

YOUNG ADULT EDITION

DEEP CALLING

a **12 week** small group
discipleship journey

Tara J. VinCross, author
T. Jason Vanderlaan, contributing editor

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AdventSource

Published by AdventSource

www.adventsource.org

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ISBN: 978-1-57756-642-7

Printed in the United States of America

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About the Author and Contributing Editor

TARA VINCROSS

Tara J VinCross, DMin, BCC, has spent more than 25 years in full-time ministry. She began in youth and young adult ministry and has stayed closely involved ever since — directing summer programs and planting a young adult church in Philadelphia. She currently serves as Senior Pastor of Azure Hills Church in Grand Terrace, California, where she lives with her husband, Caleb, and their two kids. She has served churches in Washington, Pennsylvania, and California.

Tara is passionate about helping people create space in their lives to become deeply rooted in the love of God and serve the world from their passion and giftedness — a conviction shaped by years of accompanying people through questions of calling, doubt, and belonging. She is the author of the *Deep Calling Discipleship Series*, *Deep Roots* baptismal Bible study guides, and several children's books, including *Sabbath Song: Jesus' Rhythm of Rest*. She and her family enjoy traveling, mission trips, outdoor adventuring, and trying new vegan restaurants. Connect with her at taravincross.com.



T. JASON VANDERLAAN

T. Jason Vanderlaan is a creative leader with 15 years of pastoral experience (including a decade in youth and young adult ministry), and is currently pursuing a MDiv/MSW dual degree at Andrews University. He and his wife, Natanya, have three children, and together they love exploring new places and foods. He enhanced *Deep Calling* with a young adult focus, including discussion prompts, group activities, and devotional challenges.



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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to The Journey

Welcome to the *Deep Calling* discipleship journey for young adults! You have a unique opportunity over these next twelve weeks to make space for the work God desires to do in your life. Thank you for investing your time and energy into this journey!

Many people are looking for easy and immediate answers or solutions. The most radical shift we can make in our understanding of discipleship is to move towards viewing it as a life-long, intentional process. Rather than a quick fix or overnight metamorphosis, discipleship is a journey. We grow daily in relationship to God, in community with others, and in understanding our purpose. There will be ebbs and flows to each of these areas in our lives. There are times your soul will feel so full of life, health, and strength that you can hardly contain the joy. There will be other times when your soul feels dry and your spiritual practice feels devoid of meaning. I experience this, too. This is part of what it means to be a disciple. We yoke ourselves to Jesus and keep pressing forward. As Paul did, we remember to press on toward the goal for which Christ is calling us heavenward (Philippians 3:14). I live for this day and the next one. I am not defined by the past, nor do I live in the past. Yesterday's spirituality and vitality is not life for today.

I want to invite you to experience grace. To hear the Holy Spirit whisper, "Lay down your heavy burden of guilt and feelings of not-enoughness when it comes to your own devotional life or experiencing a deeper relationship with Me." Many of us struggle with devotions and prayer. There is no simple formula to follow or one-size-fits-all answer.

There is *an* answer though. Trust in God's grace on the journey. Walk with the One who loves us deeply and who won't let us go. This is not a cliché, but an expression of reality. The answer is not a plan or a program but a deeply personal God. The answer is not found in right religious practice, but in a growing relationship.

It is tempting to look for "the fix," to seek that one thing that will solve the problem for ourselves and for those we love. Instead of a fix, we are invited to turn again to fix our gaze on Jesus. We are invited on a journey.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This discipleship resource is designed to be flexible and used in a variety of settings. Whether you are journeying through this book on your own or with others, keep in mind that there are three key areas where growth occurs in the life of the disciple: (1) growth in our relationship with God, (2) nurturing relationships with others in community, and (3) developing purpose through witness and service on behalf of others. As you seek these areas of growth, remember that your job is not to force these changes to happen, but rather to create space and opportunity to experience Jesus and respond to the deep calls of God. Each activity or teaching or reflection question is designed to help you connect with Jesus, others, and yourself in a more wholistic and loving way.

The first and last of the twelve weeks are all-day spiritual retreats, and in between are ten weekly guides for hearing and responding to the 8 Calls of God. The basic weekly rhythm is as follows:

- Connecting (Opening Prompts)
- Key Bible Passage
- Main Teaching
- Prayer of the Day
- Reflection Questions
- Personal Challenge during the week
- A final quote to reflect on

Prayerfully and reflectively engage with each section, not as a formula or prescription, but as an invitation to talk with God, build relationships with your community, and fulfill your purpose in the world. We highly recommend doing this journey with at least one trusted friend or mentor, if not a larger community, as the life of a disciple is meant to be lived in connection with others. However, in whatever circumstance you find yourself with this book in your hand, God is with you and will guide you through the process.



THE 8 CALLS OVERVIEW

The heart of this discipleship journey is centered around the 8 Calls of God, through which God develops an experiential relationship with us. They are:

- A Call to **Devotion**... living in a daily rhythm of love.
- A Call to **Prayer**... engaging in conversations with God as a friend.
- A Call to **Rest**... experiencing Sabbath restoration.
- A Call to **Community**... entering into life together.
- A Call to **Healing**... finding wholeness in the midst of our brokenness.
- A Call to **Witness**... discovering our call to own and tell our story.
- A Call to **Serve**... joining Jesus in incarnational ministry and mission.
- A Call to **Bless**... celebrating life with a prophetic voice, speaking what is not as though it were.

As we hear the eight calls of God in our lives, we respond by developing devotional habits. These spiritual disciplines are simple practices that help us make space for God. We immerse ourselves in the presence of God, and God transforms us!

YOUR LIFE AS A YOUNG ADULT

While the experiences and personalities of each young adult vary greatly, there are aspects of life you may find you share in common with your peers. As such, here are some suggestions to guide your journey as you relate to others and yourself.

Emphasize belonging before believing or behaving. Many people are questioning the values and practices they inherited from their childhood upbringing and are seeking to form something authentic for themselves. Give yourself space to explore this, knowing you are welcomed and loved by Jesus just as you are.

Prioritize engaging over consuming. Knowing information is good, but it is useless apart from doing and being. Rather than simply consuming spiritual content, you can only grow if you also put it into practice. Listen, but also ask questions, explore, be curious, and take action! The more you engage in the process of creating space for God and responding to God's calls, the more you will experience growth and transformation and purpose in your own life.

Remember growth comes in stages. Not everyone will be at the same point in their spiritual journey. You may have been raised in a Christian family or you may be new to the faith. Both pathways come with unique strengths and challenges, and there is a spectrum of possibilities in between. Be open to how the Spirit is moving now, in your life and the lives of those around you.

Consider your whole person. While we often think of discipleship as just focusing on the "spiritual" life of a person, in reality, it is a holistic journey.

You may be facing big decisions about relationships, education, and your career. Bring each and every aspect of your life into this process and into your relationship with Jesus.

This journey isn't about getting all the answers or figuring out how to be more religious or have an easier life. It is about a daily, lifelong journey with Jesus. Some weeks will feel exciting and inspiring; other weeks may feel difficult or discouraging. Keep showing up. Keep making space to connect with God's presence. God is with you and God will not fail to finish the good work Jesus began in you (Philippians 1:6).

Welcome to the journey. May you experience more of God in these next weeks (and for the rest of your life) than you can even ask or imagine now (Ephesians 3:20). Amen.



WEEK 1 |
Opening
Retreat



Opening Discipleship Retreat (9am - 5pm)*

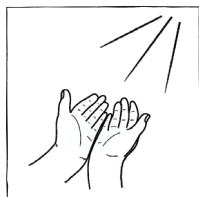
Learning to Hear God's Voice

9:00 - 9:30am	Welcome, Opening Prayer, Worship Songs, Orientation
9:30 - 10:00am	Session 1: Cultivating Quietness - Listening to God <i>Psalm 46:10. Why were you drawn to this journey?</i>
10:00 - 10:45am	Ground Rules, Spiritual Companions, Small Groups
10:45 - 11:00am	Morning Break
11:00 - 11:45am	Session 2: The Still, Small Voice <i>1 Kings 19:3-15</i>
11:45 - 12:15pm	Small group time <i>What did God speak to you?</i>
12:15 - 1:15pm	Lunch
1:15 - 2:00pm	Session 3: Hearing God in the Word <i>James 1:21-25</i>
2:00 - 2:30pm	Small group time <i>What was God speaking to you?</i>
2:30 - 2:45pm	Afternoon Break
2:45 - 4:00pm	Where does God want to take you from here? <i>In this art room, using whatever supplies you want to use, I invite you to answer this question about where God is leading you on this journey.</i>
4:00 - 5:00pm	Group closing time <i>What would you like this group to pray for you about?</i> <i>Prayer for one another and anointing</i>

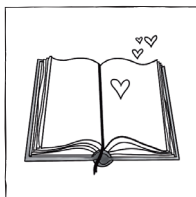
PRAYERS AND DRAWINGS, DOODLES AND REFLECTIONS

RETREAT SESSION 1:

CULTIVATING QUIETNESS - LISTENING TO GOD



call to prayer



call to devotion
