

COMING SOON!

m95



Small Group Discussion Questions
Genesis 1:26-31

1. What vocations do you think of when you hear of someone being “called?” Why? Who is someone of whom you have said, “He or she has found his or her true calling?” What makes us say that about someone? Describe the extent to which it is true of you.
2. In vv. 26-27, what activity of God is emphasized? What does it mean to you personally that you are created by God, in the image of God? In what ways does that suggest purpose? During Week 2 of this series, we considered the things God gave Adam and Eve to do in v. 28; review them now. How is this also our call?
3. Based on your answers to the preceding two questions, work with your group to develop a definition of “call.” Who does the calling, who receives a call, what sorts of things are people called to, what is the significance of being called? How does call relate to purpose and meaning?
4. In Week 2 you considered your God-given abilities and the things you love to do. Business executive Bonnie Wurzbacher describes those as “can do” and “want to” aspects of call (Visit http://www.peachtreepres.org/web/AD_TeachingLibrary.aspx and select the “Word Before Work” series for an audio file of her teaching). Bonnie adds an important third aspect of call: “led to.” When have you experienced God’s leading you to do something? How did you respond? What can make it hard to hear God’s call? What in your life might make it hard to follow where he is leading?
5. Bonnie draws a distinction between finding meaning in work (or finding “meaningful” work) and bringing meaning to work. What is the difference? What are examples of work, or other ways you might spend your time, that you would describe as “meaningful?” How might all work, though, glorify God and have meaning? How specifically do you, or might you, glorify God in what you do all week?
6. How does this passage speak specifically to your life? What will you do as a result?

Close your time praying for one another.

Challenge for the week: Draw a time line and identify on it major events, important relationships, and turning points in your life. Note points at which you were aware of God leading you. Note points at which you looked back and saw how God had led you there. Ask him to continue to lead you and to help you hear his call.



Week 4: Tuesday

Practicing the Presence

Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws (Psalm 119:64).

I've been planning to introduce this person to you since the "my95" series began. I've been stalling, waiting for the right moment, the right day. Now that the "my95" series is nearly over it's clear to me that there won't be a right moment, or that there's wisdom in the familiar "no time like the present." So here's my introduction.

He is known to us simply as Brother Lawrence. We know very little about him. He was born Nicholas Herman in Lorraine, served for a time in the military, became a Christian at the age of 18, and then at some point entered a Carmelite monastery near Paris. This obscure monk gave us one of the classic pieces of Christian literature, a work that remains in print to this day. First published in 1693, Brother Lawrence's The Practice of the Presence of God is a gift to followers of Jesus, especially those seeking to understand their ordinary daily life as an arena for God's activity.

Brother Lawrence worked in the monastery kitchen, and the discipline of "Practicing the Presence" allowed him to keep company with God at his labors just as intimately as in the chapel service or in his private devotions. Lawrence wrote

It is not needful always to be in church to be with God. We can make a chapel of our heart, to which we can from time to time withdraw to have gentle, humble, loving communion with him. Everyone is able to have these familiar conversations with God, some more, some less – he knows our capabilities. Perhaps he only waits for us to make one whole hearted resolve.

A little over three hundred years ago, a Carmelite cook was writing about "my95." In many ways his book could be a resource for us in our own efforts to live a whole life of faith. If nothing else, this much is obvious: the presence of God can be practiced.

Maybe we can go a step further. Not only can the presence of God be practiced, it must be – or we'll never grasp the heart of "my95."

Any endeavor in which excellence is displayed – singing, acting, golfing, teaching, surgery, cabinet building – all demonstrations of excellence are buttressed by a repetition

of basic skills. Those who work and perform with excellence have practiced. They have executed certain behaviors over and over and over again.

If we want to live our faith effectively in the marketplace, if we want to partner with God in the daily tasks of our lives, we will need to practice the presence of God.

For Lawrence this meant a deliberate focus of thought on God. We're not monks, and the demands of your mini-van or office are far from a cloistered life, but you can practice God's presence.

You practice praying for a coworker, or praying before a meeting. You practice being a thankful person. You commit a piece of scripture to memory. You make yourself turn off the radio for those last minutes of your commute, entering the closest thing you can find to silence.

The possibilities are many – but the practice is yours alone to carry out. Lawrence was probably right. God is waiting for us to give it a try. He promises to be present.

Prayer:

As this day begins, O God, I invite you to be present with me. I pray for the help of your spirit that I might be present to you. Teach me what it means to practice your presence in the details of my life. Amen.

Devotionals by Dr. Mark Crumpler
Associate Pastor, Peachtree Presbyterian Church



Devotionals

Week 4: Thursday

Minus 95

This is what the Lord Almighty says to all those I carried into exile . . . Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce . . . seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile (Jeremiah 29: 4-7).

Let's do the math again.

A small percentage of your week is spent in church. Whatever that percentage might be, it is certainly well spent, but it's a small percentage no matter how you slice it. We're calling it the 5%.

That leaves 95% of your week spent doing other things. The life of faith finds true expression in that 95%. At work, at home, at leisure, whatever a typical week involves – that's where you live the Jesus way. Following Jesus happens in the 95.

But what happens when the 95 is lost?

Of course, literally speaking, the time on the clock that makes up your 95 can't be lost. But sometimes the life you've known, the activities and endeavors that define your 95 can seem to vanish. Here one week, gone the next.

What happens to your 95 when you've lost your job? What happens to your 95 when you lose a marriage? What happens to your 95 when you lose the physical capacity to do the things you've always enjoyed doing? What happens to your 95 when your spouse slowly loses the memory of the life you've shared?

There's a biblical word that captures this kind of experience. The word is "exile." God's people went through a period of exile and this experience is told in different places in the Hebrew Scriptures. The essence of exile is dislocation. Everything that has defined life – the large piece we're calling "my95" – is taken away.

To be in exile is to lose your place, your people, your practices of worship and play. Whatever it is that makes you "you" is gone.

In Jeremiah 29 we read about two ways of responding to exile that were placed before God's people. On one hand there was a prophet by the name of Shemaiah who basically

encouraged the people by telling them that they would soon get home and things would soon get better. His message was about waiting for the old ways, the old 95, to be restored again.

In contrast there was the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah basically said, don't waste time waiting for the old 95 to come back again. Live your life now. Embrace the 95 God has given you today. Build houses, plant gardens, get married, have babies. Live the life God has given you today, not the life you used to have, not the life you wish you had.

Jeremiah's message was hard to hear, but it had the ring of truth. A truth that's worth hearing when it seems that the 95 you've known is no longer your 95. As difficult as it may be, the life you have today is a life that can bring honor God. You may feel dislocated, lost, bereft of the 95 you worked hard to achieve – but God is with you in the life you have today, in the place where you find yourself right now.

So do the things life demands of you today. If you have a job, go to work. If not, look for work yet another day. Mow your grass. Hug your children. List the errands and get them done. Live the life you have right now. In the simple bravery of living this day, God meets you with grace.

Prayer:

I give you thanks, O God, that life is not defined by my plans and expectations, but by your grace. Give me strength for the simple and ordinary tasks of this day. Remind me that the life I have today comes to me by your hand. Make my heart brave to live it well, and make me thankful in everything this day will bring. Amen.

Devotionals by Dr. Mark Crumpler
Associate Pastor, Peachtree Presbyterian Church

my95 DVD videos



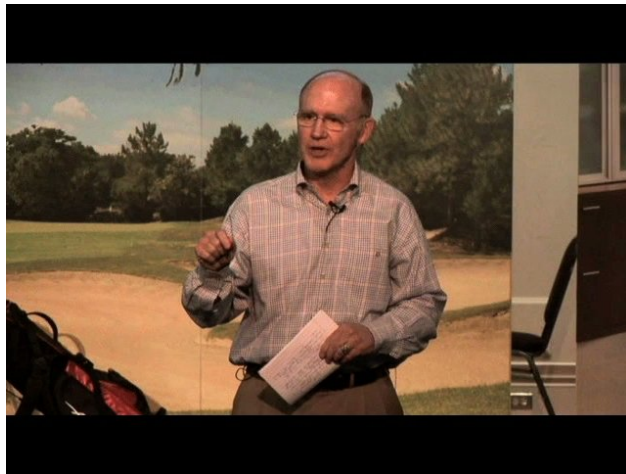
The Event Overview allows *my95* leaders to see the setting and choreography of a *my95* event. This 22-minute piece is a condensed version of a full two-hour session of *my95* already held by a church.



The Event Video is a short piece that appears in the “Partnership” portion of the *my95* event. In the Event Video, individuals describe how they partner with God in their daily lives (*their 95*). You may choose to use the provided video or to create a similar one of your own.



The Promo Video is designed for use in promoting both the *my95* campaign and the program events. As with the other videos, the Promo Video can be used during the campaign or can serve as a sample for a congregation who wants to produce their own.



The *my95* DVD includes two Testimony videos that may be used during the Testimony portions of the *my95* event. While these testimonies are by two members of a particular congregation, they are insightful and can be used during an event or to provide ideas or samples to *my95* leaders.