



— INTRODUCTION & USER GUIDE —

LIVING A LIFE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE

My name is Rick Lawrence—I'm Executive Director of Vibrant Faith, a ministry resourcing, training, coaching, and research organization founded by Dr. Merton Strommen 25 years ago. For five years our Vibrant Faith team partnered with more than two-dozen churches around the U.S. to help plant "cultures of calling" in their congregations. The project's goal was to raise awareness and practice for what it means to live our everyday life with a deep sense that God has called us into a missional life. Our passions and skills and dreams are tied to God's stirrings in us.

As our capstone to the project, our Vibrant Faith team partnered with Studio 949 Productions to create the 35-minute documentary "*The Power of Calling*"—a deep dive into the inspirational stories of people who discovered the profound pull of meaning and purpose in their lives, and what happened in their relationship with God as a result. In this ministry resource kit, we've included the entire documentary, along with specially produced segments that are embedded in a six-session resource for small groups. You can use the elements in this kit to...

- Show the documentary to a large group (even your whole congregation!), followed by an interactive and engaging conversation guided by companion Leader Guide.
- Give the Small-Group Series to interested small groups in your congregation, helping them dig deeper into their own meaning and purpose in life using storylines from the documentary.
- Split apart the six lessons in the Small-Group Series as topical one-off lessons, targeted for various ministry areas, interest areas, and needs in your church.

The Kit Includes:

- **A Congregational Resource** – The full documentary paired with a post-viewing Leader Guide
- **A Six-Session Small Group Series** – The first lesson includes the full documentary, and four of the remaining five lessons include a specially-produced short segment based on storylines in the documentary. Each Lesson includes a Leader Guide and Participant Handout.
SESSION 1 – "The Power of Calling" **SESSION 2** – "Stewarding Our Lives" **SESSION 3** – "Uncovering Your Story"
SESSION 4 – "Everyone Is Called" **SESSION 5** – "Give What You Have to Give" **SESSION 6** – "Jesus Calls You By Name"
- **A Short Promotional Trailer** – Use it to promote a churchwide viewing, or to promote to small groups
- **Promotional Graphics** – A variety of graphics, in both style and size, to use as you promote.

The strategy of engagement in Lives of Meaning and Purpose is fundamentally relational and discovery-based—participants are discovering new insights and truths, interacting with each other about their discoveries, all guided by a leader. We use mixed conversation groups of two, three, four, and the whole group throughout. We used debriefed experiences and storytelling in the form of video segments as catalysts for conversation. These things are woven together throughout the experience.

Jesus prioritized participatory discovery in His "teaching" or "intentional growth" encounters. Whether He was telling a story that caused people to wrestle and ask questions, or plunging them into an experience that transformed them, or deepening their faith through vigorous conversation, Jesus was all about participation, not presentation. So, if we pattern what we do after Jesus' participatory strategies we'll...

1. **Use a "Prompt" to kick off discovery.** Just as Jesus did, we can use a story (or photos or film segments) or a discovery question as a prompt to start exploring.
2. **Create "Targets" for people to pursue.** Whatever the truth we're trying to focus on, we find a way to get participants exploring that truth before the Leader explores it for them. We do this by...
 - Asking clarifying questions about the "prompt."
 - Asking challenging "Why?" questions that get at the heart.
 - Ask "Bridge" questions that help people dig deep into Jesus or Scripture or truth.
 - Interact with whatever people discover—embrace, clarify, further their thoughts, or ask follow-up questions.

All of this is invigorating for leaders—it requires a dependence on the Spirit of Jesus, and follows the way He engaged others to help them grow... Most people, for most of their life, do not experience another person paying ridiculous attention to the threads of their story. We can learn to persevere and be more creative in our pursuit of people if we will embrace the "Jesus way" of pursuit and exercise more courage in how we teach and relate to them...



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Leading the *Lives of Meaning and Purpose* Congregational Resource of Small-Group Series is a bit different than you may be used to. These adventures are driven by conversation, intentional interaction, storytelling (in the form of specially produced video segments) and experiences that serve as a launching pad for discussion. Here are guidelines for leading these lessons...

- Included in the digital folder for each lesson is a printable/editable Leader Guide and a printable/editable Participant Handout. Before your gathering, you'll need to print one copy of the Leader Guide and a copy of the Participant Handout for each person you expect to attend.
- Sometimes you'll need simple supplies—pens and notecards—but most often you won't need to gather anything.
- You'll need a whiteboard or flip-pad and markers—it's a central practice in leading these lessons to “take notes” on what people in the group say. This is important for referencing back important insights, but even more, to underscore the importance of their contributions. Long experience has taught that people more quickly open up and contribute when they know their insights are important.
- Because these lessons are built around shared participation and shared discovery, your role as the Leader is to guide the group through these experiences, bringing them into and out of breakout groups and discussions, and offering “connective tissue” in the “Say” segments. Your most important role is to guide the conversations, ask follow-up questions, and add your own perspective along the way (without “trumping” or negating what someone has already said).
- These lessons are flexible—you can adapt them to any setting and time constraint—simply edit out what you need to.