

Overview

Our vocation in God is something that needs regular attention to be sustained. Through God it changes and develops over time. We have to be open to new promptings and surprises as God reveals more of his purposes for our lives and for those he calls us to engage with for his sake. Vocation is a shared activity. We are members together of the body of Christ and we need each other for encouragement, support and as partners in God's work. What do we need to do to support each other on our journey and sustain the clarity of our calling?

This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions

Facilitator

In this session it is important to share the signs of new beginnings that we began to discuss in the previous session (topic VOC6) if they have been completed. The other main focus for this session is to explore how the local church can positively support, encourage and sustain people in their vocations given that these will invariably be expressed in daily work and life.

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

Facilitator

Invite the group members in turn to talk about the SMART exercise they started last time they met and to share some ideas about new beginnings and next practical steps.

Activity

Share your thoughts about the possibilities and plans for new beginnings, and some of the actions you will take.

Facilitator

Encourage members of the group in whatever they have identified as a new beginning no matter how apparently small. Ensure everyone is invited to contribute without being put too much on the spot. When everyone has contributed ask the group members to consider the following question on their own for a few moments

Question

What have you learned from these sessions about exploring vocation?

Facilitator

Invite the group to share their responses individually. It will probably be worth writing these comments down. It is likely that a number of the comments will reinforce how much people have appreciated doing this activity in a group and listening to and sharing in each others stories and perspectives - there is a great value in listening to others experiences. Try to draw out the useful lessons for sustaining vocation in the longer term.

Facilitator

Turn the focus of attention in this last section to explore how, as a member of the local church, we can help to sustain each other vocation. Ask the group to consider the following question.

Question

What do you think the challenges might be as you move forward from here?

Facilitator

Share the responses. Likely responses might be:

- Having to decide what to stop or let go
- What if I have got it wrong and my new beginning doesn't work out
- Dealing with the pressures and challenges of everyday work and life –how do I best respond
- Its too much for me on my own – I need to team up with someone else
- Persuading others that this is the right path
- Working out the next few steps
- Keeping in tune with God and going with the flow

Facilitator

Introduce a discussion around this extract from Paul's letter to the Ephesians and explore ways we can overcome some of the challenges together. How might we support and encourage each other and those in the church community who are exploring their vocation too?

Discussion

'Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work'

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NRSV)

What do you think are the implications for the Church, and for our vocations, of St Paul's statement?

Facilitator

Lead a discussion to explore the following question. Help the group to identify positive actions that could be taken to encourage others to explore their vocations.

Question

How can we as a Church be a community that takes our individual and collective vocation seriously?

Facilitator

Encourage a member of the group to read the final reflection ('The Heart of the Matter') aloud. Once it has been read, ask the group what they will take from this reading, which parts spoke to them particularly.

Final Reflection

The Heart of the Matter

The Lord God said:

I myself will dream a dream within you.

Good dreams come from Me, you know;

My dreams seem impossible, not too practical,

Not for the cautious man or woman;

A little risky too sometimes, a trifle brash perhaps;

Some of my friends prefer to rest more comfortably in sounder sleep with visionless eye.

But for those who share my dreams I ask a little patience,

A little humour, some small courage,
And a listening heart – I will do the rest.
Then they will risk and wonder at their daring,
Run and marvel at their speed,
Build and stand in awe at the beauty of their building.

You will meet me often as you work -
In your companions who share your risk,
In your friends who believe in you enough
To lend their own dreams, their own hands, their own hearts to your building,
In the people who will find your doorway, stay a while
and walk away knowing that they too can find a dream.
There will be sun-filled days and sometimes it will rain -
A little variety.....
Both come from Me – so, come, be content;
It is my dream you dream,
It is my house you build,
My caring you witness,
My love you share – and this is the heart of the matter.

*Author unknown – cited in 'Live for a Change: Discovering and Using Your Gifts' by Francis Dewar
(1999, Darton, Longman and Todd)*

Facilitator

During the week, you might like to reflect on :



**Who might you encourage to join a group
to help to explore vocations in this way?**

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?

Facilitator

Lead this final prayer, encouraging the group to join in with the words in bold.

Final Prayer

In the beginning, before time, before people
Before the world began,
God was

Here and now, among us, beside us,
Enlisting the people of earth for the purposes of heaven,
God is

In the future, when we have turned to dust
And all that we know has found its fulfilment,
God will be

Not denying the world, but delighting in it
Not condemning the world, but redeeming it,
Through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit,
God was, God is, God will be.

Listen, Christ has promised to be with us
in the world, as in our worship.
Amen. We go to serve him

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