CALLED

A Themed Devotional Series

For CVF Students

By CVM Staff

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This series of devotionals was created around CVM’s annual theme of “Called” from Ephesians 4:1. We hope you enjoy getting to know the CVM staff better while exploring your calling. We encourage you to prayerfully journey through the study together as a CVF group with your Bibles open, looking up the scriptures (in bold italics) and discussing the questions (in bold).
THE FOUNDATION
Week 1

If you have ever seen a new high rise building being constructed, there is an amazing amount of work done to build the foundation. I have watched one go up in our home area and it seemed to take forever to dig and build the foundation. The depth of the hole was incredible and all of the concrete and infrastructure put in place over the weeks was amazing. Now that the building is going up we quickly forget that work as we see the beautiful building that now sits on that foundation.

We must always first have a firm foundation in who God is and His purposes in our world before we consider our calling. David captured this in writing in Psalm 8:

“When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.”

I appreciate the ownership David gives to God for the immensity of creation and yet in writing about His fingers doing the work shows that he is personally involved in it. Knowing God, His character, and His plan are important parts of the foundation that we build our calling upon. As veterinary professionals, we know great details of His creation at the micro level through our studies of anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology. Again, his fingers at work. “Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you....” Isaiah 44:2a. His creative finger has been involved in your life since your conception.

Our calling, as a part of His eternal purposes, is built on the foundation of Him as the Creator of our world. We must frame our efforts to know Him and to understand our calling humbly as we consider who He is as Creator God. We must continually seek to understand His story of redemption through the unfolding of His plan. Humbly we approach Him, knowing who He is and yet also understanding that He cares for us. He has made us a little lower than the Trinity and crowned us with glory and majesty. This is incredible!

Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus starts with the charge that we are “blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). He continues to lay other important foundation pieces for our calling in the verses that follow:

“Chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” vs 4
“Predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ” vs 5
“His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” vs 6
“in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” vs 7

The promises go on and on. I challenge you to read and reflect on the first three chapters of Ephesians as a foundation to our theme “Called” (Ephesians 4:1). Consider how solid your foundation is. Do you know and believe Him as your Creator? Do you know His story and plan of redemption for you through the life and sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ? Your personal devotions, times of worship, your gathering as a fellowship group, and your involvement in a local church should serve to open your eyes to new details of the character of God and His plan of redemption. This is foundation work.

Are you purposeed to pursue Him to build your foundation?

“He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood arose, the river burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.” Luke 6:48

Calling is defined as a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence. Before you continue to walk in your calling, make sure that you are convinced of God and His plan as your foundation.

“God did not direct His call to Isaiah— Isaiah overheard God saying, " . . . who will go for Us?" The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God’s call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends upon my spiritual attitude.” -Oswald Chambers

-Kit Flowers, DVM

Kit is a 1978 graduate of Colorado State University. He served as a veterinarian in the US Air Force and in private practice in Panama City, FL before going with his wife Jan and daughters Molly and Missy to serve with CVM in Kenya from 1985-1990. Kit then returned to Seattle to serve in the CVM home office and has served as the Executive Director since 1993. He and Jan are the proud grandparents to seven grandchildren and are blessed to walk their calling out in the CVM family.
THE FIRST CALL
Week 2

When I first went to Ethiopia to serve with CVM in a veterinary clinic, I met the Stoneman family who worked to provide clean water to the same community. When they shared about their calling they joked that they were called when someone from their mission agency picked up the phone and asked them if they wanted to go to Ethiopia.

What is a calling? Who is called? Does there have to be a supernatural call or even a phone call?

Can I be called if I don’t ever plan to go overseas?

What I want to talk about today is the most basic call of Christ. When I think of calling, I think of the call to follow Christ. The call of the first disciples is somewhat similar (minus the phone) in that it is a specific event with a direct call. Read Matthew 4:18-20.

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.” (NIV)

The first step is accepting that call. Simon Peter could have walked away and not accepted Christ’s call on his life. He would have missed out on the opportunity God had for him to lead His people to truth.

Sometimes when I share about missions, I meet some who want to put the cart before the horse. They want to go and serve and represent Christ, but they don’t know Jesus yet. Or maybe, they have just read on to Ephesians 4:2-6 that tells us how to live, but we haven’t accepted Jesus’ first calling on our lives and therefore don’t have His help to live out that calling. Really, we are all called to know and follow Christ and that is such an important first step. God sent His Son, Jesus so that we might know Him.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” - John 3:16 (NIV)

Let’s make this personal. Note that He loved each of us (the world—that means YOU), not just a select few. He has called each of us, no matter what we have done, no matter who our parents are and no matter what was done to us. That means God loves YOU and He is calling YOU! (You don’t have to wait for the phone call—He is already calling you.)
THE FIRST CALL
Week 2

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” - John 1:12 (NIV)

What does it mean to “believe in Him?”

For me, I was first called as a child, and I believed in Jesus when I was about five years old. I remember asking Him to forgive my sins and accepting His gift of salvation and told Him that I wanted to follow Him. It was that simple to become God’s child. And it is that simple no matter whether you are 5, 25, or 85! If you would like to learn more, www.theromanroad.org is a great help to understand, or ask one of us on staff at CVM and we would love to help you.

In your group share with 2 or 3 others about how you were first called to Christ and if you have accepted this call to follow Him. If you have time, review the verses of why you need God’s calling, Romans 3:23, Rom. 5:8, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9-10. Thank Him for calling you, and if you haven’t accepted His call, then say “yes” to His first and most important invitation; to follow Him.

-Denise A Ward, DVM

Denise is an Iowa State grad, class of 2001. After practicing in Iowa for two years she has served with CVM for the last 10 years: seven in Ethiopia, two in Seattle and now in North Carolina. She returned home from Ethiopia with her Ethiopian born German Shepherd because she realized that her dog Mia takes good care of her by making sure she takes walks, has a nice yard and enjoys the journey. She’s currently based out of Greenville, NC serving as CVM’s East/Northeast Regional Representative.
When I was a kid, there weren’t cell phones. We had tin cans with string but that would only stretch so far and the reception wasn’t all that great most of the time. Trying to communicate around the farm was a little difficult without driving out to the field where work was going on. When we would work away from the house, we would have to pay close attention to our watches if we didn’t want to upset Mom by being late and having her hot wonderful meal get cold. Sometimes we got cold lunches due to missing the appointed lunch time.

When I was a teenager, we put up a big bell in the front yard and named it “Big Bertha” so that when a meal or something important was happening, Mom or anyone else could let us know by the ringing of that bell. You wanted to make sure when you rang that bell that you turned your head away from it as it would make your tympanic membrane do a little dance since those loud sharp rings would stop right on top of it.

When that bell went off around a meal, you knew it was time to go to the house. If it rang any other time, you knew something was up and someone needed to go check. The bell ringing meant that you were being called back to the house for something important. If we were too far from the house, we wouldn’t hear the call to come home. If there were woods, hills, wind, thunder, rain, etc., that too might prevent us from hearing the call of the bell.

Eph 4:1 says, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” We all want to respond to God’s calling on our lives, but many are not sure what app on our phones to use for that. Where do we get the calling? Being called by God means we have to be in fellowship with Him so that we can hear Him. God has given us many avenues to hear Him – His Word, the Holy Spirit, pastors, Godly friends, devotions, books, CDs, DVDs, Bible studies, Christian music, etc. There are so many ways that God speaks to us, but we have to be near to Him and intentionally listening to hear Him. Over the years I’m sure I missed God speaking to me at times because I was too busy and not taking time to fellowship with Him in any of those ways. I’m sure I missed out on some blessings He had prepared for me.

Hearing Him speak to you if you have distanced yourself from Him can be difficult. Sometimes Satan puts obstacles in our way to keep us distracted so we can’t hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us. He loves to put worry, busyness, activities, school, work, sickness, relationships, etc., in our path so that we don’t take the time to “be still and know Him” (Psalm 46:10). Psalm 1:1a & 2 tells us more about how to be in fellowship
THE BELL
Week 3

with Him, “Blessed is the man who meditates on His law day and night.” The closer we are to Him, the better we hear Him just as when we were closer to the bell at the farm. We could get so far away from the bell or there were other obstacles in the way that we didn’t hear it.

What are some distractions in your life right now? What’s standing between you and hearing God’s voice?

Are you close enough to “The Bell”? How can you keep the distance between you and God to a minimum so you’ll know when He’s calling?

Big Bertha wasn’t there to ring for just fun unless everyone was at the house. It was there to be used for a specific purpose—to heed a call. If it was rung and people were in the field, it was a great imposition to drop everything and hurry to the house thinking there was an emergency. But when we listened for it and it sounded, we went without knowing what was ahead. Most of the time it was for food, but sometimes we didn’t know for sure but went anyway to see what the call was for.

We have to listen to the Lord day and night. We must not get so far within ourselves or others that we can’t hear Him when He calls. We must keep ourselves available and listening—even when we are not sure where He is leading. We must let His word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). Sometimes we are given a flashlight or lantern that only shines a few feet in front when we would really like to see the entire path. God wants us to walk in faith with Him, heed His call, and follow where He leads even when we don’t fully understand. He loves us and will never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

Have there been times in your life when you felt it was easier to recognize God’s voice? Were there less distractions, were you walking closer with Him daily, what was the difference?

-Glenn Gaines, DVM

Glenn is a 1982 Texas A&M grad. He did mixed practice, with equine emphasis till 2007 when he and his wife, Kathy went and served for 3 years in Mongolia. They started doing missions in 1995 and have been on 17 international trips to 8 countries. He now serves as the Region Representative for CVM in the South Central U.S.
“If you died tomorrow...” We’ve all heard the subsequent question, “Where would you go?” But recently, during the funeral ceremony of a 22 year-old girl who lost her long battle with drugs, I thought of the alternate ending, “If you die tomorrow, where have you been? What have you done?” Are we doing what we would be doing if the end were near? Are we spending ourselves on things of value?

"Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God." - Ephesians 4:1 (NLT)

Are we living worthy of the call? And to what are each of us called? I often slip into believing that we’re all cut from the same mold. If we all studied the same amount, we’d get the same grades. If we all consumed the same calories, we’d be the same size. If we all used the same hair products we’d have the same hair. But my daughter has taught me a great lesson by rarely bathing, never using hair products, and having the most gorgeous hair I’ve ever seen. The lesson that I have to learn over and over again, through marriage, parenting, and every relationship, is that we’re all very different, and different for very good reasons.

What has God created you to do? To do well, and to enjoy doing? Veterinary medicine, surgery, research, missions... Look with me at these three verses:

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.” – 1 Peter 4:10

“for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”
-Philippians 2:13

Jesus said, “I came that you might have life and have it to the full.” - John 10:10

What do these verses tell us about the calling on our lives?

I think they show that His call is likely at the crossroads of where your gifting, your desires, and God’s opportunities intersect.

Sounds simple enough, but we all know hearing from God can be about as clear as mud sometimes. Here are 5 steps that are at least simple to remember, if not to put into practice, because they all begin with CS (borrowed from Campus Alpha). As a group read over these tips, the scriptures that accompany them, and share examples of how you’ve used them in the past and heard from God.
LISTENING
Week 4

Commanding Scripture - good reading of the good book, Matt 6:33

Compelling Spirit - good listening to the Holy Spirit, Acts 13:2

Common Sense - good reasoning, conscience, 2 Timothy 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 7:20

Counsel of the Saints - good advice, Proverbs 20:18, 12:15, and 15:22

Circumstantial Signs - good awareness. Does anyone else have a rule of threes? I have this rule of thumb I feel comfortable with that if I’m praying about something and then it randomly comes up three times, it must be God. Twice and it could be a coincidence, but if it just keeps coming up, I’m confident it’s affirmation.

And finally, after exploring all these avenues, the ultimate test of God’s will, “Do you sense God’s peace about this decision?”

“At the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.”—Colossians 3:15

Other scriptures references to consider if time allows: Philippians 4:6-8, Romans 12:1-2, Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 16:9

The Bible is clear that God has a plan. Sometimes, it’s not clear what His plan is, but it’s clear that that plan will require sacrifice. I can almost guarantee that sacrifice will be a blessing. However you hear from Him, whatever path you end up on, be sure to live life worthy of your calling...

-Lauren Spears-Charles, DVM

Lauren is an Auburn grad, class of 2005. She lived and served with CVM in Bolivia for three years. There she quickly went from being single to having a family of four including her handsome husband, Jon, beautiful Bolivian daughter, Angie, and their Bolivian Labrador, Ruby. She's currently based out of Louisville, KY and serving as CVM's Southeast Regional Representative.
To reference “being called” is to use a phrase that is often over-utilized but not fully defined. What does it mean to be called? What does Ephesians 4 speak to us about? I like to read verses in context, so let’s explore Ephesians 4:1-16.

Here are a few highlights from the passage about what being “called” means:
- Be completely humble, gentle and patient
- Bear with one another in love
- Make every effort to maintain the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace
- Use the gifts given to us to equip us for ministry
- Grow to spiritual maturity to become the body of Christ

Whoa. So that seems easy, right? To be completely humble and patient all of the time, to maintain the unity of the Spirit and to grow to full spiritual maturity!? Can’t I find an easier call to follow?

The point is that this calling can seem insurmountable. How can we live up to this passage and be the body of Christ that we are created to be? Let’s shift gears and talk about something else that feels rather insurmountable:

**MOUNT EVEREST.**

It reigns as the tallest mountain in the world at a towering 29,029 feet above sea level. Originally known as Chomolungma in Tibetan, British surveyor Andrew Waugh, then kindly named it for his predecessor, Sir George Everest.

While not the most technically challenging mountain for climbers, altitude sickness, weather and exposure to extreme temperatures are the real problems. Sometimes we choose paths in life that don’t seem the most difficult, but it’s the unexpected aspects that can prove to be most challenging.

What unexpected circumstances have greeted you? I can think of many things that ambushed me in veterinary school. You?

Let’s imagine that we are climbing Mount Everest together. Let’s also pretend that the summit corresponds to us living out the “calling” described in Ephesians.

**Obstacle 1: KHUMBU ICEFALL.**

This is a nice way of describing an area created by glaciers. It contains huge blocks of shifting ice with deep crevasses. It’s very dangerous for climbers, due to the potential of being crushed by ice, or falling into a crevasse. To reduce the hazard, climbers often traverse this area when the sun is down, since the ice has less chance of melting. I should mention that they walk on horizontal ladders with big spiky climbing boots on their feet.
Being a Christian in a new environment (like vet school) can be hard, because you’re getting used to the equipment and trying to figure out how life works with these new obstacles. You’re largely climbing through the dark.

**Who can you lean on to help you navigate this time? Older students? CVF friends? Mentors/Advisors? How will you facilitate getting advice?**

Remember our passage about being “called”. Our trip up the mountain will be gradual because we have to acclimate our bodies to the altitude. So again and again, we will pass through this first hurdle. *Again and again, we will have opportunities to practice being gentle and humble as the passage describes.*

**What gifts has God given you to continue to pursue His vision?**

**We all have flaws - what are you improving to make this pursuit stronger?**

**There is strength in numbers - what assets do you have as a group?**

**Obstacle 2: WESTERN CWM.**

Most of your exposure problems on Everest will be due to cold weather. On the Western Cwm, you’re walking through a glacial valley also known as the “valley of silence” since wind is generally cut off due to the high peaks on either side. The high altitude, sun exposure and lack of wind makes the Western Cwm incredibly hot. *You will be tested, and being a Christian isn’t easy.*

**When met with unbearable circumstances, how will you react?**

**What are some methods of coping while under stress? Hint: prayer is one.**

**Obstacle 3: LHOTSE FACE.**

As the altitude gets higher, it becomes harder to climb. After you’ve walked through the valley of silence, what greets you? A sheer wall of glacial ice. From its base to the top, you must climb 3,700 feet, at 40 to 50-degree pitches, with some occasional 80-degree bulges. Since it’s made of hard blue ice, climbers must kick to fix the front points of their boots into the ice as they climb upward on ropes that Sherpas set for them. You aren’t the first one to traverse this path. We have the expertise of Christians who have gone before us, contained in the Word. They have set the ropes for us. But remember, ropes are just tools. If we don’t grab the ropes and work to lift ourselves closer to Him, we will be stuck and unable to move forward.

**What biblical examples can we learn lessons from?**

**Who has set the ropes for us?**

**What potential obstacles (mental or physical) prevent us from grabbing the rope?**

Everest has many obstacles. Next week we’ll jump to an especially scary one.
Last week, we started climbing Mount Everest together, in a big analogy for following God’s calling on our lives as described in Ephesians 4:1-16. Hang in there with me, as we continue the journey and try to navigate around the obstacles we encounter along the way.

**Obstacle 453: DEATH ZONE.**
I told you it was especially scary. Above 26,000 feet, any exposed part of your body will immediately get frostbite. There is 1/3 the level of oxygen, so you are breathing rapidly to try to get enough. The problem is, it’s called the death zone because there is not enough oxygen to sustain human life. Once you enter the death zone, you are trying to reach the summit, which is only 1.07 miles away! It seems so close! However, it takes climbers 12 hours to walk this distance. If we went to the summit right now without acclimatizing, we would lose consciousness in a few minutes. Following God’s calling as described in Ephesians isn’t easy, and it isn’t going to happen overnight. You can’t go from the sea level to the summit in one day. It will be a gradual process of putting one foot in front of the other, and it will be work. The path is full of highs and lows, but would you ever doubt the journey once you see the view from the top? I’m guessing not.

So why do people climb Mount Everest? Why do people attempt things that seem insurmountable? I once heard an astronaut speak, and he said that astronauts and mountain climbers do these crazy things for the same reason: They are more afraid of not (climbing/going to space) than they are of death. Wow.

**In that case, shouldn’t we be more afraid of not knowing God than we are of following a calling that feels insurmountable?**

**How do I know I am being called?**
“The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God’s call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends on my spiritual attitude.” —Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*

Also see: John 15:16-17

**What is the overarching theme of the call? Unity.**
Nothing in this Ephesians passage mentions being alone. It refers to each of us using our spiritual gifts and joining together to help the Kingdom of God come to fruition, as we are all parts of God’s body. We have to work together and help each other discover our own spiritual gifts, because each one will be joined and held together in the body of Christ.
Also see: John 17:20-23, Romans 12:3-8

How do I know what’s next?
Your’re not going to climb Mount Everest in one big step. You need to put one foot in front of the other. Keep traveling on the path that God has laid out for you, and together we will all make this journey, one step at a time. Sometimes it’s taking that first step that halts us.
Also see: Genesis 28:15, Hebrews 13:8

How do I plan my future?
“You will not find my peace by engaging in excessive planning: attempting to control what will happen to you in the future. That is a commonly practiced form of unbelief. When your mind spins with multiple plans, Peace may sometimes seem to be within your grasp; yet always eludes you. Just when you think you have prepared for all possibilities, something unexpected pops up and throws things into confusion.

I did not design the human mind to figure out the future. That is beyond your capability. I crafted your mind for continual communication with Me. Bring Me all your needs, your hopes and fears. Commit everything into My care. Turn from the path of planning to the path of Peace.” –Jesus Calling devotional

Also see: Matthew 6:28-34, Proverbs 28:19, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Jeremiah 29:11-13, Romans 8:31

-Melissa Cheeks, DVM
Melissa is a 2011 graduate of Purdue University. She moved to Wisconsin after graduation and worked in a small animal clinic before joining the CVM staff full-time. She and her husband Maurice share their home with Trixie the dog, and Chaplin the mustachioed cat. Melissa is currently based out of Madison, Wisconsin and is serving as CVM’s North Central Regional Representative. She is not a mountain climber, but hopes to see Everest in person someday.
Each of us is called to something. Perhaps a specific job, maybe caring for certain people, maybe to live in a certain area, or to attend a specific church. Or maybe it’s something far more general than that. But each of us who has fallen in love with our Savior Jesus has been given some calling (Romans 8:30). Some lucky few, may have heard the Lord’s calling in a very specific way; others of us may not know all the details or minutiae of the calling, but we trust God’s leading in the direction He chooses.

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” – Ephesians 4:1-3

No matter the specifics of our calling or how it came about, Paul does tell us that we are to walk in a manner worthy of that call. Verses 2 and 3 tell us that the worthiness of the calling of Jesus is substantiated through humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity, & peace.

Which of these characteristics do you find the hardest to practice as you live out your calling?

Which of these characteristics do you have to rely on the most during this stage of your calling?

It can be easy to think that once we’ve heard from Jesus what He wants us to “do” then that’s it – we have our “marching orders” and march on we shall. However, Scripture tells us repeatedly that the life of a follower of Jesus isn’t one that merely does what Jesus says to do; Scripture tells us that we are to emulate Jesus – to be His representatives in the world (1 Cor. 7:20). The description given in Eph. 4:2-3 of what a worthy calling looks like lived out is for all people, for all callings.

In this verse, Paul uses the Greek word ἐκλήθητε (eklethete) from the root word καλέω (kalew), which means to call, be called, invited, or summoned to a particular end or participation. This kind of word doesn’t indicate that God’s calling on our lives is an order to merely be obeyed; rather it is an invitation to walk alongside God in the work that He is doing. However, we cannot work alongside and with God if we are focused on ourselves. The antithesis of humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity, & peace is selfishness.
THE INVITATION

Week 7

Paul elucidates what it means to walk in a worthy manner – a manner of imitating the person of Christ – further on in Ephesians 4

“...put off the old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness...” (Eph 4:22-24)

We cannot live out God’s calling in our lives if we are merely focused on ourselves. God’s inviting call is ultimately for others, to engage in a world that needs Jesus in a way that reflects who He is. What we do as part of the passion, desire, talents, skill, and giftedness that Jesus graciously gives is intended to be used for the edification of the Body of Christ. No matter what our specific calling is, we are to work within the body of Christ, to maintain unity in the Spirit, all parts, callings, & vocations working together under the banner of one Lord & Spirit. To that end, we can only do this if we are imitating Christ in true righteousness and holiness. This practice is not simply something we do occasionally; instead it is a lifestyle choice of imitating Christ.

Obviously, we will fail to live up to this standard 99.999% of the time. Yet, that is our standard. If we were to see our calling as less about what specifically we do and rather, how we live that calling out day to day, in our personal and professional relationships, with humility, patience, love, unity, & peace, then we will truly walk in a manner worthy of our calling.

Do you view your calling more as a set of tasks or as a lifestyle choice?

In what ways do you need God’s help to change so that your life is lived out in a manner worthy of His calling?

What are some practical things you can do, personally and professionally, to imitate Christ in humility, patience, love, unity, & peace?

-Sarah Lewis

Sarah is the newest addition to CVM as the Admin Assistant for Short-Term Missions. She graduated from Multnomah Biblical Seminary last year and is grateful to have a job in her field. Sarah lives in North Seattle, and while she has no roommates, pets, or plants, there are many books that keep her company late at night. Sarah enjoys eating Mexican food, drinking copious amounts of coffee, and plucking around on her banjo named Rosie Mae.
The Mongolian herder lives in a most interesting home. In the harsh conditions of howling desert winds that sandblast their faces and extreme cold that may stay 30 below zero for a month at a time, their house is called a ger (yurt) and it is perfectly adapted to fit the special needs of these nomadic people. But when the grass gets low and the animals have to search far from the ger to survive, the family must pick up and leave. They can only take life’s necessities as they pack everything into yak or camel carts and move to the next grazing site. There is no garage filled with surplus stuff, no toy box with discarded trinkets. They live without excess.

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” (Matthew 9:37b). The worship leader from our church in America recently announced that his family would be moving on to a new ministry. They had done an outstanding job and will be sorely missed. Within three weeks of the official announcement, the church had 87 applicants for his position. Where is the shortage of workers?

In Mongolia, three of our long-term missionaries are returning home to the U.S. They too have had extraordinary impacts in ministry. They have given up family and friends, and most of their material possessions, to follow Christ into a place of hardship and deprivation. They sacrificed years of “the good life” to answer the call to a distant land. Now, as we pray for others to come and fill these positions, there are no long lines. There is no stack of resumes to sift through, no agonizing decision of who would be the best to fill these positions.

Maybe when you consider a call to Long-term Missions you laugh. Not the laughter of fun or joy, but the laughter of skepticism. The laughter of Sarah that rang in the ears of God, ‘God, you can’t! You cannot give me a baby at my age!’ (Genesis 18). ‘God, you can’t,’ is still ringing in His ears. Maybe you think, ‘God, you can’t... take away my attachment to the things that I must leave behind, and fill them with more of Jesus. My house, my car, my security, my career, my comforts. The shelves at my store packed to overflowing with a full aisle of choices for my pet, who I’d also have to leave behind. And the fabulous food at the restaurants I enjoy after the Sunday service. My hobbies, my sports, and so many other things...things I know I cannot keep, but feel I cannot leave.’

What is it that you would have to leave that may prevent you from following Him? “And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’” -Matthew 8:20b
And, ‘God, you can’t stop the gnawing feeling in my gut that stirs with the thought of leaving friends, grown children, and aging parents. There is no way, God, that you can fill this lonely pit in my stomach with more of your Son. How could you make up for this loss of family and friends?’ We are like the young man of Matthew 8:21 who wanted to follow Jesus but he could not trust Him with his family.

Who is it that you would have to leave that keeps you from saying “Yes, I will follow you”? What could Jesus possibly mean in Matthew 8:21-22?

And finally, ‘God you can’t equip me to do the things that you will ask me to do in areas where I am unqualified.’ This is not a new response, but the same one Moses used thousands of years ago. Exodus 4:10, “Moses said to the Lord, ‘O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue,’” and in 4:13 “O Lord, please send someone else to do it.”

What skill or gift do you lack that prevents you from saying “Yes” to Him?

Listen with me carefully to what the great “I Am” has to say in Exodus 4:11. “The Lord said to him, ‘Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?’”

Is it not “I the Lord” who can fill empty hearts to overflowing with Himself? Is He not the one who can change our desires for the earthly things to those that will last throughout eternity? Is it not He who can care for the ones we leave behind with an abundance that we could never provide? Is He not the one who made us and knows every cell in our body? Then surely He can also ready us to confront every encounter we will face.

-Gerald Mitchum, CVM

Gerald and his wife Frances have been CVM fieldworkers in Mongolia since 1995. Mongolia V.E.T. Net is an NGO that has developed from this CVM ministry. Come and join the Team of 65 nationals and several CVM workers for a short-term mission and see if God may be leading you to Mongolia. Yes, we have missed the family times…the weddings, the births, the funerals. We have missed the time with children and grandchildren. And yes, we have missed the beauty and bounty of our country. But we have seen the glory of God as He has touched the lives of thousands and built His kingdom in a land where His name was previously unknown. It is “them” that we will take into eternity to spend forever with us.
The idea of being “called” to something is not a novel one. We use the term freely in Christian circles as do folks from other walks of life. When one possesses a “calling”, it adds a sense of nobility or purpose to their direction. It gives us little room to question their motives or even their chances of success. After all, if one is “called”, one will do absolutely everything in their power to accomplish the task set before them. For me, there were two great “callings” on my life. I was called to be a follower of Christ and I was called to be a veterinarian. What I didn’t expect was the great collision that occurred between these two while I was in vet school at Kansas State.

I knew that Colossians 3:17 states, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” If God had truly called me to be a veterinarian, I needed to do whatever it took to make that happen. Soon, my devotion time, my prayer time and even my church time turned into school time. After all, if God had called me, He knew what it would take. After school I would make up the time with Him. You know, after graduation when life gets easier. I really didn’t think much of it because I love veterinary medicine and in the end, God’s “calling” was just confirming my own internal desires.

God allowed me to walk down that path until He showed me a few passages. In the Gospels, the story of how Jesus called His disciples is told. Jesus called out to James and John and said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” The Bible says immediately they left their nets, their boats, the hired men and even their father to follow Him. There was nothing wrong with any of the things they left behind.

In Luke 14:26 it says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” That was exactly what James and John were faced with. It’s the same thing that we are all faced with. There cannot be anything between us and the calling that Christ has placed on our lives. We cannot let family, or possessions, dependants/employees or even our professions get in the way.

Matthew 6:31-33 states, “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
ONE CALLING
Week 9

His command is to seek Him first and His promise is that He can be trusted with everything else.

What are some ways that you don’t seek Gods kingdom first?

So, where does that leave my call to veterinary medicine? 1 Peter 4:10 states, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” God has given us gifts. He has created us each in a unique way with talents and passions. We should use those things for His glory. God was gracious enough to allow me to pursue veterinary medicine. I was created to lean towards it. But God is also jealous enough to take me away from it, if it becomes an idol. How often do we take the good things of God and turn them for our own devices? Ministries, mission opportunities, charitable works, all of it can be turned into idols. Don’t be fooled into thinking that God cares more about you being a veterinarian than He does about you whole heartedly seeking an intimate relationship with Him.

What are ways that our profession can become an idol?

What are ways that we can prevent this and use our profession to serve God daily?

In the end, there is only ONE calling. That is the calling that Christ has impressed upon our hearts to follow Him. Everything else is a direction He allows us to walk in for His service and glory. Be forewarned, any other “call” can be taken away if it gets between you and God. Or even worse, if you fight it long enough, He will simply let you walk in your own lukewarm desires which no longer glorify Him. So instead, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” -Eph 4:1

If God called you away from veterinary medicine, would you follow?

-Barry Schwenk, DVM

Barry began serving with CVM as a student leader at Kansas State in 1995. He has participated in short term mission trips and enjoyed six years of emergency medicine before serving 6 years in Ethiopia. Along with his wife Colette and three children Emily, Jonas and Simon, Barry is living in Arizona and serves as the CVM Southwest Regional Representative.
As we conclude this series of thoughts on the theme “Called” let’s start with a discussion question:

**Which of you are runners? Would you say that your running has increased or decreased since you’ve been in vet school? Why?**

Today, let’s explore the passage we’ve been studying together from a different angle. “The Message” version of the Bible brings a new perspective to verses we’ve looked at from many sides already. Here are Paul’s words from Ephesians 4:1-3 in Eugene Peterson’s translation:

“In light of all this, here’s what I want you to do. While I’m locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don’t want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don’t want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.”

Can you imagine how Paul must have felt? Locked up in prison, desperate to get out and run again the marathon he’d been imprisoned for; of sharing Christ with as many people as he could, but his hands (and feet) were literally tied. How frustrating to see the work to be done, to feel completely impotent to run the race yourself and then to see others, whose hands were not tied, but they were sitting on them.

I am somewhat of a runner. I started in middle school and have had various periods of running and sitting in my life since. Vet school was one of those periods of stagnation. I was BUSY! Can anyone relate? For more than a year I didn’t run. Then, I remember it like it was yesterday, I walked into the small animal clinic one Sunday after church to check on a patient, and I don’t know what compelled me to do it, but I stepped on the pet scale. *I was heavier than I’d ever been in my life, by 10 pounds!* Immediately, I threw out the Krispy Kreme donut I had left from church that morning, and drove to the park to start running again. After years cooped up in that prison cell of a classroom, I felt free to pour myself out on that trail. It was glorious! I’ve not stopped running since.

How little we appreciate our freedom if it’s never been threatened. Paul was persecuted, his rights revoked, his hands tied, but he was passionate to get out and run. Let’s not wait for our own adversity to learn this lesson, to gain this fervor, let us use Paul’s chains to motivate us to *run the race God has set before us* (Hebrews 12:1).
RUNNING THE RACE  
Week 10

Do you feel that you’re running “on the road God called you to travel”? Or are you strolling off? Are you sitting around on your hands until you finish vet school and have more time to serve, and love, and run?

I challenge you as individuals, and as a group, to run now, with perseverance. And not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

My daughter just turned 11. On her birthday, seven of us, if you count our faithful Labrador, ran her first 5K race with her. We’d trained together some, so that her birthday wouldn’t be ruined by the unforeseen suffering of the grueling 3.1 miles, but the training didn’t prevent the pain. And my daughter is not a fan of pain. So, instead of pushing through the stomach cramps, or the stiffness in her neck, to finish the race sooner, she would stop and walk regularly. My father, a veteran runner, but not much of a current one, was the tortoise to her hare. Every time she’d stop to walk, he’d jog slowly past us, and eventually when she decided she was ready again she’d sprint by him like the wind. In the end, can you guess who won the race? True to the fable, by a mere ten seconds, the tortoise outran the hare without even putting in an effort. The little bunny ran as fast as her little legs could carry her for the last 100+ yards, but it was no match for the steady jog of one who knew how to pace himself.

Living out your Calling in a worthy manner is a lot like running. Don’t take breaks in the middle of the race, when you’re tired or busy, or overwhelmed. Just pace yourself on the hills and in the valleys, and keep running on the path that He’s laid out for you. Serving in my church, in my community, in my CVF, and around the world, during vet school was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Don’t be confused into thinking that this is time to focus on your studies and only take in. You have so much more to give right now than you think. If you’re only sitting on your hands and receiving (consuming calories), but not exercising your faith and burning any, you might wake up 10 pounds heavier one day! And we wouldn’t want you to have to throw away your donut.

How can you pour out love on others while you work through vet school? What are some ways you can mend fences? And how can you do it all with humility and discipline?

One last time, “I am in prison because I belong to the Lord. Therefore I urge you who have been chosen by God to live up to the life to which God called you.”

–Ephesians 4:1 (NCV)

-Lauren Spears-Charles, DVM  (bio in week 4)