

February GIFT

God Calls Us Through Scripture

What is your favorite story from the Bible?

Why did you choose this story? What do you like about it?

Does the bible story you chose challenge you? How?

Welcome to February GIFT. This year we have been thinking about how we can hear God calling to us. We thought about how God calls us through prayer, how he calls us through the Mass, how we are called at our baptism, and today we will consider how God calls us through Scripture. To do this, we will take a close look at the Bible and think about how we can read the Bible to help us hear God in our own lives.

The Bible is a collection of stories that tell us who we are – beloved children of God. It tells our story. The bible is a great treasure for understanding God, not only in the history of the ancient Israelites and early Christians, but also in our lives today. The Bible is also a great source of inspiration, comfort, and confidence in our very lives today. And, through hearing these stories, we start to hear how God is calling us in our lives.

Opening Prayer

Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Let us pray:

O God, we thank you for your holy word we find in the Bible. Give us a clear mind and an open heart to learn about the Bible today. For it is “in the sacred books the Father in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them. We pray that you will be with us and help us to hear your call through scripture. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Reader:

A reading from the first book of Samuel:

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” The Word of the Lord

Reflection Questions:

1. Why do you think it took Samuel so long to recognize God’s calling?
2. What do you think your reaction would be if you heard God calling your name?
3. What other ways and times can God speak to us?

Opening Learning Experience

Watch the video and discuss it afterwards.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARdwIWDnE90> (4 minutes)

God did not whisper the words into the ear of the author who dutifully wrote them down. The inspired message of God that we have in the Bible came to us through a long process.

1. It started with **God's inspired message** which is God's message of love for each of us.
2. Then, the people heard the message of God's love in their own lives.
3. Next was something called **Oral Tradition**. God's message was retold over and over generation after generation. Parents told their kids, who told their kids.
4. Later, the inspired message is written down in the form of stories, sayings, songs, gospels, and letters.
5. Finally, we had a **Bible**: the writings are put together into the official "canon" – 73 books that make up the Bible.

By reading the Bible, or listening to stories from the Bible, like we do at Mass, we hear God speaking directly to each of us. Maybe you have had an experience where you hear a bible story, and something sticks out to you right away. That could be God speaking to you through Scripture.

Now, let's do an activity using the Bible.

ACTIVITY 1

Open your Bible to the Table of Contents. See that the Bible is divided into two major sections: The Old Testament and New Testament.

The Old Testament is the sacred Scriptures for the Jewish people, and tells the story of God's relationship with the Israelite people. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus and the early Christians.

The Old Testament begins with the book of Genesis with the story of God creating the earth. The New Testament begins with the Gospel of Matthew, with the story of Jesus

Catholic and Protestant Bibles both include 27 books in the New Testament. Protestant Bibles have only 39 books in the Old Testament, while Catholic Bibles have 46.

Practice looking up a scripture quote

To find a passage in the Bible follow these simple steps:

- a) Scripture references are always listed in the same format:
 - a. name of the **book**, such as "Matthew"
 - b. followed by the **Chapter number**, such as "5:"
 - c. followed by the **verse number**, such as "14"
- b) **Locate the book.** Use your Table of Contents to find the beginning of your desired book.
- c) **Locate the chapter.** Next, page forward to the desired chapter. Notice the relatively large chapter numbers in the text of the Bible.
- d) **Locate the verse.** Notice the small numbers embedded with the words of the text. These numbers designate the verses.

Practice finding Bible passages. Write down the verse indicated. Then write down what God's message might be in this verse.

Write down the verse indicated. Write what is God's message to us in this verse.

Make Up Session hand this sheet in: Name_____

Matthew 5:14

God's message:

Psalm 23:1

God's Message:

John 3:16 _____

A great way to practice looking up Bible verses is to find out what the Sunday readings will be and then look them up in your Bible at home before you come to Mass. Think about the question, what is God's message in this reading? Is there a message for me.

Activity

Bible Questions

Read the Bible passage together, and then write your answers to the “Bible Question.”

Mark 1:16-20 Call of the First Disciples

Bible Question: If Jesus had come during our lifetime and asked you to be a disciple, would you have dropped everything to follow him or would you have felt like you needed to finish your homework or do something else? Do you think Jesus calls disciples now?

Mark 6: 34-44 Feeding of the Five Thousand

Bible Question: How would you have felt if you had been one of the five thousand people fed when Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish? Do you think God calls us now to feed other people? How can we do this? What kinds of things are people hungry for?

Exodus 20:2-3 The First Commandment

Bible Question: How would you explain the commandment to a friend your age? What are some of the other “gods” that we sometimes allow into our lives? Do you think believing in God is a calling?

For the first reading, do you think Jesus calls disciples now? How does he do it?
In the second reading, Jesus feeds people. How can we feed people?
In the third reading, how many would say that believing in God is a calling?

Closing Prayer Service

For our closing prayer, we are going to pray using something called Lectio Divina. This form of prayer might help us to hear how God calls us through scripture. There are several steps to this prayer method and I will explain them as we go along. So, if everyone could just sit comfortably, we will get started.

The first step of the Lectio Divina is to proclaim the Word of God. While you are listening to the reading, choose a word or phrase or verse that touches you personally.

Reader 1: Proclaim Matthew 5:43-48.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger

and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Pause for a minute.

At your tables, share your word or phrase or verse, but don’t discuss it. Just share your word or phrase.

The second step of Lectio is **The Word Speaks to Us. As you listen again to the reading, listen carefully to God’s personal message to you. How might God be speaking to you?**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

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“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Pause for a couple of minutes.

Now share at your tables what you have heard in your hearts. Really try to use only the first person singular (I felt or I heard...).

The third step is **Response**. As you listen to the reading again, think about how you are personally called to respond to the Word. Try to listen for God's voice in the Word and to what God might be saying just to you. How will you answer?

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Pause

Now, each person shares his or her response to the Word. How is your heart calling you to respond? After each person shares, everyone is to respond to each person's sharing by saying AMEN.

Together, pray the prayer Jesus taught us, Our Father...
We close our time of prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

