, 16 and explore the following questions:

- How does the passage from Ephesians relate to the passages from Matthew and Luke?
- According to all three of these Scripture passages, what is our calling as followers of Jesus Christ?
- What is the sign of our calling as followers of Christ?
- How has your church community helped you discover who God is calling you to be? How could it help you?



Express

Use the following questions to help the participants express what they've learned:

- Think about a time when you took a great risk. How might this experience be like following God's call?
- How much risk is involved in facing your day each day? What do you need to face that adventure?
- What would you do if you knew you wouldn't fail? if you knew you would have enough money? if you knew you wouldn't be made fun of?
- How might God call you to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free?
- Who do you know, or know about, that is participating in God's work in the world? How did they hear God's call to them? How has responding to and following God's call changed them?



Exit

Invite prayer requests from the group and close your time together in prayer.





Session Objective

In this session, participants discover:

- That there are multiple ways to serve God in the church and in the world because everyone has different God-given gifts
- That we can only accomplish God's work together because all people's gifts are necessary and interconnected
- That some of their own unique gifts, talents, and skills can be used in Christian service

Faith Statement

Each member is the church in the world, endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry and is responsible for the integrity of his or her witness in each particular situation. Each member is entitled to the guidance and support of the Christian community and is subject to its advice and correction. In turn, each member, in her or his own competence, helps to guide the church.

—Confession of 1967 (9.38), Inclusive Language Text



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What are you going to do with your life?
- Who is God calling you to be right now? Who is God calling you to be in the future?
- How do you know what you're supposed to do with the rest of your life?
- Can you do God's work if you're not working for a church or Christian organization?
- What if God is calling you to be a pastor, a Christian education director, or a youth director?



Explore

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-20, 26 and Romans 12:4-21 and explore the following questions:

- Based on the information in the Scripture passages, what issues do you think the churches were facing that prompted Paul to offer this advice?
- How do you respond to the list of gifts and activities that are described in these Scripture passages?
- Which of the gifts and activities do you most connect with?



Express

Use the following questions to help the participants express what they've learned:

- When have you or your family had what felt like a nearly impossible task to do? What made it possible for you to do it? How did a community's gifts and involvement make it possible?
- What can we accomplish when we use the gifts we've been given and work together?
- What happens when someone doesn't use his or her gifts?
- How has the church community helped you discover and develop the gifts God has given you?



Exit

Have the participants pick one of the gifts or characteristics from the Scripture reading to develop in the coming week. Close with prayer.





Session Objective

In this session, participants will:

- Explore vocation as living out the gospel and their baptisms throughout their lives
- Talk about life plans and the ways God calls us at different times and in different ways
- Identify ways God may be calling them to live out their baptisms in the present as they make choices for the future

Faith Statement

A person responds to God's call to faith in Jesus Christ through Baptism and through life and worship in the community of faith. Persons respond to God's call to discipleship through the ministries of God's people in and for the world. Persons respond to God's call to honor and serve God in every aspect of human life[:] in their work and in their play, in their thought and in their action, [and] in their private and in their public relationships.

God hallows daily life, and daily life provides opportunity for holy living. As Christians honor and serve God in daily life, they worship God. For Christians, work and worship cannot be separated.

—Book of Order (W-5.6002–6003)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What is God calling you to do? Who is God calling you to be?
- How do you currently serve God in your everyday life?
- Can you do God's work if you're not working for a church or Christian organization?
- How do you know when God is calling you to do something?



Explore

Read Esther 3:12–13; 4:1–5:3 and explore the following questions:

- How do you think Esther felt when her cousin, Mordecai, asked her to go to the king? How do you think she felt when Mordecai told her she might have been brought to royal dignity just for that time?
- What was Esther being called to do? How did she know she was being called?
- How is Esther's story an example of doing God's work outside of a faith community?



Express

Use the following questions to help the participants express what they've learned:

- When have you been in the right place at the right time to help someone? How did that feel?
- When have you stood up for something you believed in, even when it might have cost you?
- What careers and occupations are you thinking about or pursuing right now? How do you see your work as part of God's work in the world?



Exit

Have the participants name for each other the special gifts or talents that each person has that will be used to help do God's work in the world in the next week, and in the next seventy years. Close with prayer.





Session Objective

In this session, participants will experience the practice of discernment in finding one's vocation, by discovering the many different ways to listen for God and exploring ways to make space for us to hear God.

Faith Statement

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church. In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

—A Brief Statement of Faith (10.4)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- How are you supposed to know when God is calling you to do something?
- What does God's voice "sound" like? How do you know if what you are "hearing" is God's voice?
- What if you heard God asking you to do something? What would you do?



Explore

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10 and explore the following questions:

- What made it possible for Samuel to hear God?
- Why do you think Samuel assumed Eli was calling his name instead of God?
- What's the main theme of this story?

Read 1 Kings 19:9-13 and explore the following questions:

- What's the main theme of this story?
- Why do you suppose Elijah heard God's voice in the stillness and not in the wind and earthquake?
- What do these two Scripture passages have in common? How are they unique?
- What made it possible for Samuel and Elijah to hear God speaking to them?



Express

Use the following questions to help the participants express what they've learned:

- When are you most able to hear God or experience God's presence?
- When are you most likely to seek God's advice? How could you be prepared to hear God's voice to you?
- Just as Samuel was accustomed to hearing Eli's voice, which voices are you most prepared to hear in your life?
- How can your community of faith help you listen for God's voice and God's call to you?
- Imagine you are on the stage of your life and there is a balcony full of people who can help you make decisions. Who encourages you? advises you? challenges you to do your best? questions your decisions? stands up for you? gives you a dose of wisdom? thinks through a plan of action with you? Who else is in your balcony?



Exit

Close with prayer, asking each person to pray for the person on his or her right.

