

# ALL ARE CALLED

By Robert Thompson

If you have a few minutes, grab a cuppa and sit with me a while. If you are a bit like me, sometimes theological questions and discussions can be challenging. I have spent a while exploring some questions and perhaps what I share may resonate with you.

But before we begin let's get comfortable. Grab that biscuit and a hot drink and let's go exploring some aspects of our Enduring Principles.

***God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God's purposes.***

Many would know that I have recently experienced a couple of heart attacks and underwent four operations to repair my heart. Throughout those experiences I have been upheld in prayer by my faith community, friends, neighbours and family. For someone like myself who is usually on the other side of the hospital visit it has been a humbling experience to be the one ministered to. I have been amazingly blessed. Among the many supporters I have a "boys club" that have rallied behind me, Marshall, Peter, Mark, Ben, John, Ian, Adam, Greg, Russell, Cousin David and my dance instructor Kevin Law. They ring me up to check up on me, offer sage advice, brighten my day and remind me

that I am loved. To receive calls, like this from friends, is a gift. Is it overstating things to say it is sharing God's purposes? I don't think so. I feel that it is often the simple things that make the big difference in life. A simple phone call, an email, text, Facebook post... it keeps us connected and whilst it doesn't compare to a kiss on the cheek, in the case of the "boys club" I'm not too fussed about the lack of physical contact. Whatever your gift is, give generously and often.

***Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.***

I have a memory that stands out clearly for me from many years past... We were at a Christmas Family Camp at Koonjearre in Queensland, and a senior minister Ken Robinson was our guest presenter. Back in the day, Ken was helping us to be "invitational in our witness". He presented a class that was both fun and challenging as it helped us understand how we talk about our "Christian Discipleship" with others. He asked each person in the class to develop an "elevator pitch". Basically, it was a short script for sharing our witness of Jesus Christ with someone we didn't know well. Ken asked for a volunteer to share their "elevator pitch" with the group. A beautiful elderly woman in the

class did not hesitate for a moment, her hand shot up, and in no time, she was front and centre ready to tell her story. Away she went with her delivery. She started with sharing about herself and where she had lived, what she had done in her life, she shared about her family and work. We never actually made it to her testimony because the elevator had reached the ground floor, people had exited the building and were by now safely at home in bed. Breathless, her final words were "I made a real mess of that didn't I?" and with that she broke down laughing, which gave us permission to laugh as well. It was a wonderful example of how we can sometimes lose our way when trying to articulate what we believe. It is for good reason we should prioritise "living" the message of Christ. It is also important though to be able to articulate the blessings of God in our lives, the value for us of our belief and commitment to following the message of Jesus Christ. I feel our worship, songs of praise, message/sermons and prayer life offer great opportunity to explore and voice the message of Christ. As a church, our enduring principles steer us to declare our beliefs by way of action, discerning where God is leading us, and discovering those places to live out our discipleship. Together we are called to respond to scriptures like Luke 4: 18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free"

May we be challenged to be invitational in every aspect of our lives, encouraging others to work with us as "change agents" to create God's peaceable kingdom.

***Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.***

I was talking on the phone to a wonderful friend and minister recently Ken Palmer. He has been a minister to me personally all my life and continues to offer a quiet reassurance of the love of God to both myself and my family. We all have people who we look up to as our spiritual guides and mentors. Another long-time mentor of mine has been Roger McLaughlin. Roger is a wonderful example of a person whose Priesthood (lay ministry) has transitioned through different roles, in step with the natural transitions he has experienced as his life journey has unfolded. Each of us whether ordained or not can be a blessing to our community however I am profoundly aware of how a person's individual ministry can be amplified through the blessing of priesthood. I have witnessed miraculous moments as elders offered prayers of healing, miles from medical help and seeing breathing eased and fear pass. The tears of joy that followed are forever etched into my heart and remain as a gentle reminder of the value of intentionally and humbly providing God's ministry to others in the circumstances we find ourselves.

***We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.***

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of our discipleship is where do we go from here, how do we respond to being called of God? After my recent experiences where my heart was held in the hands of a surgeon for an hour and a half, I am now aware more than ever how precious life is. I am reminded that I am a living miracle, and I have overwhelming feelings of gratitude and thankfulness. Our relationship with God, however, is not transactional. God's relationship with each of us is filled with Grace. Love gifted freely and abundantly... not earned or bargained for. We are invited to faithfully respond, born out of Love, and our desire to be authentic in sharing that Love.

I watched a movie during my recovery about the history of the Fab Four, "Eight Days a Week". It was the early years of the historic band "The Beatles". You may have heard of them? When the Beatles toured America, they visited Jacksonville County where segregation between black and white was the norm and the race riots in Jacksonville were dominating world headlines. Early in their American tour, they had written into their performance contracts that they would not perform to an audience where there was government enforced segregation policies. When it came to Jacksonville, they had to stand their ground – using their position of unforeseen influence (4 young people from another country) to make a stand for what was right. Making a stand for what is right and just, means living out our beliefs and principles even when we are going against the tide of what others think – and of what might be easier or more convenient... When our motivation is genuine love of all persons, then what we do, will be God's will.

There have been times over the last months where I have had to draw on some things in my survival kit to help me through the "long night of the soul". Prayer, meditation, music, good literature. Some of the most profound words that have sustained me are "Be still and know that I am God". In the stillness, the place between the notes is where the real music can speak to us. How blessed it is to be upheld in prayer by one another. How powerful it is to share with someone that you love them.

What are we called to? At the very essence of our calling is a calling to love... thoughtful, self-aware, non-transactional love.

So as a refrain just hum this in your head for a bit while you ponder on things deep and meaningful..... all you need is love, all you need is love..... all you need is love, love .....

Love is all you need.

Thanks for spending time with me, let's do it again soon!