



Unfinished: Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet Lent 4

Called to Attentiveness

Warm-up Question

When have you looked at something, looked away, and then looked back again, only to see something that you did not see the first time?



Photo by [Marc Wieland](#) 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 in collaboration with 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!

The man called Jesus

Read [John 3:1-17](#)

Bible Story Reflection

We probably don't have to turn to far to find a "he said, she said" scenario in both our personal lives and in the public square. As human beings, we are easily influenced by the words and rumors of others, especially when there is something inside of us that wants to believe that a particular something is true. Growing up in a generation with technology at my fingertips, I found that as I hit my middle school and high school years, I was getting most of my information from two sources – social media and what friends would tell me. To say that this didn't influence my way of thinking would certainly not be true, and it really did impact my life and my place in society.

Sometimes it seems as though we are stuck between a rock in a hard place when it comes to figuring out what to believe about a particular circumstance. Do we believe someone's words, or do we believe their actions? Which captures and holds our attention more? We can also wonder the same things about our faith. What captures and holds our attention? I know for a fact if someone came up to me and told me that a random man rubbed dirt on their eyes and they were able to see again, I certainly would have a hard time believing them. First, I would be suspicious and wonder if they really could not see in the first place, and second, I would be concerned for their mental well-being. Where would we be inclined to focus our attention in such an experience, and is there more than one right answer to that question?

And what about in our own lives of faith? Where do we direct our attention? In this story, the more that the man who was given sight tells his story, the more it becomes about Jesus, and the less it becomes about him. The more his attention is focused on Jesus, the less his attention is distracted by what others are saying and doing. It is not a "he said, she said" kind of story. Instead, it becomes a "here's-what-Jesus-did-and-who-Jesus-is-story." There is good wisdom there for all of us. The center of our faith is Jesus, and that is what, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, captures and holds our attention.

Discussion Questions

1. How can clouds be a metaphor for this reading in John?
2. How do you typically respond to others who share their faith story?
3. Do you ever find yourself questioning the faith story of others? If so, what is this about for you?
4. How easy is it for you to tell your faith story?

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5. Have you ever had your faith story questioned? If so, what was this like for you?
6. How has your faith story changed throughout your life? What has impacted that change?
7. What kinds of things pull your attention away from Jesus?
8. How can you challenge yourself to be captured by Jesus this week?

Activity Suggestions

In a group, play a game of telephone. Make it difficult. How does this idea of “he said, she said” compare to the story in John? Where did it go wrong? Where did it go right? What capture the attention of the people in the group?

Find some time on a sunny day to go outside and cloud-gaze with a friend. What do you see? What does your friend see? How does what you see change the longer that you look at the sky? How does what you each see change by what the other sees?

Write your faith story, and share it with a friend or family member. As you write, think about the difference between telling God’s story about you and your story about God.

Vocare Practice

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

- How do I typically decide where I invest my attention?
- What captured and held my attention today?
- Where do I wish I could have invested my attention today?
- Did my attention align with my values?
- What do I need for tomorrow?

Prayer Concerns

Those who cannot see who Jesus is, those who struggle with their faith story, ecumenical dialogue that holds space for stories different from our own

Closing Prayer

Turn my attention to you, O God, that I might recognize you at work in my life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

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