

LIVING A LIFE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE

*An hour-long immersive experience for small groups, centered around one section of **The Power of Calling** documentary—flexible for in-person and online use. If you're in-person, you'll need a whiteboard or flip-pad and markers. If you're online on Zoom or another platform, post responses in the Chat. Give or post the Participant Handout for each person in the gathering and pass out pens or pencils for those who don't have them.*

INTRODUCTION (5 Minutes)

SAY: In *The Power of Calling* documentary we see Chef Eric, Antoine, and their wives all wrestling with the concept of “calling.” Most people do. Our quest for meaning and purpose in life is rarely clearcut. And most of us believe the only “called” people are professional religious people—clergy or ministry leaders. So it's hard for us to see our everyday responsibilities, and our dreams and passions, somehow “sourced” by God in the first place. Most of us think we're somehow “beneath” being called by God into lives of meaning and purpose.

SAY: In *The Power of Calling* documentary, that's true of everyone connected with the Blue Bears Café. Neither Antoine and Eric, who first explored the possibility of opening a French Café staffed by workers with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (IDD), first connected their dream to God's calling in their lives. And Emmanuel and Gabby, the Ivers' sons, only discovered they have God-given skills as chefs when they became the first two IDD staffers at Blue Bears.

QUESTION (Pairs, 6 Minutes): When did you discover you were actually really good at something you didn't expect? Find one other person to be your partner right now. *(Pause)* Maybe you tried tennis for the very first time and you were better than the person teaching you! Or maybe your teacher required everyone in class to write a poem, and you discovered you had a knack for writing verse. Whatever it was, share that story with your partner... Partners, be sure to ask at least one follow-up question during or after your partner's story.

Debrief (Whole Group, 3 Minutes): When you think about the stories you just shared and heard, what are some words that represent the emotions in those stories? *(Write responses on whiteboard or flip-pad.)*

Video (5 minutes): Watch “Antoine” from *The Power of Calling* documentary.

Play the downloaded file or stream it from this link: <https://vimeo.com/vibrantfaith/poc-session4>

Think about the words we've put on our whiteboard—remember them as we watch a short segment that focuses on Eric, Antoine, Emmanuel, and Gabby. Where do these emotions show up in this story?

QUESTIONS (Whole Group, 7 Minutes): Why do our callings in life tend to “sneak up” on us? Why are we often blind to the connection between our passions in life and their “headwaters” in God? When we discover more about our meaning and purpose in life, what impact does that make on our relationship with God, and why? *(Write responses on whiteboard or flip-pad.)*

Scripture Discovery (Pairs, 20 Minutes): Let's explore a story of discovered callings that involves Jesus and an unexpected encounter. With your partner, dive into the story of Jesus and the man who was born blind—it's perhaps the most detailed “encounter story” in the gospels. Read John 9:1-38. Then answer these questions together:

- How did Jesus help this person(s) discover their buried calling?
- How did the “hard-wiring” of this person(s) connect to the calling Jesus surfaced in them?
- What did it take for the person(s) Jesus encountered to step into their calling? How is that similar to your own story of calling?

Debrief (Whole Group, 10 Minutes): Let's explore the insights and understandings that stick out to you from your conversation with your partner. What are the parts of your conversation that felt very true to you, or something important was noticed? I'll write everything you share on the whiteboard. *(Write responses on the whiteboard or flip-pad, and interact with these responses by highlighting common themes or adding additional insights.)*

SAY (2 minutes): *(Use a different color or marker than you have used so far for this.)* Now let's see if we can sum up our discoveries about the way Jesus plants callings in us, and what we do to respond to them. Let's see if we can condense that into one sentence—I'll write it on our whiteboard using a different color of marker. *(Go back and forth with the group until you have your one sentence, then write it on the whiteboard.)*

CLOSING (2 minutes): As we close, I'd like you to stand up, get some space from the person next to you, and close your eyes. *(Pause)* Now open your arms wide to your sides and keep them there. *(Pause)* Silently consider this question... What does it feel like to have your arms wide open like this? *(Pause)* As you maintain this open posture, what do you want to silently say to Jesus? *(Pause)* In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Jesus & the Man Born Blind – John 9:1-38

¹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ² “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” ³ “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. ⁷ He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing! ⁸ His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!” But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!” ¹⁰ They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?” ¹¹ He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!” ¹² “Where is he now?” they asked. “I don't know,” he replied.

¹³ Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, ¹⁴ because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. ¹⁵ The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them. ¹⁷ Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What's your opinion about this man who healed you?” The man replied, “I think he must be a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. ¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?” ²⁰ His parents replied, “We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we don't know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³ That's why they said, “He is old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, “God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner.” ²⁵ “I don't know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!” ²⁶ “But what did he do?” they asked. “How did he heal you?” ²⁷ “Look!” the man exclaimed. “I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

²⁸ Then they cursed him and said, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from.” ³⁰ “Why, that's very strange!” the man replied. “He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from? ³¹ We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. ³² Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he couldn't have done it.” ³⁴ “You were born a total sinner!” they answered. “Are you trying to teach us?” And they threw him out of the synagogue.

³⁵ When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.” ³⁷ “You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”

³⁸ “Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.