

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)—We can often know people for years and years without knowing their stories. We might know *what* they do, without having any clue *why* they do it. They might not even know that themselves. Understanding that our callings often flow through and from our life stories can help us think differently both about our stories and about how God works in our lives. Engaging our stories and creating space to hear the stories of those in our community are an essential part of finding lives of meaning and purpose. This is true for us as individuals and churches.

SAY: Your story matters—in the everyday ups and downs of life, the threads of your story reveal your callings. But it's only when we take the time to listen to our stories that we can see and encourage those callings. Let's explore what it looks like to help others discover their meaning and purpose in life...

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

Play the downloaded file or stream it from this link: <https://vimeo.com/vibrantfaith/poc-session3>

QUESTIONS (7 minutes, Whole Group):

- First, what's something that stuck out to you about this church—something that caught your attention?
- What's something that surprised you?
- In what ways is your own story known in your church?

Partner Sharing (10 Minutes, Pairs): Look at the images on your handout. Choose one that connects you with something that brings meaning and purpose to your life. *(Pause)* Now turn to a partner and tell your story—how does your chosen image connect a story about meaning and purpose in your life? As you listen to your partner's story, make sure to ask at least one clarifying question. For example: “What about this experience in your life still has an impact on you, and why?” or “What feelings did you have during this time, and why?”

QUESTIONS (7 Minutes, Whole Group): Gather everyone back together, then **ask:** What are the feelings you experienced as you told your story, and why? *(List responses on the whiteboard or flip-pad, or in the Chat online.)* Then **ask:** What feelings surfaced in you while you were listening to your partner? *(List responses on the whiteboard or flip-pad, or in the Chat online.)* When you see these “feeling words” listed, what insights or observations can you make about the stories of our lives? *(Write responses on whiteboard or flip-pad, or in the Chat online.)*

Scripture Discovery (3 Minutes): The story of the Woman at the Well is a powerful one for many reasons. In the stories you just told and heard, meaning and purpose surfaced in some unexpected ways. The same happened in Jesus' encounter with this outcast woman, desperate to reclaim her dignity... **Read Aloud:** John 4:1-18.

QUESTIONS (7 Minutes, Whole Group): As Jesus pursued this woman with upending questions, he helped her find purpose through her story—despite how others had judged her.

- What “feeling words” on our whiteboard (or Chat) likely apply to the experience of the woman, and why?
- What can we learn from the ways that Jesus engaged the woman and her story?
- Jesus engaged the woman at a place and time that was part of her daily life. Assume he wants to help you to “mine” your daily life for meaning and purpose—what do you think you would find together?
- How does your current work connect with your life story, and why?

QUESTION (7 Minutes, Pairs): Return to the images on your worksheet. If callings happen in and through our stories, choose an image that speaks to you of a new calling or purpose that you sense God is putting in front of you. With your handout, turn back to your partner and discuss:

- Which image best expresses your call into a deeper meaning and purpose right now, and why?

QUESTIONS (6 Minutes, Whole Group):

- Let's hear back from your conversations—what's something that stuck out to you about your partner's story, and why?
- Think about your conversation with your partner, and what you've heard from others today... What have you learned, or re-learned about people's stories and how God calls all people?

CLOSING (3 minutes): Look at the images on your handout again—ask Jesus to guide you, through one of the images, into one aspect of his call to a life of meaning and purpose. Once you sense him directing you to one of the images, take some moments in silence to pray for clarity about your purpose—ask the Spirit of Jesus to help you pray... *(Pause for at least 60 seconds, then offer an "Amen" to end the prayer time)*

John 4:1-18 – Jesus & the Woman at the Well

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" (although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized), he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"