



Unfinished: Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet Lent 1

Called to Values

Warm-up Question

When have you had a lot of questions about your faith?



Photo by [Tim Graf](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

“Near and Now” is a resource provided by the Nourishing Vocation Project through the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College. This edition is written by Melina Thurmond. Melina is a 2021 graduate from Augustana College, Rock Island, who now works in Georgia as a Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator. She loves taking advantage of the warmer weather by hiking, kayaking, swimming, and enjoying the outdoors!

Led by the Spirit

Read [Matthew 4:1-11](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Sometimes it seems like we are meant to question every single thing that happens to us. For a few moments, step back and think about the last few years. We experienced what will most likely be one of the most pivotal times in our lives (COVID-19 Pandemic). For the sake of caring for one another, we needed to live by unfamiliar rules and guidelines for nearly two years, and then we encountered a different “new reality” yet again as restrictions and guidelines eased. Why did this happen? How do we process what we have been through?

For those of us who were college students during this time, this was especially challenging. After two years of life-turned-upside down, during what should have been critical, formative years, we have stepped into a world, expected to function as fully-fledged adults, having experienced personal and collective trauma that we have yet to fully grasp or understand. This hit me all during my junior year of college. The year I was supposed to have my final year at my camp, do my internship, go through and sort out what is supposed to be my next, most faithful step – all of which didn’t happen. So, now what? What matters? What do I value, and how do I make sense of it all?

The same questions could be asked of this passage. Jesus was led into a place that he and no one else would want to be. For a vulnerable 40 days and nights, Jesus was tempted, tried, and tested. He was starved, malnourished, and in his humanness, Jesus had to have pondered what really mattered. He had to have wondered whether he was ever going to see the end of this experience. He most certainly had internal questions and struggles. He knew that God who had called him “beloved” when he was baptized, was leading him, but at what cost?

But who said faith is meant to be comfortable? Who said we are meant to live within the boundaries of what we know to be “home?” I have found that the times my faith has been challenged and I really dug into what my values were, those were the times when my faith stretched and grew the most. The story of Jesus’ temptation reminds us that faith is not easy. It can be hard for us to believe that we are being led by the Light who wants to see us flourish when we certainly don’t always feel like we are. We see all sorts of famous influencers evangelizing across their platforms, and they make it look so simple and easy. But that’s when we remember that Jesus’ own road was marked by

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temptations, trials, and tests that challenged his values. Whatever we face and whatever questions we have, Jesus has been there ahead of us, and Jesus is always with us even when – and maybe even especially when – faith is hard and we wrestle with what it means to live our lives valuing what Jesus values.

Discussion Questions

1. What decisions were the hardest for you during the Pandemic?
2. How were your values challenged during the Pandemic?
3. How did the Pandemic impact your faith?
4. How are you learning to cope with tough decisions post-pandemic?
5. Have your values changed since the Pandemic? If so, how?
6. Where do you see God in your questions and struggles?
7. How hard do you find it to put your values first?
8. The story tells us that Jesus was “led by the Spirit.” What can make it hard to trust that you are being led by that same Spirit?
9. What does it mean for you that no matter what you experience, Jesus has been there ahead of you and is with you now?

Activity Suggestions

Take a day during the week. Jot down each time you have a decision to make. At the end of the day, reflect on the decisions you chose and how those decisions reflect you as a person and your values.

Take some time to have an intentional conversation with a trusted friend. Talk about a time where the decision seemed impossible. What got you through? Were you happy with the outcome? Let the conversation flow naturally.

Write down the things that you value the most in these three aspects of your life: faith, friends, family. Where do you see similarities/differences, how can you continue to nurture each of these spaces? Which areas can you see your values changing/evolving the most?

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Vocare Practice

Reflect upon how you are being **called to values**

- What do I value?
- How have I lived my values today?
- How have my values been in conflict today?
- What do I need for tomorrow?

Prayer Concerns

Those facing difficult decisions with limited or no guidance, those who face “no good choice,” and those who feel alone in the wilderness

Closing Prayer

Lead me by your Spirit, O God, to value what you value. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

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