

CALLING AND VOCATION: CONVERSATION STARTERS

Below are some suggestions of ways in which you can start to explore the subject of calling and vocation with children and young people.

TALKING MOVIES

Watch a movie together that helps you to explore the theme of calling. Some suggestions for films include:

- *Arthur Christmas*
- *Moana*
- *Spiderman: into the Spideverse*
- *Harriet*
- *Hacksaw Ridge*
- *Brave*
- *The Incredibles*

After watching the film, choose one or two of the following questions to discuss together:

- Which character do you relate to most and why?
- Do the characters always know what their gifts are/their purpose is? How do they discover what their gifts are/purpose is? How do they react to that discovery?
- Do all of the characters have the same goal? How does this affect the way they work together? How do the characters work together to achieve their goal?
- What role does everyone play? Have you ever had an experience where you've worked with a group and everyone has used their gifts to achieve a goal? What role did you play? What gifts and skills did you use?

BORROWING FROM THE IGNATIAN TRADITION

Ignatian spirituality looks for God's presence in our world and active in our lives. The Daily Examen is a prayerful reflection on the events of a day, looking for signs of God's presence and his direction for us.

A simple Examen might, for instance, ask the following questions:

- What are you thankful to God for today?
- Where have you felt close to God today?
- Where have you felt distant from God today?

The Ignatian website, Pathways to God, offers a Daily Examen for reflecting on using our gifts. You can find this at www.pathwaystogod.org/my-prayer-life/examen/examen-using-our-gifts2018

ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER'S GIFTS

If you are able to meet together physically:

- Ask participants to sit in a circle and give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to write their names at the bottom of the paper and then pass this on to the person on their left.
- Everyone then writes (at the top of the page) one positive thing about the person named on the piece of paper they now hold. This works best if participants are able to name a gift, skill or ability that they see in the person.
- Once they have written a positive comment, they fold the paper down to hide their writing (the person's name should still be visible at the bottom of the paper) and pass it on to the person on their left.
- Ask people to keep writing positive comments about one another until everyone has their own named piece of paper back in their possession. Allow people some time to quietly read the positive comments and end in prayer, thanking God for the gifts and skills we have each been blessed with.

If only able to meet virtually:

- In Zoom, open up the whiteboard for each person and, using the 'annotate' tool, ask participants to write positive things about the person in question. When everyone has commented you can save a copy of the whiteboard to send to the person afterwards so they have it to read. Pray as above.

DEFINITIONS OF CALLING

Share the following quotes with your young people and then lead them into a discussion on how they feel about each and their understanding of calling:

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

(*On Calling: Your Deep Gladness & The World's Deep Hunger*, Frederick Buechner, www.calledthejourney.com/blog/2014/12/17/frederick-buechner-on-calling)

“Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody and what values you represent.”

(*Let your life speak: listening for the voice of vocation*, Parker J. Palmer, 2000)

“Vocation at its deepest level is, ‘This is something I can’t not do, for reasons I am unable to explain to anyone else and don’t fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling.’”

(Parker J. Palmer, as above)

BORROWING FROM THE JAPANESE TRADITION

Ikigai is a Japanese term for ‘a reason for being’. The word ‘Ikigai’ usually refers to the source of value in one’s life, or the things that make one’s life worthwhile. Encourage your children and young people to draw their own Ikigai diagram and then have a conversation about where value is in life.



AN APPRECIATIVE CONVERSATION

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is an approach to personal development that focuses on the positive core – appreciating the present and affirming strengths. Learning through telling stories of personal experience is a key technique in AI, as is asking the right questions!

Split your group into pairs and tell them they are going to have some time (at least 15 minutes each) to take it in turns to interview one another using a set list of questions. You will need to tell the group when it is time to swap over.

Encourage your group to be generous listeners when it's their turn to ask the questions. Ask them to avoid jumping in with their own thoughts, personal experiences or opinions when it is their partner's turn to talk. They can, however, ask questions for clarification or to draw out more information. They might also want to make notes on behalf of the person they are interviewing.

The questions they should ask are:

- 1) Thinking back, when was the last time you felt truly alive, engaged or excited while performing a task? Tell me about this memorable event. What made it exciting? Who was involved? How did you feel? Did you learn anything new about yourself or do anything different as a result of this experience?
- 2) Without being humble, what do you most value the most about yourself (for instance as an individual, a friend, a member of the community or as a disciple)? What would you describe as your strengths – the things that come naturally to you?
- 3) What do you think others appreciate in you? What do other people tell you that you are good at, or that you should be doing?
- 4) What is it in your life that you can't not do? What do you keep coming back to? What need do you see in the world that you can't ignore or you can't stay silent about? What sort of difference would you like to make?
- 5) Based on your responses to this interview, if you had three wishes for the future, what would they be?