



What does it mean to join God's calling community?

Through Jesus, God summons us out of mere 'self' and into His glorious, calling community – the Church. This term we're learning how to respond together to God's call upon each of our lives.

1	The Calling Community of God	Genesis 1-3
2	The Calling of Jesus	Luke 3
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4	Called out of Ourselves	Acts 9
5	Called out of Chaos	Colossians 3
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Term 4 Growth Group Booklet



**MANLY-LOTA
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
Growing Followers of Jesus

‘God’s Calling Community’: What’s it all about?

‘God’s Calling Community’ is a Bible series running for 9 weeks in term 4 of 2019. It’s a series about the church. God’s church. The ‘bride of Christ’. In fancy theological terms we could say it’s a teaching series on ‘ecclesiology’ – about what it means to gather as His chosen people.

In our Presbyterian church heritage, we’ve rightly talked a lot about what it means for Jesus Christ to call us *out of sin*. But we’ve possibly not talked enough about what it means for Christ to call us *into God’s Church*. Out of sin, and into the Church. Out of isolation, and into connection. Out of aloneness, and into community. We’ve not talked enough about being called out of ourselves and called back into ‘God’s calling community.’

The Bible actually begins with God’s original ‘Calling Community’ – a community of the one, true God in perfect loving relationship: in His 3 persons, Father, Son and Spirit. So this series begins in the beginning. Where we see this relational God create all of humanity to be in His likeness. To be relational: to live, grow and flourish within the well-ordered, right and blessed relationships of His original calling community. But we’ll see how through Adam and Eve we fall into mere self. That’s talk 1. From there, we’ll see how God calls us back into community with Him and with each other, through the calling of His Son, the Lord Jesus (talk 2). Then we’ll see Jesus calling Saul, calling other disciples, calling us and calling others (talk 3). From talk 4 we’ll see Christ calls us out of ourselves, out of chaos (talk 5), out of impurity (6), into belonging (7), out of deception and into truth (8) and ultimately out of frustration and into glory (9).

This series has been written by 4 fellow pastors at Presbyterian Churches in Biloela (Andrew Purcell), Manly-Lota (Jeff Keighley), Brad Dewson (Goondiwindi) and David Bailey (Warwick). We’re also brothers in Christ, and good mates. We hope you enjoy.

Getting the most out of this series

There are a couple of simple things you can do to get the most out of this series; some ‘daily disciplines’ if you like, of memorising and reading Scripture.

Memorise the key verse from last Sunday and **read** the passage of Scripture each day from the coming Sunday. Here’s an example of the daily disciplines from week 5:

Week 5 Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Colossians 3:15 (week 4’s key verse)

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4

That’s part of course of good habits for growing as a follower of Jesus.

- 1) Hear the Bible talk in church every Sunday
- 2) Getting to Bible Study
- 3) Meditating on God’s Word – memorise, read and re-read, etc etc.

1. The Calling Community of God



Reflecting on the Trinity, CS Lewis says: "The words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love." Discuss.

What are some implications for us of the one, true creator being in very nature a community of 3 persons?



READ: Genesis 1:1-31

1. **When we listen to verses 1-25 we hear a lot of patterns. What patterns do you notice in these first 5 days of creation? (What does God do, what happens, and what does He see?)**
2. **On the sixth day of creation, the patterns reach a surprising crescendo. What do verses 26-28 tell us about God? About us?**

READ: Genesis 2:15-25

3. **What are some patterns of Adam here, that mirror the patterns of God in chapter 1?**
4. **What is the only thing called 'not good' in the Garden of Eden? (v.18)**
5. **What was distinctive about the first human community: Adam, his wife and the Lord God? (v.25)**

READ: Genesis 3:1-20

6. **What is ironic about the serpent's promise to Adam and Eve in verse 5?**



7. Look at some of the 'action' words in verses 6-8 (*saw, desired, took, ate* and *hid*). What are some examples from our own life, where we see this pattern at work?

8. Discuss what happens from verse 7. What are some of the 'not good' results for human community, as a result of Adam and Eve's falling out of God's community?
9. What did God say to the serpent that planted a seed of hope for Adam and Eve, and all of fallen human community? (verse 15) Where in the Biblical story does that hope blossom? (See Colossians 1:15-23)

BIG IDEA: The God of community calls forth a people made to build community, but Adam falls into mere self. Yet God promises another Son to bring the children of Adam back into His calling community.



In the Old Testament, Eve is the bride of the first Adam and the mother 'of all the living' (Genesis 3:20). In the New Testament, the Church is the bride of Christ (the 'second Adam') who provides the home for all of us called back into God's community.

Use the space below to list 3 people you would love to join our church. Pray for each one to hear Jesus call them out of mere self, and back into 'God's Calling Community'.

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Genesis 1:26

Read: Luke 3

2. The Calling of Jesus



Think of a 'stand-out' performer in any 'crowd' (whether it's in sport, business, or politics... or something else.) What is it that makes them stand out? How do people tend to respond and relate to them?

Here we're going to consider how one 'stand-out' performer gets us out of the crowd and into true community.



READ: Luke 3:1-38

1. Why are the crowds being baptised by John? What do you think he is calling them to? (verse 3, verses 8-9)
2. What are the crowds and various groups (like tax collectors, soldiers) wanting from John (3:10)?
3. The people's expectation is that John is perhaps the Messiah: The One to restore the life and community that has been destroyed by sinful selfishness. John explains that he's just a forerunner - One is coming after him who will do it: enter Jesus! Why then is Jesus, of all people, baptised along with the crowds (3:21)? What is this act saying of him?
4. What is the significance for Jesus (and for the crowds present at his baptism) of the voice from heaven and the dove landing on him (3:22)? What might this be saying about Jesus' calling?
5. What point do you think Luke is making about Jesus, by putting his genealogy straight after his baptism and the declaration by God of Jesus' Sonship? (Hint: Look at where the genealogy ends...)

READ: Luke 4:1-15

6. Think back to last week. What happened last time a son of God faced the devil? What is the devil calling Jesus to be?

7. What really makes Jesus stand out? What might his success against the devil's temptation mean for God's calling of Jesus?



8. What have these passages done for your appreciation of Jesus? What are some things that perhaps you've never considered about his calling, baptism and temptation?

9. What does Jesus' success mean for us? What hope does that give us that God's vision of community is being restored?

10. Given that Jesus stands out from the crowd, what should our response to Jesus be (cf. 4:14-15)? What implications might this mean for our attempts to try and build community our way?

BIG IDEA: God calls his Son to enter our aloneness and - by his Spirit -begin his ministry of calling forth a new community.



Spend time praying together. List some prayer points that come to you after reflecting on today's passage.

Praise:

Confession:

Thanks:

Request:

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Luke 3:38

Read: Acts 2

3. Jesus Calling Us



Called to dinner. Called to get in the car. Called to play on the soccer or netball team. Called for opening presents at Christmas. Thinking back to your childhood, what are some ways you were called to join others, and for what purposes?



READ: Acts 2:1-13

1. Who is it that were “all together in one place” (v.1), and what feast were they celebrating?
2. What happens to those in the house? (Note Luke’s use of the words “like” and “seemed”)
3. What is the response of the God-fearing Jews who were visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost? What was **VISIBLE** and **AUDIBLE** that had them “amazed and perplexed”?
4. Describe this event in your own words. What is the Holy Spirit doing?

READ: Acts 2:14-36

5. What is Peter’s advice to his fellow Jews concerning what he’s about to tell them? (v.14)
6. The prophet Joel had forecast a particular time in history which Peter says has now arrived – what are the things to note about this time? (esp. v.21)
7. God had also spoken to King David about a time in the future where one of his descendants would sit on his throne, and that his reign would last forever (see 2 Samuel 7:13). How does Jesus fulfil this prophecy and promise?
8. How is the risen Lord Jesus, who reigns eternally over God’s kingdom, responsible for what these people have just witnessed at Pentecost? (esp. vv.32-33)

READ: Acts 2: 37-41

9. How does Peter convict the crowd of their sins? What’s their response (v.37)?

10. What is Peter's solution to their predicament and who is this available to? (How does this align with what Joel prophesied in verse 21?)
11. Who does this "call of God" go out to? (v.39)
12. Once you hear the call of God, who does the responsibility for your salvation rest with? (v.40-41). Explain your answer – c.f. Hebrews 4:12-16

READ: Acts 2: 42-47

13. Following Peter's explanation that day, many people responded to Jesus' call on their lives. What did they devote themselves to, and would this be appropriate for us today?
14. What did this new Christian community 'continue' to do, what did they 'enjoy' and who did they 'praise'? (vv.46-47)



15. How have you responded to God's call on your life? How can you better contribute to the life of your church family?

16. How are followers of Jesus 'involved' in the calling process? What part do we play as Christians today?

BIG IDEA: By His Holy Spirit the risen, present Lord Jesus is calling people from all places and all generations together into God's ultimate, true and eternal community.

Pray for many others in our region to repent of their sins and join us in God's Calling Community.



Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Acts 2:38-39

Read: Acts 9

4. Called out of Ourselves



Share what struck you from church on Sunday. What did we learn?

READ: Acts 9:1-19

1. Who does Jesus say that Saul is persecuting? What does this imply about the Church?



2. In verses 13 and 14 Ananias gives an objection to Jesus' directive to go to Saul. What is comforting and what is confronting about Jesus' response in verses 15 and 16?

3. We are told in verse 19 that Saul is strengthened by taking some food, but what are the other ways the disciples in Damascus strengthen Saul? (verses 17-19)

READ: Saul's account of his conversion in Acts 22:1-16.

(Pay particular attention to what Ananias says to Saul in verses 14 and 15)

4. What is 'good' about the news Ananias tells Saul in verses 14 and 15? What aspects of the Good News does he convey?

READ: 2 Corinthians 6:3-13

5. What is the cost of Saul's (Paul's) affection not being withheld? What are some of the costs we are called to pay, in order to open wide our hearts in love?



6. We all struggle against the condition of 'being curved in on ourselves' (Martin Luther's *Homo Incurvatus In Se*). Can you identify the particular areas of your life that cause you to 'turn in on yourself'? What would be some practical steps for you to take, to heed Jesus' call 'out of yourself'?

BIG IDEA: Jesus calls Saul and Ananias out of themselves, and to see their place in God's church through suffering and discomfort. Saul, with the help of Ananias, is now called to become the apostle to the nations.



Choose one of the following challenges. Share how you would like to pray about this over the next week. When everyone has shared, pray together for each other.

- a. How might we show that we value the church just as much as Jesus does?**

- b. How can you and your fellow disciples seek to strengthen the faith of others?**

- c. What is one way you can step across the threshold of discomfort and embrace the costly love of others?**

- d. Highlight a particular way you can seek Jesus about what he is calling you 'out of' and what he is calling you 'up into'.**

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Acts 9:15-16

Read: Colossians 3

5. Called out of Chaos



Many of us didn't grow up in peaceful human family. Some of us have known nothing but chaos in our family. What would be some characteristics of a relationally healthy, peaceful family?



READ: Colossians 1:1-2

1. How does Paul describe the church in Colossae? Who are they to each other? Who is God to them?

READ: Colossians 3:1-17

2. In verses 1-4 Paul twice commands them about 'things above.' What is this command and who is called to obey it?
3. Paul also gives the reason for this command: 3 events in history we are connected with. What are they and how have we been connected with them? (Hint, look for the 'with' words)
4. Discuss verses 5-9 together. What are some unhealthy ways we used to walk in, that we are now called out of? What habits are we to be rid of? What must we 'put to death'? Share how those things cause chaos in relationships.
5. In verse 10 Paul shows us that when we believed in Jesus we have 'put on the new self'... been 'renewed'. Thinking back to week 1 of this series, in Genesis 1, what are we being 'renewed' in?
6. Paul shows that in Jesus we have been called back into God's calling community: of renewing relationship with Him as our father, and in renewing relationships with each other, as brothers and sisters. We are God's 'renewed' family! From verse 11, who is now 'in us', regardless of our background?

7. In verses 12-14 what new behaviours must we learn together? Why?
8. As new members of God's church family, Paul says we are now 'one body'. What are we 'called to' in verse 15? What are to 'let' happen?
9. We began this study recognising that God is the Father of this new family. How does verse 17 end?



10. What new, healthy ways of relating are noticeable in your church family? Where do you see peace where there could be chaos?

11. Describe (but not name) one lingering relationship you have in our church family, that needs renewing. What new behaviour can you personally begin to practice, to help respond to our calling to peace?
12. Transformation in our lives begins when we realise what God has called us out from, and called us up in. As you set your heart and mind on things above, what is one habit/practice/behaviour in your life that now needs transforming? Share and discuss.

BIG IDEA: Jesus calls us out of lives of chaos in which we once lived, and up into His life of peace within His body, the church.



Pray for renewal of your brother or sister sitting next to you, 'in the image of the Creator'. Pray specifically for the precious things they have shared today, from the story of their lives. Pray for our church family to respond to God calling us up and into a community of peace.

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Colossians 3:15

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4

6. Called out of Impurity



"Lord, grant me chastity and continence; but not yet!" prayed Augustine of Hippo. He was famously converted when God answered his prayer, calling him out of a life of immorality and up into a holy life, through faith in Jesus Christ. But his prayer captures something of our own sinfulness. We want what God offers... but we just like sin so much. To start, take a moment to reflect and then share about a couple of sins you really like.



READ: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

1. Paul urges the Thessalonian Christians to live in a way that pleases God (v.1) Where did they learn this way of living and why do it?
2. Is living to please God or "holy living" a one-off thing? Do we ever "make the grade"?
3. It's clear (from verse 3) that God's will for us is that we become more and more holy, and that what God has done in us through Christ will affect our behaviour. A key area he transforms is our sexuality. When you scan through verse 3-6 what have we been "called out of"?
4. What have we been "called to"?
5. How might we "wrong" someone or "take advantage" of them through sexual immorality (v.6)? Why is this such a serious thing (vv. 6, 8)?
6. Paul's talk about "brotherly love" or love for one another (from verse 9 onward) feels a little unconnected. But how might it relate to the topic of holiness? When you think about what Paul is calling us into, what are we being "called out of"?
7. Why are we called to this love for one another (v.12)?



8. We often make a connection in our thinking, between “impurity” and what we do sexually with our bodies. In our church, do we think about “brotherly and sisterly love”, working so we can care for others, as a big feature of the holiness we’re called to? Talk about why or why not. How can this become more of our church family culture?

9. How might heeding the call to “brotherly love” help with the call to self-control of the body in v.4?

10. Think about verse 6 and the warning of Lord’s judgment on those who ignore what he ‘calls us to’. Can you think of ways in which this judgment is seen in our present life, when we ignore the call to self-control? How might heeding this call to purity be good for us and our community?

BIG IDEA: Jesus calls us out of lives of impurity and up into a life of holiness together, urging each other to please God in how we love and honour him more and more.



Which part of this chapter raised issues for you:

1) Where in your life would you prefer not to be holy?

2) Where has Jesus already been purifying you?

Pray together, about both of these things.

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: 1 Thessalonians 4:7

Read: 1 Corinthians 1

7. Called to Belong



Thinking back on your life, when have you most felt like you 'belonged'? When did you most feel you didn't belong?



READ: Romans 1:1-7

1. Paul reminds us WHO Jesus is. What does he specifically tell us about Jesus in verses 1-4?

2. Who are WE in relation to Jesus?

3. What did Paul and his co-workers receive from Jesus, and for what purpose?

4. What are the Roman Christians called to (v.6)?



5. What do you think it might mean for you to be called to belong to Jesus?

READ: Romans 1:18-32

6. What kind of community and lifestyle is Paul calling the Gentiles to 'come out of' in order to belong to Jesus? How closely do these words describe the wider community that you live and work in?

7. According to Ephesians 2:1-3 we all used to live like this. How does Paul encourage us to change/be transformed so that we no longer live this way? (see esp. Romans 1:16-17)



READ: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

8. What does Jesus call his people to be – and who is included in this? (v.2)

9. In giving our lives to Jesus, what do we now have?

10. In verses 8 & 9 what is God's promise to 'those in Christ' regarding our fellowship with Jesus? If everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus is in fellowship with him, what should our relationship with each other look like? (see also 1 Corinthians 1:10)



11. Which parts of your life can you see the Lord Jesus wanting to change and transform in you? (Are you resisting these changes, or allowing the Spirit of Holiness to do His work?)

12. In what ways have you seen the power of the Lord Jesus at work in your church? How are you being encouraged at the moment to live better in Jesus' community?

BIG IDEA: Paul compels local churches to be colonies of relational transformation, reminding us that we have already been called by the Lord Jesus to belong to God's calling community, through His Spirit of Holiness.



Pray that our church would be a place of relational transformation, as the Lord Jesus continues to call people out of 'self', and to belong in God's calling community.

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: 1 Corinthians 1:2

Read: Ephesians 4

8. Called to Undeceive



'It's not that it's a better ME that we hope for tomorrow, but a better WE.' Discuss this reflection from church on Sunday. How did you grow? Who did you grow?



READ: Ephesians 1:18-23

1. This is Paul's opening prayer for the church at Ephesus. What is the 'calling' Paul prays they would 'know'?

2. Christians in our culture generally have a very low view of church. But what IS the church, according to God's view? (See verses 22-23). Reflect on this for a minute, for your local church. Do your actions show you value God's church like He does? Why, why not? Share and discuss.

READ: Ephesians 4:1-25

3. In the first 6 verses Paul packs in more 'calling' language (at least 3 mentions). Find them. What does Paul 'urge' and what is our calling?

4. Paul again talks about God's church as 'the body' (verse 4). Together, look for all the 'body language' of this whole passage. How do we grow as individual members of God's church, and how does the church grow?

5. Zoom in on verses 14 and 15. What does 'speaking the truth to each other in love' deliver us from?



6. The words 'speaking the truth in love' are more literally 'truthing in love'. This could also be translated 'undeceiving in love'. What do you think will happen in a healthy church, as we learn to 'undeceive' each other?

7. Sometimes we speak the truth, but without love. At other times we pretend to love, but avoid speaking truth. What is so challenging about speaking the truth in love, and what is so exciting about it?
8. "The Christian life is having the hope that there is maturity." Discuss together. What are some ways we give each other hope?
9. Paul began chapter 4 of his letter to the Ephesian church by 'urging' them. The original ancient word for 'urge' was 'one who walks beside you'. We might say Paul is 'side by side' with his fellow Christians. It's the same word Jesus used in John's gospel when He promised to give His Spirit: quite literally 'the One who walks beside you'. In the last 12 months, how have you let your church 'walk beside you', and who have you been 'walking beside' in our church?

BIG IDEA: The Lord Jesus urges us to weigh our calling, making every effort to 'undeceive' each other into maturity, as He grows us up together in one body, one Spirit and one hope.



Pray to see and to notice where we need to 'undeceive' each other. Ask for courage to speak the truth to your brothers and sisters. Ask for love to speak tenderly in the truth. Pray for the person next to you – asking God to help you see how you can urge them to grow up in Christ together. Write down and share one area you wish to grow in, that you would like your group to pray for you.

Daily Disciplines
Memorise: Philippians 3:17
Read: Romans 8

9. Called to Glory



Frustration. We get frustrated with ourselves, with each other and with the world. We get frustrated with God. How does all this relational frustration take its toll on you? How do you react when you get frustrated? Share and discuss.



READ: Romans 8:18-30

1. What various ways does Paul describe the present frustration of the world God created?
2. For those called to follow Christ, how should we now think of our present sufferings? (See especially verses 17, 23, 26 and 28: how does each verse frame our suffering?)
3. What, for Paul, is not even worth comparing? (Verse 18). What point is he making?
4. Where is God's glory going to be revealed, and who is the whole creation waiting to see? (Verses 18-21)
5. As we suffer in this present life what are we 'eagerly waiting' for? What do you think this will include? How are we to wait for it? (verses 22-25)
6. What do we learn from this passage about the relationship between *groaning* and *hoping* in this life?

About *frustration* and *transformation*?

About the *present* and the *future*?

List some things Paul mentions about the present and future:

Present Experience	Future Experience
<i>Eg. Our Sufferings (v.18)</i>	<i>Eg. Glory revealed in us (v.18)</i>

7. Who 'walks beside us' in our suffering, according to whose will, and to transform us into whose image? (verses 26-29)

8. From our first week in this series (in Genesis 1-3) what 'community' are we being called into?



9. How does our hope for the future together fuel our capacity to live now together, in church?

BIG IDEA: Our present frustration is not worth comparing to the glorious hope Jesus summons in us: our hope to live as transformed people in a transformed community in the transformed new creation.



Reflecting on this whole series of 'God's Calling Community', how has your view of God changed? Praise God in prayer.

How has your understanding of church changed? Confess to God in prayer.

How has God used His church family to help you change? Thank God in prayer.

How would you describe God's calling community now? Ask God in prayer.

Daily Disciplines

Memorise: Romans 8:28

Read: Romans 8

