

Overview

Who am I, what are my gifts, what am I passionate about and when do I feel most alive? These, and other such questions, are all important when exploring the issue of our own calling. God has made us uniquely and has planted in us particular gifts and purposes that he wants us to use as partners with him in his work. This topic helps us to explore and name our purpose and what we feel we are able to offer to others. Being clearer about that helps us to work with other more creatively.

This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions

Facilitator

In this topic there are a number of exercises that group members need to complete beforehand. The time in this session is divided between a short introduction to the main theme and time to review the exercises and to draw the insights together. Depending on the group, this may be too much for one session and you will need to judge the groups capacity and whether another session is needed

Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members

Facilitator

Introduce these Bible readings (all from NRSV) and invite the group to consider their significance for exploring vocation.

Bible Perspective

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Romans 12:3-8

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

Luke 9:23-25

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared for us in advance.

Ephesians 2:10

Facilitator

Invite the group to share responses to the following question;

Question

How do these readings suggest we should approach the task of looking inward?

Facilitator *Introduce the perspective ‘Gifts and Grace’, and invite the group to discuss any points that arise from it*

Perspective **Gifts and Grace**

Our gifts are not necessarily our talents, they are not the ‘things that we are good at’. They are the attributes, the characteristics, the uniqueness of each one of us.

Grace is the means by which each one of us becomes wholly and fully alive, where these gifts are brought to fullness, where some gifts will be exceptional and take centre stage of who we are, and where other gifts will form part of the background of who we are.

God’s grace enables each one of us to become the person he made us to be, and we are all on a journey towards becoming this person.

Facilitator *Turn now to the exercises that the group have prepared beforehand*

Activity **Explore your responses and ideas to one or more of the accompanying exercises**

Exercise 1 Party Time

Facilitator *This is a straightforward exercise and a good one to begin with. It is in two parts. Firstly ask each member of the group to state their three chosen letters and comment on how easy or hard it was to decide. People can change their mind easily here and that is fine –it’s not meant to be scientific. Sometime people might choose to talk to others at the imaginary party because there is something they admire in them rather than because they are like them. Don’t get too bogged down. Secondly ask the group to choose, if they have not already done so, the words they most like when it comes to describing themselves. Ask them to write their favourite of these words on the left-hand side of the stick-person summary sheet.*

Exercise 2 Who am I?

Facilitator *Depending on how much time you have, it is probably best to do this exercise in pairs – you may need to take part too if there are odd numbers. Invite people to take about 5 minutes each to share their answers. Some people will just have answered a few questions that interest them. You might want to get everyone to share their answers to the question about which aspect of Jesus they most admire to bring the group back together. It’s interesting to see how we all see different aspects. Again invite people to add any thoughts to their summary sheet – words that might describe them and thoughts about what they might bring or offer to others.*

Exercise 3 Know your Gifts

Facilitator *Hopefully people will have prepared some ideas about times they feel most alive. A bit of quick thinking can be done in the session if not. Best to split the group into 3’s for this exercise. The guidelines on the exercise sheet are self explanatory. Suggest each person has about 5 minutes to talk. Encourage the other to listen and to feedback feelings and insight which they have picked up. Again, at the end, invite group members to add to their summary sheet.*

Facilitator

Having worked through the exercises, invite the group to spend a little time to reflect on what they have said and heard about themselves. Ask each group member to write down on the left-hand side words that best describe the core of who they are, words that have come out of the exercises. On the right-hand side, write down words that describe what they want to give or offer to others.

Activity

Summarising your Purpose

Words that describe the core of who I am

(eg. encouraging, practical, warm, energetic, stirring)

Words that describe what I want to give or offer

(eg. problem solving, bringing clarity through listening, revealing the truth, resolving differences)



Facilitator

Having spent a little time on the summary sheet, ask the group to have a go at the activity 'Naming our Purpose' which tries to come up with a phrase that encapsulates their sense of purpose. Suggest people pair up and have a go using words or phrases from each side, to come up with a statement of purpose. Suggest that they read the words or phrases out loud. It is often when we hear phrases spoken out loud that we know whether they are a good description of ourselves. Point out the features of a purpose statement. This activity doesn't have to be completed here and now, it can be work in progress.

Activity

Naming our Purpose

Now, using words or phrases from each side, try to come up with a statement of your purpose (eg. I am the kind of person who is..... and wants to offer.....). Pair up with someone else in the group and share your statement with them out loud. Does the statement make sense to you and to them?

Some features of your purpose

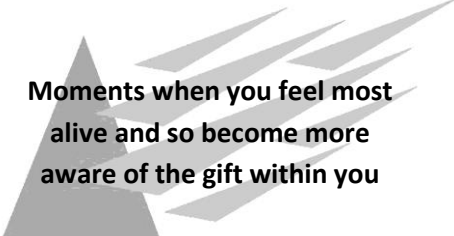
- When all other parts of you are stripped away, this is left and is distinctively you
- You can't stop yourself being this
- It is life giving to you and others
- It is not specific to any one situation and applies to all the contexts you find yourself in
- It's not something that you have learned – you may have polished and refined it but it is part of who you are
- Those who are close to you will affirm it in you and encourage you to exercise it
- It's going with the grain of who we are and is much more effortless than other things we do
- It's not always what we want or wish for ourselves but it is who we are

Facilitator

Point out that this activity can be continued to be worked on in the coming weeks. Suggest the group members continue to experiment with different combinations of words as something may click and seem a really good fit.

Facilitator

During the week, you might like to reflect on :



**Moments when you feel most
alive and so become more
aware of the gift within you**

“That is why I now remind you to stir into flame the gift of God which is within you through the laying on of my hands”

2 Timothy 1:6 (NRSV)

Facilitator

Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session and ask them to share quickly 1 or 2 points.

Ponder

What did you learn from this session?

Reflection

Listen to 'O God you search me and you know me' together, thinking about the person God made you to be, the living flame that God put inside *you*.

The song can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKsB9NcYSBg>

(Or say the words together if no internet access is available)

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my ways lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you go before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
You are with me beyond my understanding:
In ev'ry moment of life and death, you are.

For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
God of my present, my past and future too.

Although I feel your hand upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my ways lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you go before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

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