

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups Feb 10th 2008

Our calling – called by God Genesis 17:1-8,



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

What comes to mind when we use the term 'vocation?' The Biblical understanding of vocation reveals a 'calling by God to his service, a calling to know him and live in the light of a loving relationship with him, but somehow 'vocation' has been sucked into the preserve of the 'caring' professions or church leadership!

This first week in Lent we begin a five week course exploring God's call on our lives and today we focus on Abraham. Abraham lived 4,000 years ago in Southern Iraq in a city called Ur on the river Euphrates. The city possessed a highly sophisticated urban culture and was dominated by a towering temple, a ziggurat, where the moon god was worshipped. Along with his father Terah, Abraham moved to Haran 100 miles north of Ur, another city dominated by worship of the moon god. Abraham lived there till his father died then something happened that changed the course of his life and indeed the world. He heard God's call – read Gen 12:1-3. What was Abraham to do? He knew nothing about God, pagan worship was the norm, but he had faith, responded to God's call and stepped out on a new journey with God.

Like Abraham God calls us on a journey with him and asks us to step out with him and discover his plans and purposes for us, to take that step of faith and respond to his call. Few of us would set out on a weekend walk in the Lakes without a route plan and map but many of us embark on the different stages of our lives with little thought about our ultimate direction and purpose. The truth is that God has made each of us in his image to walk in step with him, to grow into the person he has called us to be, to be like him and share in his work in the world, to heed his call on our lives and to live our lives out of a sense of his call, to be part of his big picture for the world.

The passage for this week highlights four characteristics of God's call:

God's call is personal In the context of his covenant with Abraham God gives him a new name. The first syllable of God's name Yahweh becomes the middle of Abraham's name - Abram becomes Abraham. His wife Sarai becomes Sarah and there is a sense of a new beginning for her as well as Abraham, a beginning that ultimately led to the birth of Isaac. In the Bible calling someone by their name is an important sign of God's personal call. God has a particular, unique plan and purpose for each one of us that can only be fulfilled by us. Only you can be the father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, friend, colleague, neighbour to those who inhabit the world in which God calls you to live.

God's call is one of hope and not despair Read Gen 17:15 -17, 18:10-15 and 21:1-7. God's call is not to be free from the traumas and difficulties of this life but to trust him and still keep faith in his call, to look for signs of hope, and laughter! and to become those very signs ourselves.

God's call is to action God's promise to Abraham was that he would bless him if he 'walked before him and was blameless' 17:1. Although many believe in God, few do anything about it, few worship him and few follow his plans and purposes for them and then when things go wrong guess who gets the blame! Through his Son God calls us into a relationship and life with him and he will be with us in all circumstances when we say 'yes Lord' respond take up his call and act upon it.

God calls us to listen Note that Abraham's first 'action' in response to God's call is to fall down before him 17:3. Our action begins by being with God, by worshipping him, putting him first, only then can we hear what he is saying, only then does the journey begin.



Witness: Questions to discuss

- 1 Share any ways in which you have felt a sense of being called by God to something, or have observed that sense of calling in someone else.
- 2 What stops us hearing God's call?
- 3 Imagine a perceptive friend who knows you well being asked what they see you called to be and /or do. What would they say?
- 4 Are there any limits to what God might call you, his people to do?
- 5 Use the journal reflection on p23 of Life Calling.