

Description

If you give Jesus your whole life, what does that mean for your career? Does God care whether you become a lawyer, a musician, or a truck driver? Find out how God can use your passions and talents in combination with his mission for the world.

Goals

1. Help participants feel accepted, safe, and able to ask questions to grow spiritually.
2. Help participants learn about their calling (the unique purpose for which God made them) by looking at how God uniquely created them (their gifts, passions, abilities, experience and personality).
3. Look at how Jesus’ calling of common fishermen to be his disciples, or “fishers of men,” relates to how God still calls people according to their gifts, experiences, etc.
4. Take an inventory of gifts, abilities, passions, experience and personality. Thank God for the gifts he has given each person, and think of one way to put them to use to serve God in the next week.

Outline

Starter: “The Oath Scene - Green Lantern Movie”

Story Part 1: Marshall (alternate story: Greg)

Bible Encounter: Luke 5:1-11

Story Part 2: Marshall (alternate story: Greg)

Experience: “What is Your S.H.A.P.E.?” Video and Workshop

Opening

Give a sincere and warm welcome to each person, letting them know you are glad they chose to come to the session. Share the vision for the group, then feel free to use the following language to open the session:

“Who am I? What am I here for? What do I have to offer the world?” These are not simple questions. They’re the deepest we can ask. And we must ask them if we’re to live meaningful and fulfilling lives. These questions launch us on a journey of discovering our calling in life. They lead us to explore what gifts and talents we have, and how we can use them to make a difference in the world. That’s what a “calling” is: the place our gifts and passions intersect with the needs of the world around us.

We’re going to explore how God has placed gifts, talents, and passions in each of us. As we discover who God has uniquely made us to be, we will begin to discover how God intends to use us in the world and in his mission to redeem it.

Starter: “The Oath Scene - Green Lantern Movie”

Hal Jordan went from being a rather aimless test pilot to taking on a significant mission. What do you think it would be like for him to take on a bigger purpose for his life?

Story Part 1: Marshall

What would you want people to say about your life when it's over? What would you like to have them say you accomplished—in your job, in your family, in your community, or in other facets of your life?

Bible Encounter: Luke 5:1-11

Context: This passage describes how Jesus called his first followers. Simon Peter and his partners were fishermen in the Sea of Galilee in Israel. It was honest work, and these men likely made decent money at it. They fished at night when it was cool (the fish did not usually bite in the daytime). Also, anything they caught during the day would be harder to sell at the market, which was busiest in the early morning. When Jesus met up with the fishermen in this passage, they'd just finished a long day's work and were probably exhausted. They had to finish the long and arduous process of cleaning and mending their nets, which had likely snagged all sorts of things you couldn't eat. Only after this could they finally go home to sleep.

1. What do you learn about the professional life of a first-century fisherman in this passage?
 - Boats and nets represented their livelihood. These were the tools of their trade and were the source of financial security and stability. Fishing wasn't just a hobby for them; it was how they made their living. They had made a financial investment in the boats and nets so they could fish. Leaving their livelihood behind would have been a radical decision.
 - Fishing was their area of competence and expertise. They had been doing this all their lives, since they were children.
 - Fishing was their identity. They were known as fishermen in their community.
 - Your notes:
2. How would the disciples have initially felt when a rabbi (not an expert in fishing) told them (fishing experts) how to fish?
 - The advice Jesus gave them was lousy fishing advice. They shouldn't have tried to fish during the day. And putting the net out with only one boat would not leave nearly as much surface area to catch fish. Usually, two boats were used.

- They may have felt annoyed. They were exhausted from fishing all night and probably bummed out that they had nothing to sell at the market.
- Even more annoying might have been the fact that they’d just been cleaning their nets. If they went fishing again, they’d have to clean them all over again.
- However, they agreed to do what Jesus told them, not because they thought it was good fishing advice, but because he told them to do it.
- Your notes:

3. After the catch was hauled in, what might Simon have been thinking and feeling? Why?

- Simon may have been overwhelmed that the usual order of things, the routine he was accustomed to, was blown wide open. He likely didn’t expect to catch anything, and was shocked at what had happened. Simon believed he knew everything there was to know about fishing—now he realized he didn’t have a clue.
- This was no doubt a stressful experience for Simon—his boats and nets were literally in danger of being lost.
- This experience opened a door to another world, which Simon was frightened to enter. Simon may even have wished he’d never seen this miracle, so that he could go back to the comfort and routine of the life he knew.
- Your notes:

4. How was the disciples’ new calling to fish for people similar to fishing for fish?

- Fishing requires being in the right place at the right time. So does evangelism.
- Fishing requires knowing where the fish are and what they’re hungry for. The disciples would need to know their audience and their felt needs.
- Fishing involves patience and timing. The mission of God and the growth of the Church take time. There are long periods of inactivity or waiting (in prayer, on the Spirit) and then opportunities come and go in an instant. For instance, the disciples waited for 40 days after the resurrection for something to happen. On Pentecost, in an instant, something did happen: the Spirit fell, a crowd gathered, and Peter was ready to reel in the people with a sermon.
- In fishing, you’re in control of the net or lure, but you are not in control of whether the fish are biting. As evangelists, the disciples would have the power of the Spirit and the message of the gospel, but they were not responsible for, nor could they compel people to become followers of Jesus—just as they couldn’t compel a fish to bite.
- Your notes:

5. What does Jesus’ interaction with the disciples in this passage tell us about how Jesus calls people to a purpose or vocation for their lives?

- Jesus knows who we are. When he calls us, he does so understanding the identity and gifts he’s placed in us. He doesn’t equip someone to do one thing and then call them to something different. He calls us according to our gifts, and gifts us according to his call.
- The call feels right to the disciples. The disciples are fishermen. He calls them to be fishers of men. He speaks in language they can understand, in a way that is attractive and compelling to them.
- Jesus knew who the disciples really were, even more than they did. As we think about our own lives,

Jesus knows more about us than we do. As we respond to his calling, he will help us discover our true identity. (Think of *The Matrix*: Morpheus knew more about Neo than Neo did when Morpheus invited Neo to follow him.)

- Your notes:

6. The disciples, after seeing the greatness of God’s glory, left behind their nets and boats to follow him. What sources of identity, security, or value would you need to hold loosely so that you can make your life available to God?

- There are a lot of possibilities here. Often, our career plans, our need for financial security, or the titles or other props we look for get in the way of what God has for us.
- Often, it is not the thing itself—the career, the money, the relationship—but the white-knuckled grasp of control that is really in the way.
- God wants us to hold things loosely before him. He may take the thing away, or he may give it back or let us keep it—but devote it to him and his purposes.
- Your notes:

7. Simon doubted his ability to be used by God, but Jesus reassured him. How do you need to be reassured by God that he is able and wants to use your life?

- Often, when we sense God may be calling us to something, we second guess ourselves or have doubts. We don’t feel sufficient for the task and write ourselves off.
- Simon not only felt incompetent to be the disciple of Jesus, the miracle-working rabbi, he felt incompetent in his chosen profession (fishing) at that point. He was humbled and aware that he really had nothing to offer Jesus.
- God reassures us that he uses limited people like us with all sorts of flaws to do his work. Ultimately, it is not about us, it is about him. As crazy as it seems, God delights in using us for his purposes. That is what he made us for.
- Your notes:

Story Part 2: Marshall

Experience: “What is Your S.H.A.P.E.?” Video and Workshop

“What is Your S.H.A.P.E.?” Watch the video.

Workshop Briefly review the five components of S.H.A.P.E. using the handout, then give participants time to brainstorm ideas on their own. If possible, complete your own S.H.A.P.E. handout prior to the session, so that you can share personal examples and be available to help participants brainstorm.

Be mindful that the “Spiritual Gifts” portion of S.H.A.P.E. could be a Launch session all on its own. Feel free to reference passages like Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 4:7-13, or 1 Peter 4:7-11, but these are not exhaustive lists of spiritual gifts. If participants seem especially interested in learning more about their spiritual gifts, let them know there are books and other resources on the topic, and they can even take an assessment (ask your InterVarsity staff for assessments that may be available for students).

LAUNCH

Does God have a “calling” for me?

As participants spend time thinking on their own, all they need to do is think of *something*. If participants are having a particularly difficult time, you may need to say something like: “Let’s just throw some ideas out there. It could be anything you’re good at or love doing. Maybe you’ve been to Africa and treasure your experience there. Maybe you’re an artist and love creating things. Maybe your biology class fascinates you. Or perhaps you play an instrument or sport. Or maybe you come from a family of mixed ethnic heritage or speak more than one language.”

It’s okay if they have no idea yet how their idea fits into God’s Kingdom work—that’s where the groups of two or three can help.

After a few minutes of individual brainstorming, have participants get in groups of two or three, depending on the size of your group. Have them take turns sharing one or two of their ideas and receiving input from the other people in their group, with the goal of finding one practical way to pursue or apply one S.H.A.P.E. item this week.

Remind participants that there are plenty of resources to help them in the On Your Own tab for this session. Review the lists of videos, books, articles, audio, etc. prior to the session, and share one or two of your recommendations.

A sample closing is below. Or close in prayer, giving thanks to God for how he has made each person unique. Ask him for help to take the next steps each person chose during the workshop time.

Today, we asked the question “Does God have a ‘calling’ for me?” We learned that, ultimately, God has created each of us for a calling. Our calling is related to how God made each of us unique.

When Jesus invites you to be his follower, he does not change who you are; he intends for you to bring every part of yourself along in the journey. When Jesus called his disciples away from fishing (their livelihood) to follow him, he called them to “fish for people.” They were still supposed to put down their nets for a catch, but their nets would soon become the gospel message and the catch would become human souls.

As you follow Jesus, instead of using your spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, and personality all for yourself, you’ll use them for God’s purposes—to love him and others. In time, you’ll discover your calling where your gifts and passions intersect with the world’s needs.

And remember that we can help each other discover our callings as a community by affirming the gifting and good things we see in each other’s lives.