## Session 3. Called *as* We Are

**Supplies Needed**

* Leader: Chapter 3 in *The Stories We Live*
* Participants: *The Stories We Live.* Kathleen Cahalan. Eerdmans, 2017.
* Paper and pens for the “Chapters of Life” activity

#### Opening Prayer (2 mins)

Welcome group members by name, and invite them to make a nametag. As you begin, invite the group into a time of silent centering. Conclude the silence with this prayer or another of your choosing.

***Generous and loving God,  
Blow through us, that we might sense your presence.  
Wrestle with us, that we might discern your path.  
Love us, that we might become who you call us to be.  
  
Generous and loving God,  
help us to receive your call for us,  
help us to feel your presence with us,  
help us to discern the path you would have us follow. Amen.***

#### Part 1. Introduction (3 mins)

Introduce the concept of *called as we* *are* using this information from Kathleen Cahalan:

God calls you as the person you are in the particularities of your life. You can only live out your vocation as the person you are; I can only become the person I am called to be in the context of my life. God’s call to you is not a generic calling, but is specific to your time in life and place in the history of the world. Vocation is God’s call to your life’s particularities as you know them, that which is a given in your life (gender, family, ethnicity, time in history) and what you can make of it (education, opportunities, relationships). Even your understanding of faith, vocation, and God arise from these contexts. You have been given this life, and you have to discover God’s call *as* you are. (p. 32)

Vocation is not reserved for a select group of people, a particular lifestyle, or certain types of work. Vocation is about the whole of your life, your whole life long. How was God calling you as an infant or child? And now, how might God’s call relate to your development as youth, young adult, adult, and older adult? (p. 33)

We develop in two ways: First you become a person, with a sense of who you are, through relationships with others; through in-between-ness of relationships, you construct yourself. Making meaning is the central way in which you form a sense of self, identity, and purpose.

The second way you develop is obvious: you change over time. You make transitions over the course of your development which require you to make new meaning from experience. Transitions disrupt your sense of self. Life is motion, and the motion of development requires you to make meaning with each new life phase. The way in which you negotiate each transition in the life span can determine how well or how poorly you live into the new situation. (p. 34)

Vocation, then, is Christian meaning making. It refers to the ways we “take in,” construct, reconstruct, critique, and identify what is significant in relationship to God and others. God’s call comes to use from birth till the end of our days in multiple and varied ways. You experience God’s call anew through particular developmental tasks that emerge in each part of the life span. (p. 36)

#### Part 2. Explore: Chapters of Life (15 mins)

Introduce the activity by saying:

God’s callings are multiple and varied in your life, emerging in different ways, given your age and the life tasks you task. Vocation is not static or linear, but dynamic, sometimes fluid and at other times more stable. It is complex and multifaceted and is not determined once and for all in your life. Across the life span, God calls us as infants to gaze and behold, as children to play, as youth to begin exploring identity, as young adults to ask big questions and dream big dreams, as adults to love and work, in later stages of adulthood to step back and then step back in, and in elder years to give and to let go.

Invite the participants to image their life as the chapters in a book that is still being written. Using the chapters imagery, ask them to name the key chapters in their life that reflect stages—as a child, teenager, young adult, midlife adult, mature adult, older adult—and the transitions in their life—growing up, education and graduations, first job, changing career, first house/apartment, marriage, becoming a parent, raising children, becoming a grandparent, retirement, and more.

Ask the participants to give each chapter a descriptive title that names their experience of calling and vocation at the stage or transition. For example: “Living into the call and challenges of being a parent” or “Embracing the joy of being a grandparent” or “Starting a new job.” Give them examples from your own life so they can see how the activity works in practice.

Give each person time to complete their “Chapters of Life” activity.

#### Part 3 (Optional). Video Reflection: Mark Berkson (15 mins)

Video:

Show the video “Mark Berkson” from the “Lives Explored” video project (8 mins). Thumb drives with the videos are available from the adult ministries office. Alternatively, you can find the YouTube video at [bit.ly/MBerkson](http://bit.ly/MBerkson).

Reflect:

After the video, invite reflections using some of the following questions:

* **What did you notice about Mark’s story? What struck you as significant, beautiful or important?**
* **How does Mark’s story connect with the idea of being called “as we are” in the midst of life and over time?**

#### Part 3. Reflect: Callings Over Time (15 mins)

Ask people to reflect on how they experienced God’s calling in the different chapters of their life and how they have seen God’s callings and their vocation emerge at different stages of their life. Conclude their reflection with: ***How do you experience God’s callings at this age in your life?***

Form pairs or triads, and invite people to share their insights how God’s callings and their vocation emerged at different stages of their life, and how they are experiencing God’s calling today.

#### Part 4. Conclusion (8-10 mins)

Invite people to share summary insights about what they learned about callings and vocation from their own life story.

#### Closing Prayer

Close with this prayer, or another of your choosing.

***As I adventure with you today  
 be the compass that guides me,  
 the light that shines on my path,  
 the only one I follow.  
As I adventure with you today  
 be the word that encourages,  
 the hand that reaches out,  
 each time I stumble  
As I adventure with you today  
 let me glimpse our destination,  
 and appreciate the places  
 through which you lead me.   
As I adventure with you today,  
 be the strength I need to follow,  
 and as the day draws to a close  
 let me rest in your embrace. Amen.***  
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