

The logo for CPAS, featuring the letters 'cpas' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font inside a dark blue circle. Below the letters is the tagline 'Making Mission Possible' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

cpas

Making Mission Possible

A large, solid orange circle containing the text 'GROWING LEADERS' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

GROWING LEADERS

- **Introductory Video**
- **Leaders' Guide**
- **Handouts**
- **PowerPoint**
- **Activity 1-2**
- **Additional Handout 1-2**
- **Project 3 Handout**

A dark blue circle containing the number '3' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. This circle is part of a larger graphic element that includes a thick, curved orange line and a smaller green circle above it.

3

**CLARIFYING
CALL**

SESSION 3: CLARIFYING CALL

'God invites everyone to make some contribution to the life of the world, some piece of gift-work or service to others, that only you can do because of the particular person you are, your gifts, your wounds, your personal background and history. It will be something that expresses the unique essence of what you are, which God calls out from you to be a gift to others.'

Francis Dewar

Session Overview

- Aim (10 mins).
- Way in, considering call – what is it? (15 mins).
- Bible (10 mins).
- Activity, life experience (10 mins).
- Reflection, considering call – why does it matter? (10 mins).
- Refreshments (10 mins).
- Activity, how do we discern God's call? (10 mins).
- Activity, SHAPE (15 mins).
- Activity, overview of remaining steps (15 mins).
- Bible/worship (13 mins).
- And finally (2 mins).

Session Aims

- To continue developing relationships within the group.
- To make clear that the Bible does not restrict call to certain types of roles.
- To help participants further discern God's call.
- To encourage leadership based on a 'surrendered' life.

Bible Base

Romans 1, Mark 1 and John 15: the nature and purpose of God's call. Clarifying God's call should make an impact on the whole of life, not just the 'spiritual bits'. The Bible makes it clear that 'calling' is for all.

Background

INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

This session explores the place of 'call' in the leader's life. We use the word 'call' here not in any mystical sense (some inner experience that clarifies what God wants us to do), or in a limited sense (the tendency to think of 'call' as limited to a certain type of vocation, for example a calling to an ordained role), but in a biblical sense of the call to discipleship that every Christian responds to, and within that call a clarity about how I should blend the various aspects of my discipleship that are unique to me.

The session flows in this way:

- Clarify that God's call is for all people.
- Suggest a way of further discerning God's call for our lives.
- Identify how discerning God's call ought to make a difference to the way we live.

There is also material for participants to consider with their mentors after the session.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON CALL

We need to remember that our priorities should be shaped by God, expressed through the Scriptures. In most 'western' churches the idea of call is highly individualistic, often restricted to ordained or paid ministry. The biblical view offers a much wider perspective.

The primary reference of call in the New Testament is of being called to faith in Christ as part of his body. In this session we want to keep that kingdom perspective to the fore. It will avoid an over-anxious introspection which is often more concerned with what 'I' am doing or being, rather than with God's purposes.

Likewise, some teaching on God's call involves hints of a mystical secret, where a select few have knowledge of what God intends, whilst most people struggle to understand his purposes for their lives. Whatever line you take on guidance, try to ensure that your focus has the freedom of scope that the Bible offers.



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Jesus and the early Church leaders were less concerned with what someone did, and much more concerned with their level of faithfulness to God in the way they did it.

None of this should obscure the main focus of this topic. Many leaders have their effectiveness blunted because they are uncertain of the precise working out of God's call on their lives. Consequently, some tend either to address many things superficially, never fully shouldering the burden for the long term, developing appropriate skills and experience. Others become massively over-committed and live life at a pace of rush and busyness which is unsustainable and destructive. Others ignore vital aspects of their discipleship relating to relationships, inflicting inappropriate harm on others. This issue is acutely focused for leaders because of the opportunities that surround them, the expectations upon them, and the internal dynamics that drive them.

God's call has many aspects. We are called as people to faith, as friends to relationship, as co-workers to churches, as parents to families, as praying people to communities, as partners to marriages, as leaders to our work places and as servants to all. These things cross our neat boundaries of 'church' and 'real life' and can make, in the unexamined life, for disastrous consequences.

Helping leaders to examine their lives and understand something about the shape of God's call on them is important. It is about much more than organising effective ministry colleagues for you and your church. It is about helping those we lead become the people God wants them to be. For some, that will mean putting things down, stopping ministry activities and even moving to a new place, job or church. So be prepared for painful choices in participants' lives (and possibly in your plans and hopes for them). But keep their (and your) eyes fixed on the bigger picture of God's purposes. The one who calls has gone before and cheers us on, telling God not how badly we're doing, but what fantastic steps we're taking (that's a rough translation of Hebrews 4:14-16).

Your Own Preparation

One of the dangers in teaching about God's call is 'call-projection'. This topic should not be taught as a purely theoretical exercise. If people are to make progress they need flesh on the bones of general principles to see how this is lived out in practice. Examples from your own life will help, but make sure that you avoid giving the unintentional impression that your personal response is the 'correct' one. As a leader it is easy to project your call onto others' lives. This can lead to the 'cloning' of the leader and an inauthentic life in the participant.

As you prepare, ask God how much you should disclose about your response to his call. In particular meditate on the balance between teaching, disclosure and encouragement, and pray against 'call-projection'. John 21:20-23 provides a very helpful reference point as Jesus deals with the issue of call-projection/ comparison in the lives of the disciples. Use it for your meditation.

Materials

- Refreshments.
- Blu-Tack.
- Blue and red circular stickers. (small), ten of each per person.

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1 How's the journey?
- Handout 2 The big picture.
- Handout 3 The example of Jesus.
- Handout 4 Feedback form.
- Project 3 Personal life statement.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

- Introductory video.
- Activity 1 Call statements.
- Activity 2 Psalm 63 Prayer cards.
- Additional handout 1 Spiritual gifts.
- Additional handout 2 Life in the red zone.
- Session 3 PowerPoint.



SESSION 3: CLARIFYING CALL

Outline



Aim
0-10 MINS

Slide 1

ARRIVAL

Welcome people as they arrive. Ensure there is a relaxing atmosphere – music, refreshments and comfortable seating all help. If you wish, invite people to begin the Way in activity now.

Slide 2

INTRODUCTION

Offer a warm welcome and thanks for coming. Briefly set the evening in the context of the course, and remind people that in Growing Leaders Part 1 we're looking at some of the foundations for Christian leadership. Summarise what you covered last time: establishing identity. Give a brief opportunity for comments or questions before introducing this session. You may even like to ask people to form pairs and share one thing they have done as a result of the last session.

Slide 3

Slide 4

Pray for the session. Explain the focus of this session: clarifying call. Remind people of how 'call' is part of our model of leadership development. How we spend the hours and minutes of our day is ultimately an issue of call. Whilst many leaders speak of 'juggling too many plates' or 'trying to balance their lives' or 'the wheels coming off', many organisations and churches experience the 'Pareto principle' – one fifth of the people doing four-fifths of the work. Added to this is the tension of how we structure our leadership for when the church gathers (usually on Sunday). We should not emphasise the 'internal' aspects of church life at the expense of our mission in the everyday Monday to Saturday world of home, school, workplace and community. Helping people lead better in the areas that occupy them is critical to whole-life discipleship.

Slide 5

Ultimately this issue is one of call. Yet within many churches there is a tendency to think of 'call' as limited to a certain type of vocation, for example a calling to the ordained ministry. During this session we will:

- Clarify what call is, noting that it is for all God's people.
- Identify why it matters.
- Suggest a way of discerning God's call for our lives.
- Identify how discerning God's call ought to make a difference to the way we live.



Way In
10-25 MINS

Slide 6

CONSIDERING CALLING – WHAT IS IT?

The purpose of these activities is to think about our understanding of God's call.

Slide 7
Activity 1

OPTION 1: AGREE/DISAGREE

Activity 1 has a series of pages with a statement at the top of each one. Place copies of these around the room before the start of the session so that people can easily get to them and gather around them. Each participant will need ten red and ten blue self-adhesive round stickers.

The aim of the exercise is to identify statements with which you agree and to put a sticker below them. The last two pages provide space for you to put your own questions about call to the group. Ideally invite people to do this exercise as they arrive.

When completed, look round the room and get a snapshot of what the group thinks about calling. It might shape the way in which you present your prepared



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Outline

material as the session unfolds. Depending on the time available you might want to highlight for the group some of their common responses, or to point out any patterns that their responses show.

Slide 8
Handout 1

OPTION 2: HOW'S THE JOURNEY?

Using handout 1, ask people to try and identify a symbol which best reflects how they feel about the following three issues: their relationship with God, their current occupation (make sure you give this a wide reference; it might be homemaker, volunteer work – whatever they spend most of the time doing), and church work. Give some concrete examples. After a few moments ask them to share the results with someone else.



Slide 9

WHAT IS CALL? THE BIG PICTURE

Introduce the big picture of what the Bible tells us about calling. You might want to include the following points:

- The primary reference to calling in the New Testament is the call to discipleship, to follow Jesus. Take people to Mark 2:17 and remind them that as 'the sick' we are all equal in this sense of call. No one is better than anyone else. Paul picks this up in Romans 1:6 where he says we are 'called to belong to Jesus Christ'. The NT gives no sense of exclusiveness, the idea that call is just for the pious few. All Christians are called to worship God, work for his purposes and witness to his presence in the world (you may like to look at 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 3:14).
- Our particular calling is to discern the specific way God wants us to live our lives, in contrast to other Christians around us. All are called to discipleship (primary calling) but each of us has a particular way to engage in God's will in God's world (particular calling). Paul was called to be an apostle (Romans 1:1). Philip was called to be an evangelist (Acts 8:4-40). Others were called to be elders of local congregations. And still others had none of these roles, but were involved with a wide range of things. Today it is the same. Some work in supermarkets, others in offices, others in local churches. Some are gifted to work with children, others in music. Some live out their lives celibate, others married. It is different for everyone. Whatever we do, however, our attitude is to be the same, we are to do it as though we were doing it for Jesus (Colossians 3:17, 23).
- In the NT it is normal for others to recognise the faith, character, and competence of someone for a particular role within the life of the Church. In this sense, they exercise the call to that person. For example, Paul gives Titus responsibility for identifying and appointing appropriate elders for the work in Crete (Titus 1:5-9). In this sense discerning our 'secondary' calling is as much a corporate process as an individual one.
- Call in this sense is not limited to our occupation, but to every aspect of our lives. It is how we live out our discipleship as the unique individual God has made us in our occupation, relationships and recreation.



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Outline



Activity 1
35-45 MINS

Slide 10
Handout 2

Handout 2 has a graph with a horizontal axis marked as 'Life Experience' and a vertical axis marked as 'Awareness of God's Call'. Invite participants to take a few minutes to think back through their lives and identify moments when they have been keenly aware of God's call in either of the two senses outlined above. It might be when they became a Christian, the influence of Sunday school or a youth group, a sense of being called to a particular occupation in life or role within the church, or particular times when they have grown in knowing Jesus.

This exercise could go on for a long time, but use it to make the basic point that anyone who is a Christian already has some experience of God's call. The aim of the session is to help participants take what they already know and respond more faithfully and obediently to God in it. You might want to invite participants to continue working with the graph in their personal prayer times or with their mentor.



Reflection
45-55 MINS

Slide 11

CONSIDERING CALLING – WHY DOES IT MATTER?

At this point some may be wondering why it matters. Use slide 12 to address this. There are two options:

Slide 12

OPTION 1

Use the scale on the left of the slide. In response to the statement 'My life is balanced' where would participants place themselves on the scale if 1=perfectly balanced and 5=totally unbalanced?

OPTION 2

Invite participants to answer briefly the two questions on the right-hand side of the slide, allowing a minute for them to respond to the first question before introducing the second.

Often things are out of kilter, not as we would want them to be. We give less attention to the important things than we would like. Things feel out of balance.

Slide 13

At this point we want to challenge the contemporary view of 'balanced life' as being the goal. This may be quite difficult for some people to take on board. But at the heart of a Christian understanding of call is the recognition that we're not called to the contemporary understanding of a 'balanced' life. Rather God calls us to a 'surrendered' life.

Slide 14

If we take a moment to reflect on the images associated with 'balanced life' we quickly realise they are unhelpful. For example, 'work/life' balance implies that somehow work isn't life, and yet many of us spend the majority of our waking hours 'at work'. Or what about some of the other images? 'Balanced life' makes us think of a tightrope where we are desperately trying to walk the narrow line, or of one thing being weighed in the scales against something else, or balancing spinning plates on top of poles. All these images create a sense of stress and tension between one thing and another.

Slide 15

Slide 16

Yet Jesus doesn't call us to a balanced life. Indeed there are occasions where his teaching seems to go against a contemporary understanding of a balanced life – 'whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34). On another occasion he tells a man he can't go home to bury his father. This is because Jesus calls us to a surrendered life. It is



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through this surrender to him that we discover his abundant life (John 10:10). This is then lived out in a blended life.

Slide 17

A blended life is a more holistic approach to working out God's call on our lives. Through surrender to him as our Lord at the centre, everything else then finds its rightful place around him as the centre of our lives. Nothing is more 'spiritual' than anything else (implied by the common picture of God at the centre and then family, church, work as concentric circles around God). At different times in our lives some of these things will take more of our time than others. What we are looking to do is blend these various elements in a way which honours God's call on every aspect of our lives. You may like to reflect on this in the following way.

- Following on from the activity above, take a moment to pray in pairs. Offer prayers of thanks for God's call on our lives; that he has called us to faith in him, and has work for us to do.
- Remind participants that for the Christian the priority is not a balanced life but a surrendered life. That is why Paul speaks of 'belonging' to Jesus, and, when he refers to himself as a 'servant of Christ Jesus', the word he uses means bond-slave. As Bishop Michael Baughen has said: 'You'll only find contentment in life through surrender.'
- Use the Surrender meditation on the PowerPoint. If possible arrange for a musician to play the song 'I surrender' as you watch the images. Then go straight into singing the song when the images stop. Alternatively play a reflective track.

Slides 18-55



Refresh
55-65 MINS

Maybe non-alcoholic cocktails, delicious doughnuts or fabulous fruit!



Activity 2
65-75 MINS

We've clarified that God calls us all. He has something particular for each of us to do. If we add that there is enough time on earth to do everything God wants us to do, why are so many of us far too busy?

Slide 56

To motivate participants to see the value of clarifying God's call on their lives, ask the following question. In relation to 'over-busyness', if you were to fault yourself in one of these three areas, which would it be?

- The inability to prioritise.
- The inability or unwillingness to organise these priorities.
- The lack of self-discipline to tackle these priorities.

Participants may choose only one option. Invite them to indicate which they chose. Normally the majority of people choose the second or third option. Yet the key issue is the inability to prioritise. Knowing God's call, what he wants us to do, enables us to see clearly how he wants us to spend our time. As one author put it...

Slide 57

'The greatest incentive to saying "no" is having an even bigger "yes" burning inside you.'
Stephen Covey

Slide 58

So how do we discern God's call on our lives?



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Explain that Growing Leaders offers one way of doing this. It isn't the only way, and if participants want to choose others, that is fine. You're going to give an overview of a five-step process, with a brief exercise to get them started. Then they will work on it as a project over the rest of Growing Leaders Part 1, involving their mentor in the process. On Growing Leaders Project 3 handout there is an outline of how this process might work.

Slide 59

1. Identify a starting point.
2. Discern where God is leading.
3. Develop a personal life statement.
4. Implement a personal life statement.
5. Revise your life statement regularly.



Activity 3 75-90 MINS

Project 3
Handout

Slide 60

Additional
Handout 1

STEP 1 IDENTIFY A STARTING POINT

No one comes to this process without some understanding of themselves and their situation. The first step uses an exercise based around the acronym SHAPE and then an exploratory question to identify 'where we are' now. See the Project 3 handout 'personal life statement'.

Rick Warren developed the 'SHAPE' tool in *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Briefly explain the meaning of each area.

- **Spiritual gifts** What are the gifts God has given to us? When asking people to identify spiritual gifts try to make sure that they do so through a range of different ways: using assessment tools, prayer, talking with friends, practical experience, etc. Relying on one method often skews our perception, whereas working with two or three offers an element of 'control' and perspective. It will also help counter the fact that much writing about spiritual gifts is influenced by the authors' theological viewpoint! (See Additional Handout 1.)
- **Heart's desire** Those things to which we are deeply committed, or passionate about, or sometimes we can identify this through our 'holy discontent', what we can't stand any longer. This helps us to identify where we use our spiritual gifts.
- **Abilities** What are the natural talents we've always had, the skills and knowledge we've developed?
- **Personality** This is about the way we prefer to do things. Are we introvert or extrovert? Do we make decisions primarily through thoughts or feelings? If people have done Myers-Briggs they can include any insights here.
- **Experience** What are the life experiences, both good and bad, that have shaped us?

Invite people to spend a few minutes in pairs talking about the area they would find it easiest to reflect on, and encourage them to do that now. (For more information about SHAPE look at *Growing Leaders*, pages 103-106, or *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren.)



Activity 4 90-105 MINS

Slide 61

Now give an overview of the rest of the steps in the process.

STEP 2 DISCERN WHERE GOD IS LEADING

This part of the process helps us to think about how God might want to use us, as he normally calls us according to how he has made us. There are two options outlined on the handout. To illustrate option 1 you may like to tell the story of



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Outline

Alfred Nobel, instigator of the Nobel Prizes. He was a successful industrialist, manufacturing explosives. One day he opened his morning paper and read his own obituary. It had been printed by mistake. He was so horrified with what he read about himself that he resolved to give his life a different focus. The result was a life of philanthropy and the establishment of the Nobel Prizes.

STEP 3 DEVELOP A 'PERSONAL LIFE STATEMENT'

Emphasise that this takes time. It is one of the main things we want them to work on with their mentor over the next six months. Four guidelines are given on the handout.

STEP 4 IMPLEMENT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE STATEMENT

This exercise will only be helpful if it makes a difference to the way we live. If we are clearer about God's big 'yes', it enables us to say a more confident 'no' to other things.

STEP 5 REVISE YOUR PERSONAL LIFE STATEMENT

The handout explains why this is important. At this stage in the process this may seem a little remote.

To illustrate the 'end product' of this process, it may be helpful if you can share your own life statement – or someone else's (with their permission).

As you draw the session to a close, use one of the options below.



Bible
105-118 MINS

Slide 62
Handout 3

OPTION 1: DRAW PEOPLE BACK TO JESUS

Use Mark 1 briefly to highlight how Jesus responds to God's call on his life. Growing Leaders pages 94-103 expands on each heading.

- Jesus knew his call (Mark 1:4-11).
- Jesus' call was tested (Mark 1:12-13).
- Jesus acted on his call (Mark 1:14-15).
- Jesus shares his call with others (Mark 1:14-20).
- Jesus exercises his call with compassion (Mark 1:21-34).
- Jesus reinforces his call through prayer (Mark 1:35).
- Jesus reaffirms his call through hard decisions (Mark 1:36-38).

Slides 63-66

OPTION 2 PSALM 63

Use Psalm 63 to remind everyone that the starting place for knowing God's will is our desire for him. Some people may want to pray that they would have the desire to know God. Others may simply like to be prayed with. If you have a prayer team, or know some respected 'prayers' in your church, this might be a good point to ask them to join the group to offer prayer for people. They could even be praying for people all through the session in a separate room.

Activity 2

As people leave the session give them the Psalm 63 prayer cards as a way of encouraging further reflection on this subject.



SESSION 3: CLARIFYING CALL

Outline



Finally
118-120 MINS

Slide 67

Handout 4

Thank everyone for coming. Remind them of the date and content for the next session and encourage them to have a word with you if there are any issues with their mentor that need sorting. You can also remind them that they can explore this topic further in chapters 4 and 5 of Growing Leaders. Distribute the feedback form and ask them to return it to you. End with prayer.

Before Next Time

Preparation

As leaders of the course there are several things you will need to do before session 4.

- Send the mentors the next mentor bulletin related to this session.
- We recommend several video clips for the next session. Check you have copyright permission to use them (see page 25 of the introductory guide).
- If you've not already done so, book your venue for the next 24 hours away at the start of Part 2 (Session 5), and check all the practicalities are sorted.
- Pray and prepare for session 4. Don't forget to watch the video introducing the session.



SESSION 3: CLARIFYING CALL

Additional Material

Learning From Life

During Growing Leaders invite each participant to read at least one biography/autobiography of a Christian leader. Here are a few suggestions:

- Just as I am, Billy Graham (Zondervan 1998)
- The Hiding Place, Corrie Ten Boom (Hodder 2004)
- Church in the Market Place, George Carey (Kingsway 1995)
- Not Less Than Everything: the courageous women who carried the Christian gospel to China, Valerie Griffiths (Monarch 2005)
- The Heavenly Man, Brother Yun (Monarch 2002)
- The School of Dying Graces, Richard Felix (Saltriver 2004)
- God's Smuggler, Brother Andrew (Hodder 2005)
- Hidden Sorrow, Lasting Joy, Anneka Companjen (Tyndale House 2001)
- Daylight Must Come: The Story of Helen Roseveare, Alan Burgess (Macmillan 1997)
- Steps Along Hope Street: my life in London and Liverpool, David Shepherd (Hodder 2002)
- Chasing the Dragon, Jackie Pullinger (Hodder 2002)

RPMs

Some people find the following analogy helpful. It is based on the RPM (revs per minute) gauge in a car. The car was made to function over a wide range of RPMs, from idling to full-on pedal-to-the-floor driving. Of course spending too much time in the latter, or in the red zone as it is marked on most cars, is dangerous. The engine was not designed for it and sustained use will result in the gasket, or 'big end' (at least that's what my mechanic used to call it) breaking down.

We can imagine ourselves monitored by five rev gauges, each one measuring a different aspect of our lives – physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, spiritual. When we live life in the red zone in any of these areas certain symptoms are likely to manifest themselves. They are described on pages 86 to 89 of Growing Leaders. Using the additional handout you can invite participants to listen to the symptoms for each gauge and decide whether they are in the red (danger) zone, or actually running nicely (around two-thirds of the engine capacity) or perhaps only ticking over (in which case they may want to 'rev-up' a bit). They can indicate this by drawing on the needle on the relevant gauge.

- **If they are all in the red and have been for a while...** It might indicate crisis. You need to stop doing most things very soon. It might be helpful to seek outside help for the particular needs and issues you have to address. After this, take time to rebuild things on a clear understanding of God's call.
- **If you are aware of imbalance and want to address it...** Imbalance might be living either in the red zone, or a gauge that is only just ticking over. Either way there might be things you need to stop or withdraw from in the short term. Use the time gained to clarify and confirm God's call for you and reshape things in the light of those truths.
- **If they are all motoring along just fine...** Are you sure you were honest?! If you were, then make sure the way you are living in each area is firmly aligned with God's particular call on your life. This will change over time, so review things regularly.

Slide 69
Additional
Handout 2

