

Called by God



Reinhold Niebuhr

God grant me—
The serenity to accept the
things I cannot change,
The courage to change the
things I can,
And the wisdom to distin-
guish the one from the other.

prayer

Hebrews 11:1, 8

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

Words to remember



Abraham & Sarah: Being Faithful to God

CALLED BY GOD

SESSION 1



Journeying into the Land of Canaan

Gustave Doré

Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 12:5a

COMMENTARY

God calls us to be faithful even when

we cannot see the final goal. It's not easy talking with God. Sometimes I feel like I'm pretending, doing it because I'm supposed to. Like drinking orange juice for breakfast because I'm supposed to. It's good for me. But then, at other times, it's like he's right there. And I'm not doing the talking. God is. God's not just answering my questions, but volunteering stuff. Most of the time I don't get it, but I'm working on it and getting better. It's beginning to make more sense all the time.

Look at today's story. Can you believe Abraham. God says to him, "I've picked a brand new place for you to live. Far away. Pack up, leave your friends and family and go to Canaan." And Abraham and Sarah agree to go.

That's where I need to grow in my relationship to God. It used to have to make sense to me or I would tell God, "No way!" But I'm getting better and trusting God more and more.

—Coleman, Grade 8

Youth prayer

God, you call us to live our lives in relation to you. Help us to hear your call. Be with us as we travel to new places and new experiences. Give us the faith of Abraham and Sarah to follow where you lead, even when we don't know where you're taking us. Amen.

—Coleman, Grade 8

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

- Monday—Psalm 46:1-3
- Tuesday—Malachi 3:6-7
- Wednesday—Joshua 1:9

- Thursday—II Chronicles 36:22-23
- Friday—Isaiah 40:1-5
- Saturday—James 1:17-18

voices



Well and good if all things change, Lord God, provided we are rooted in you.

John of the Cross, Christian Monk and Mystic

Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore.

Dorothy, The Wizard of Oz

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Charles Foster in
Story of the Bible



—Genesis 21:18

ome, lift up the
boy and hold him
fast with your
hand, for I will
make a great
nation of him.”

“

SESSION 2

CALLED BY GOD

Hagar & Ishmael: Living in Hope



words to remember

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 121:1-2

prayer

Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness keep us, we pray, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready both in mind and body, may accomplish with free hearts those things which belong to your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Proper 2

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 228

COMMENTARY

God calls us to live in hope,

but there are times when things look really bad. You wonder, "How can all this negative stuff be happening to me?" You want out, but you hang in there. You hope. The Bible is full of stories about God making things better. Prayer doesn't hurt, but there are times when you need God to do something.

In this story about Hagar's child dying of thirst, there was little hope. But God heard their cries and gave them water to drink. I think this water is meant to stand for God's presence. When Hagar and the child drank it, God took care of their thirst. God became a part of them and they got healthy enough through God to become a great nation. You see, there is always hope with God. Always.

—Laurie, Grade 7

Youth prayer

God, sometimes our lives are hard, even when we try our best. Sometimes we forget that you are with us and get really sad or mad. Help us to have hope. Help us to be glad in everything and live our lives in hope. Thanks for being with us. Amen.

—Laurie, Grade 7

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—Psalm 65:5-8

Tuesday—Psalm 146:5-6

Wednesday—Lamentations
3:21-24

Thursday—Wisdom of Solomon
12:19

Friday—Sirach 2:6-9

Saturday—Hebrews 6:19-20

voices



**Persons of faith are not
alone on their journeys.**

Linda J. Vogel

**God, help us to remember
that there are no
illegitimate children in
Your sight.**

Marian Wright Edelman

**Hope: Hold On Praying
Endlessly**

Ann-Muir Moomaw



—Exodus 3:11-12

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

B



SESSION 3
CALLED BY GOD

Moses: Finding Self-Worth



words to remember

God spake these words, and said:
I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

*Lord, have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet.

*Lord, have mercy upon us,
and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.*

Decalogue I

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 317-318

prayer

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

**Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany
*The Book of Common Prayer, p.216***

COMMENTARY

To have faith in others, you must first have faith in yourself. This self-faith is also known as self-esteem. Self-esteem is a quality that everyone should be able to have; however, many people are left without it.

In Exodus, Moses, an ordinary sinner, is called to do the work of God. Because of his low self-esteem, he could not understand why God had called him. The fact was that God picked Moses because he knew that Moses was an ordinary man and that because of this, people would believe him when he carried out God's wishes. God gave Moses the self-esteem that he needed. He also promised Moses that he would help him speak.

Next time you are discouraged and you need a boost of self-esteem, just remember that God will be there to help you through just like he did with Moses.

—Kellie, Grade 8

Youth prayer

Dear Lord, please help me find the courage and wisdom in myself to carry out your deeds. Show me that I am not nobody, but somebody. Be with me in my times of weakness, and let me have pride that, like you, I am who I am, and I will be who I will be.

—Kellie, Grade 8

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—Exodus 3:13-15

Tuesday—Isaiah 6:5-8

Wednesday—Jeremiah 1:6-8

Thursday—Matthew 3:13-17

Friday—Matthew 4:18-22

Saturday—Acts 16:13-15

voices



God helps those that help themselves.

Benjamin Franklin

O Lord, I do not pray for tasks equal to my strength: I ask for strength equal to my tasks.

Phillips Brooks

The hero is one who kindles a great light in the world, who sets up blazing torches in the dark streets of life for people to see by. The saint is the one who walks through the dark paths of the world, a light.

Felix Adler (adapted)

If you do not know how to love yourself, how is it possible that you will love God?

Meister Eckhart (13th century)



1 Samuel 3:11

When the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle."



SESSION 4
CALLED BY GOD



Samuel Blessing
Saul, Gustave Doré

Samuel: Serving All His Days



words to remember

Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the Lord and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the
desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
He will make your vindication
shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause
like the noonday.

Be still before the Lord, and
wait patiently for him;
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil devices.

Psalm 37:1-7

prayer Almighty and
everliving God, let your fatherly hand
ever be over us, your servants; let
your Holy Spirit ever be with us;
and so lead us in the knowledge and
obedience of your Word, that we may
serve you in this life, and dwell with
you in the life to come; through Christ
our Lord. Amen.

For Reaffirmation
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 419

COMMENTARY

We all have a call from God. Some of us hear that call immediately and follow it. Some of us take more time, as Samuel did in the Bible story. Samuel got confused and didn't think that it was God calling him. He thought it was Eli. Something similar might happen for you or someone you know. You may hear someone call and think it is your teacher or your parents instead of God.

If we keep God in our hearts and concentrate on his love for us, then the call from God might be clearer. As we see in the story of Samuel, once Samuel knew who was calling him, he heard God and answered God's call.

—Amanda, Grade 9

Youth prayer

Almighty God please make yourself present in our lives so that we may hear your call. Fill us with your love so that we may follow your teaching as did Samuel, your faithful servant. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

—Amanda, Grade 9

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—I Samuel 2:2

Tuesday—I Samuel 2:9

Wednesday—I Samuel 2:21

Thursday—I Samuel 2:26

Friday—I Samuel 3:10

Saturday—I Samuel 3:19

voices

Make sure that you let God's grace

work in your souls by accepting whatever God gives you, and giving God whatever he takes from you. True holiness consists in doing God's will with a smile.

—Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Mindfulness of God rises slowly, a thought at a time. Suddenly we are there. Or is He here, at the margin of our soul? When we begin to feel a qualm of hesitation lest we hurt what is holy, lest we break what is whole, then we discover that He is not austere. He answers with love and trembling awe.

—Abraham Heschel, *Jewish Theologian and Mystic*

Lord, you are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name.

—Book of Jeremiah 14:9

My father wanted me to be a farmer, too, but I wanted to be a baseball player.

—Malamud, *The Natural*, spoken by Roy Hobbs



But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
—*Ruth 1:16*

SESSION 5

CALLED BY GOD

Ruth: Call to Patience



words to remember

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Romans 12:12-13

prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*A Prayer for the Poor and Neglected
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 826*

COMMENTARY

Patience is a good thing to have when God calls us to be faithful, especially when we can't see his plan and presence in our lives. Throughout the Book of Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi, Ruth, showed patience in several ways. Her patience is something we should all observe and learn to help us in our lives with Christ.

Ruth showed patience as she waited for her call from God after her husband had died. She was left alone with only her mother-in-law. Even though so much had happened, Ruth remained loyal and felt called by God to go with her mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Bethlehem. Another example of Ruth's patience was her hope that she would soon start her life over in a new land. She knew that God would guide her in the right direction to go on with her life. Her faith led her to Boaz, who helped her to start over.

Ruth is a good example to show the importance of being patient. By waiting on God, you help yourself to make the best out of life and go in the direction of happiness, as Ruth did. Everyone should learn from Ruth that by waiting and having patience, we accomplish more things in life.

—Michelle, Grade 7

Youth prayer

Heavenly Father, so that we may be able to follow your guidance and teachings, help us to have patience in our daily lives like you did with Ruth. Give us the courage to wait in our times of hardship and uncertainty. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen

—Michelle, Grade 7

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—Romans 5:1-5
Tuesday—Psalm 14:1-2
Wednesday—Psalm 121

Thursday—Isaiah 12:2-3
Friday—Job 42:1-3
Saturday—Psalm 89:1-3

voices



How poor are they that have not patience! What wound did ever heal but by degrees?

Othello, Shakespeare

I am a patient man—always willing to forgive on the Christian terms of repentance; and also to give ample time for repentance.

Abraham Lincoln

Patience is the best remedy for trouble.

Titus Maccium Plautus (3rd century B.C.E.)

Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor vexation. Where there is poverty and joy, there is neither greed nor avarice. Where there is peace and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor doubt.

St. Francis of Assisi



For those we Love
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 831

prayer Almighty God,
we entrust all who are dear
to us to your never-failing
care and love, for this life
and the life to come, know-
ing that you are doing for
them better things than we
can desire or pray for;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen.

John 15:12-13

This is my commandment, that you
love one another as I have loved
you. No one has greater love than
this, to lay down one's life for one's
friends.

Words to remember



Jonathan & David: Call to Friendship

CALLED BY GOD

SESSION 6

So Jonathan called David and related all these things to him. Jonathan then brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

—1 Samuel 19:7

Charles Foster in *Story of the Bible*



COMMENTARY

We are called to be friends with people, but what do you do when someone thinks one of your best friends is really awful? You defend your friend and try to protect her or him from being hurt. You do whatever you can to change the mind of the person who doesn't like your friend. Then, you try to get them together so they can get to know and understand and like each other.

That's what Jonathan did in this Bible story. He protected his friend David from his father, King Saul. He worked hard to make his dad understand that David was good. The king finally agreed with his son's plea for his friend and made a promise to accept David.

Our friends are important. We should be loyal, caring and protective of each other when we're friends. God, who is also our friend, does all that for us, too.

—Nancy, Grade 9

Youth prayer

Thank you for my friends and for the love we share for one another. Give me the courage and strength to be like Jonathan when people attack my friends. Make me a good friend to those who love me and my friends and to those who don't love me or my friends. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

—Nancy, Grade 9

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—Judges 5:31
Tuesday—Proverbs 18:24
Wednesday—Wisdom of Solomon 7:27-28

Thursday—Proverbs 17:9
Friday—Sirach 5:14-17
Saturday—John 15:12-17

voices



From quiet homes and first beginning,
Out to the undiscovered ends,
There's nothing worth the wear of winning,
But laughter and the love of friends.

Dedicatory Ode, Hilaire Belloc

Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?

Abraham Lincoln

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the commandment of the great God, and he cannot command the impossible. Love is a fruit in season at all times, and within reach of every hand. Anyone may gather it and no limit is set.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta



1 Samuel 25:24

pon me alone,
my lord, be the guilt;
please let your servant
speak in your ears, and hear
the words of your servant.

“



SESSION 7
CALLED BY GOD

Abigail: Doing the Right Thing



words to remember

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they are like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

James 1:22-25

prayer Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Right Use of God's Gifts
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

COMMENTARY

I want to be liked. Accepted. Lots of my friends say, "It's easy. Just do what everybody else does." But for me, that's not easy at all. There are lots of groups of 'everybody elses,' and most of them can't agree on everything. Worse than that, what I feel in my heart to be good and right doesn't fit with 'anybody,' let alone 'everybody.' I guess I'm a little like Abigail.

In the old days, it was the custom for people to feed and care for the soldiers who protected them. In our Bible story today, a business owner named Nabal was taking good care of his employees, but not the soldiers. David and his army came into the area where Nabal lived and worked and protected them. Nabal refused to care for these soldiers. But Nabal's wife, Abigail, knew and respected the tradition, grateful for what David and his army had done for them. She took care of them even when her husband did not. It was the good and right thing to do, but I bet it was really hard for her. She answered a call inside herself to do what was good and right, no matter what and without worrying about what 'anybody' or 'everybody' else thought was good and right. I hope I can do that, too.

—Chris, Grade 9

Youth prayer

O God, we know that you have called us to be good and to do the right thing. Show us how to follow you more clearly. Show us what is good and right every day. Give us the courage to face challenges and be with us as you were with your servant Abigail and with your Son, Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen

—Chris, Grade 9

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—James 1:5-8

Tuesday—I Peter 4:7-10

Wednesday—Hebrews 13:1-3

Thursday—Psalm 4:3-4

Friday—Psalm 18:1-3

Saturday—Sirach 2:1-3

voices



People often think of Christian morality as a kind of bargain in which God says, "If you keep a lot of rules, I'll reward you, and if you don't I'll do the other thing." I do not think that is the best way of looking at it. I would much rather say that every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you into something a little different than it was before.

C. S. Lewis

Seek the Truth, come what may, cost what it will.

William Sparrow

The world cares very little about what a man or woman knows; it is what the man or woman is able to do that counts.

Booker T. Washington



—Amos 5:24

But let justice roll
down like waters,
and righteousness
like an ever-flowing
stream.

B

SESSION 8
CALLED BY GOD



Amos
Gustave Doré

Amos: Seeking Justice



words to remember

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 305

prayer

Heavenly Father, in your Word you have given us a vision of that holy City to which the nations of the world bring their glory: Behold and visit, we pray, the cities of the earth. Renew the ties of mutual regard which form our civic life. Send us honest and able leaders. Enable us to eliminate poverty, prejudice, and oppression, that peace may prevail with righteousness, and justice with order, and that men and women from different cultures and with differing talents may find with one another the fulfillment of their humanity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Cities
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 825

COMMENTARY

Amos was a prophet who tried to get the people of his time to follow God's law. If Amos came into the world today he would probably preach to us about the disparity in economic class. He would ask why we have homeless people out in the street, hungry and in need of help, while millionaires of this country have 2 or 3 houses.

He would lecture us on the treatment of children and the elderly. Amos might question the government about spending. "Why do you spend billions on defending your nation, when children are exposed to gang violence and drugs? Money should be spent protecting the children," is what Amos would ask. Amos would urge us to follow God's law and not stray from the path of righteousness.

—Amanda, Grade 9

Youth prayer

Dear God, Help us to follow your law as you proclaimed it in the Bible. Help us to be like Amos and teach others the same. Help our government to make wise decisions regarding the children of our country. Amen

—Amanda, Grade 9

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—Job 19:7

Tuesday—Psalm 106:1-3

Wednesday—Proverbs 21:15

Thursday—Isaiah 30:18

Friday—Isaiah 30:15

Saturday—Jeremiah 9:23-24

voices



**God, please stop injustice,
So our children may live
and love and laugh
and play again.**
Marian Wright Edelman

**If there is not struggle
there is no progress.**

Frederick Douglass

**Injustice anywhere is
a threat to justice
everywhere.**

Martin Luther King, Jr.





—*Daniel 6:10*

Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously.

A

SESSION 9

CALLED BY GOD

Daniel: Putting God First



words to remember

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5: 11,12

prayer

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Proper 15
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 232*

COMMENTARY

Everyone has to make choices.

We make choices for God or for other things and activities every day. King Darius liked to think of himself as a god. He signed a law that said that anyone who worshiped someone other than him would be meat for the lions. Daniel knew that, but he worshiped and prayed anyway—not to king Darius, but to the real God. Daniel was aware of the king's demand, but he chose to serve and obey the real God first, our God.

—Thomas, Grade 8

Youth prayer

Lord, I want to serve you and obey your will for my life, but it is very hard to do. Help me to learn to put you first and to be willing to take a stand when I have to. Give me the courage you gave to Daniel so I can follow you always and do what you want me to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

—Thomas, Grade 8

DAILY DEVOTIONS

reflections

Monday—Psalm 31:23-24
Tuesday—Daniel 6:16-18
Wednesday—Daniel 6:19-23

Thursday—Luke 17:5-6
Friday—I Corinthians 13:1-3
Saturday—James 1:2-6

voices



Who stands fast? Only the person whose final standard is not reason, principles, conscience, freedom, or virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all this when he is called to obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

One good way to end a conversation is to tell others that you hold a position on an issue because it is required by your understanding of God's will. In the unlikely event that anyone hangs around to talk with you about it, the chances are that you will be challenged on the grounds that you are trying to impose your religious beliefs on other people.

Stephen L. Carter

Prayer makes the soul one with God.

Julian of Norwich

