



VOCATION

Written by Jenny Baker in *Youth work Magazine*.

AIM: To explore the topic of vocation and the ideas of primary and secondary callings.

BACKGROUND PREPARATION: We don't often talk about vocation in the church and when we do it tends to be about full-time Christian work. In fact, God calls each one of us to follow him and to work that out in the context of our jobs. So people can be called to be a banker, in business, an artist, and so on. It's an important issue for young people to consider as they make decisions about their futures.

This session was written for Transforming Lives, a project that supports and encourages

Christians into teaching www.transforminglives.org.uk. You can send for a free Toolkit that includes three youth group sessions and a DVD of film clips.

Email transforminglives@stapleford-centre.org

This session uses the example of teaching, because it's easier to talk about a specific example than just in general terms. The principles and ideas covered apply to any vocation however, and so will be valuable to everyone in the group - whether they want to be teachers or not!

Shoe swap shuffle (10 mins)

Get everyone to sit in a circle. Invite them to take off their shoes, put them in the centre and close

their eyes. Get a couple of volunteers to jumble up the shoes. Keeping their eyes closed, people

have to grab one shoe from the pile. They open their eyes and find the matching shoe. Once they

have a pair, they put them on their feet if the shoes are big enough, or on their hands if they

are too small. Stress that no one should damage the shoes. Then they walk around until they see

someone with their own shoes. They swap their pair for their own shoes and go and sit down.



Vocation vacation (10 mins)

Get a couple of people to act out the 'Vocation vacation' sketch included at the end of this document.

Discuss the word 'vocation'. Where have people heard that word before? What does it mean?

Who has a vocation?

KEY POINT: Introduce this definition: Your vocation is your calling - your purpose in life, what you were put on this earth to be and to do. So we all have a vocation in life. The challenge for each of us is to find out what that calling is.

Bible study (10 mins)

Split the group into three. Give each group one of these passages and the set of questions.

Invite them to discuss the questions and record their answers.

- Genesis 1: 26-28
- Mark 1: 16-20
- Matthew 22: 34-40

- From this passage, what does God want people to do with their lives?
- Who does the passage apply to? Invite the groups to feedback.

KEY POINT:

From these answers, draw out the fact that our primary calling in life is to be in a relationship with God - to love God. That's what we were put on this earth to be and to do. That's the most important thing for us to get right.

Secondary callings (10 mins)

But there's more to vocation than that. Introduce the idea of secondary callings - the places and

roles in which we called to love God and to serve him in the world. God invites us to work alongside him in lots of different ways. Talk about some of your secondary callings - as a spouse, son or daughter or sibling; the work that you do; the way you serve at your church.

Draw the outline of a person on the flipchart.



Ask people to brainstorm what are the secondary callings that God might give us - the places and roles in which we are called to love God and to serve him.

Encourage the group to think widely, particularly in the area of work. You want to emphasise that they might be called to work in lots of different areas, not just in 'Christian work'. Include artist, builder, architect, chef, surgeon, wind-turbine engineer, development worker, fashion designer and teacher as well as worship leader and youth worker.

Ask people what their secondary callings are at the moment. They will be the schools they go to, their friends and family, and may include the interests that they have.

Transforming Lives - Christian teachers transform lives <15 mins)

Download this clip from the Transforming Lives website -

www.transforminglives.org.uk/dvd_list.php - or send for the DVD as above. Ask people, as they watch the clip, to listen out for any mention of vocation or calling. Stress that this uses teaching as an example of a vocation - they don't all have to be teachers! Discuss with the group:

- What did people say about vocation or calling on the clip?
- What was Ben's experience of being called to be a teacher? Was Ben given good advice? (He was encouraged to think about how different roles he had enjoyed and look for a job that included that.)
- How did Dave's experience of being called to teaching differ?
- How should we expect to hear God's call today? Have you felt God calling you to be involved in anything?

Fit and fulfilment (5 mins)

Explain that one of the most important secondary callings that people are interested in discovering is what work they should be doing.

Talk about the importance of 'fit and fulfilment'. We'll find fulfilment in our work if the things we have to do fit with our skills and talents. In the game at the start, you had to walk around in someone else's shoes which was not very comfortable. That's what you're looking for in a job - the sense that 'this fits me. I love doing this. This is what God made me for.'



So for example, what kind of person will fit the job of being a Christian teacher
- What skills
will they have? What abilities? What personal qualities?

KEY POINT:

Although we might wish that God would flash a neon light in the sky saying 'Be a musician' or whatever, our sense of vocation doesn't come from 'out there', it comes from 'in here' - a growing sense that this is what you are meant to be doing. It's usually a journey of praying, trying things out, seeking advice and learning from our mistakes, It is about developing the gifts God has given us, and about becoming the person God has given us the potential to be.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Vocational jigsaws (10 mins)

Give each person a blank sheet of paper and get them to draw 8 or so jigsaw pieces on it. Explain that discovering the work that you are called to in life is a bit like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw. Like Ben on the DVD it's a good idea to start by thinking about what things you are good at. What have you done that has brought you life and energy? When have you felt most alive? Encourage people to take some time on their own and write on their jigsaw pieces some of their responses to those questions.

Pray together as a group. Encourage people to take their jigsaws away and to add to them as they think about the subject more. Invite them to pray about the issue, expecting God to show them what's on all the pieces of the jigsaw and to eventually bring them together into a beautiful whole.



Script for VOCATION VACATION.

This sketch can be used as a stand-alone session using the Taking it Further ideas at the end.

This is a light-hearted introduction to the theme of vocation. It relies on Sharon thinking she's seeing a vacation adviser, rather than a vocation adviser, so make sure her pronunciation of the word in her first line sets up the misunderstanding.

Sketches like this have more impact if the actors learn their lines. Change the gender and names of the actors if that suits your context better.

Characters:

SHARON is a young woman, JACKIE is a vocation adviser. Jackie sits behind a desk at the start of the sketch. Sharon approaches from one side.

SHARON: Hello, are you Jackie Smith, the vacation advisor? My Mum made an appointment for me, and I'm not sure if I'm in the right place. I'm Sharon Harper.

JACKIE: Yes, that's me. Welcome, Sharon. Do sit down and make yourself at home. So

you want some advice about discovering the best vocation for you?

SHARON: Yes, that's right. I've got lots of ideas of course, but it's so difficult making a decision isn't it? There's so much choice out there. I just want to make sure that I do the right thing for me.

JACKIE: Of course, well that's my job, to get you talking about what you want to do so that you can work out the direction you should be heading in. Now your Mum sent me your CV which I've enjoyed reading but tell me what you've been thinking about so far.

SHARON: Well, I want somewhere that's completely different - you know, a complete change of scenery from my office job.

JACKIE: OK, and what do you do for work at the moment?



SHARON: I work for an insurance company, handling claims. I just sit at my desk all day - it's so boring. Have you seen The Incredibles? My job is even worse than that.

JACKIE: I see, so what changes were you thinking about? Would you prefer something where you can interact with people more, for example?

SHARON: Yes, I love meeting new people. I still keep in contact with the person I sat next to on the plane to Marbella last year. We got on really well.

JACKIE: OK, and were you thinking of going abroad then, or do you want to stay in this country?

SHARON: Definitely abroad - the weather's so much better. I can't stand the idea of soggy sandwiches for lunch in the rain. I want to be eating my lunch in the sun on the beach.

JACKIE: Right, well this is all helping to build up a picture of what's going to suit you. One thing that's really important is that our vocation should fit our interests and the things that we're good at. Tell me, Sharon, about the things you do in your spare time - what really excites you that you want to do more of in the future?

SHARON: Well, last year I tried waterskiing in Marbella which was amazing. I'd love to do windsurfing in the future. And of course I just love lazing around on the beach.

JACKIE: I think that's true for all of us, Sharon! Well, I know we've only had a short conversation but I think I've built up a bit of a picture of the kind of person you are, so I'd like to make an initial recommendation. You want something completely different, something overseas, somewhere hot, to be able to eat your lunch on the beach ... I think your ideal job is as a water sports instructor in a Mediterranean resort - somewhere like Turkey, for example.

SHARON: Job? You're suggesting what job I do? I wanted you to tell me where to go on holiday!

JACKIE: Holiday? Why should I know any- thing about holidays?



SHARON: Because you're a vacations adviser!

JACKIE: No, vo-cation - you know, working out what you should be doing with your life.

SHARON: Oh, I've never heard of one of them before. I wondered why you needed a copy of my CV. So you don't have any suggestions for where I should go on holiday this year?

JACKIE: Try Bournemouth.

Taking it Further

- Vocation is an unusual word. What does it mean? Where have you heard it before? What kind of things count as a vocation?
- How have you made decisions about what courses to do at school, and what you might do in the future? Do you have any sense of God calling you to do something?
- There's so much choice when it comes to both holidays and the work that we do. Who can help us decide what course of job is right for us? Who have you got advice from so far?
- Read Matthew 22: 34-40. What is the main calling that God gives to each one of us? How does living that out affect the job that you might choose and the way you do your work?