# Greater Calling Retreat

## Large and Small Group Guides for a Youth Retreat

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**God called to him from within the bush, *"Moses, Moses!"* And Moses said, *"Here I am."***

## Planning a Youth Gathering

Anyone who has ever tried to plan a youth gathering knows that there is lots involved.

- Location
- Date/Time
- Leaders
- Food
- Activities
- Permission Forms
- Theme
- Scripture Texts
- Lessons
- Questions to get youth thinking

Here is a package to help you with the last four. Feel free to use them however, to fit your situation best.

## Theme

The theme for this retreat is "Greater Calling."

The goal is to get youth to recognize that they are called by God. Called to be disciples of Christ Jesus not because of anything they have done but because of what Christ did for them personally.

## Structure

Provided here are two Large Group Lessons; two Small Group Questions; two Person Devotions for the students as well as a work sheet and a Personal Challenge.

## Scripture

- Exodus 1:22; 2:1-15
- Exodus 3:1-6
- Exodus 3:7-14
- Exodus 4:10-15
- John 10:1-30
- Ephesians 1-6

**Blessings as you plan:**

***Lord God, we thank you for the dedicated ministry leaders who love and care for youth. We entrust their ministries into your loving care. In the name of Jesus. Amen***

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# Greater Calling
# Large Group 1

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

- Before we get into the Word tonight, I want to hear from some of you guys…
  - What are you looking forward to this weekend? What are you excited about?
    - That's awesome!
    - There are so many reasons to be here.
      - Friends… activities… retreat… fun.
      - Some of you have been looking forward to this retreat for a long time.
        - Some… just heard about the retreat this past week.
        - Some of you might be like…. How did I even get here?
          - But the main reason why you're here is because God has called you to be here.
            - Whether you realize it or not, he has called you, and has set this weekend apart to connect with Him and with others.
  - This can be an intimidating notion.
    - I mean, life can be hard to say the least.
    - Things are different on all fronts. And maybe it's been hard to connect with God this past lately.
      - Maybe your Bible has been collecting dust since last fall retreat.
      - Maybe you can't remember the last time you prayed, read His word, or felt his presence.
      - Maybe you've fallen into sin habits that you really just don't want to confess to God.
        - I don't know where you're at coming into this retreat.
        - I don't know how you feel about it.
        - Heck, I don't even know if tomorrow's going to rain all day.

- ➢ But I do know one thing.
- ➢ It is good that we are here.
- ➢ It is good that you specifically are here.
  - ■ How do I know this?
  - ■ Because it's by God's will that we're here now.
    - ● And His Will… is good.

❖ You know before every youth group, retreat, mission trip… I ask that God would bring every student that he wants to be there…. That needs to hear a particular message.

- ➢ Or is in need of that space away from all the distractions of everyday life.
- ➢ I pray that students will say, "yes" to this calling.

❖ And that's what we're really our focus at this retreat.

- ➢ God's greater calling.
  - ▪ And I pray that by the end of this retreat, we would all be more in tune with God's voice and His Word.
  - ▪ I also hope that by the end of the retreat, you would come to know that God's calling in your life isn't just a career choice.
    - But His calling… His will for you is here and now.

❖ But there are certain things that keep us from living into his call, his word, and prompting in our lives.

- ➢ More often than not… we focus on what we call ourselves and what other people call us.
- ➢ What other people call us… what we even call ourselves… these labels end up being louder than what God calls us.

❖ Have you ever walked into a room and placed yourself where you think you belong? Like maybe you walked in and went to the center where your friends are? Or maybe, off along the back wall by yourself? We all tend to put ourselves into different categories.

- ➢ We have formed opinions about ourselves… some high opinions… and something some pretty low ones. And with these opinions, we adapt situations based on our perceived limitations of ourselves, by our personalities, and our experiences so far.
- ➢ I think school is one of those experiences that no matter what you can be forced into a category that plays a part in shaping your identity over time.

        - Maybe you do well and get good grades, you're an average student, a poor student, you join different clubs, athletic teams, or maybe you're the kid that literally does nothing outside of school, you're the "I go home and have no life" kind of person.
            - Even then, you've been placed into a category, you've given yourself a worth or a label.
    - Maybe at home, you're known as the smart one. Or maybe that's your brother or so, by default you feel like the not-so-smart one. Maybe you're known for being the good one or the artistic one or the loud one. And because we spend so much time in our families, we almost always have some kind of label there too,
        - and it's the same with our group of friends.
- The reality is, no matter where we are or what group of people we're with, we are going to get labeled as something. And that isn't necessarily a bad thing. I mean, it's nice to be known as "the smart one" or "the well-dressed one" or "the nice one."
    - But at the same time, labels can also make us feel a little stuck.
    - Like we're stuck with a certain group or friends. Or we're stuck in whatever hobbies or clubs we're allowed to pick up…
        - Or maybe you've just had people make some negative assumptions about you - assumptions that aren't fair or aren't even true… All because of a label.
- And that's the problem with labels.
    - If we aren't careful, how people label us – or how we label ourselves – can keep us from doing things, going places, or being friends with people that we would have otherwise.

      We begin to hear things like….
        - I'm just _____ so I can't _____.
            - Labels give us the perception that somehow our lives, abilities, and futures are limited by what we call ourselves or what others call us.
- Take a moment to pull out you're your hand out titled, "God's Calling >Labels". You have one minute to write down all of the labels you have put on yourself and labels others have put on you. All of the good, bad, and ugly.

- Over the next 2 sessions, we're going to look at the story of Moses.
  - Because he's a guy who faced more labels and setbacks than most of us could imagine.
    - But we're going to observe how God's will, voice, and calling triumphs over every label, every negative voice, set back, and trial.
- **Let's read Exodus 1:22; 2:1-8**
- Moses was born when there was a lot of tension between the Egyptian and the Hebrew people.
  - Egypt was a huge empire in the world.
    - And like most empires of that time, they created a lot of growth and progress through slave labor. And that's where the Hebrews come in: they were slaves to the Egyptian empire.
  - But as the Hebrews grew in numbers, Egypt's leader - Pharaoh - saw their growing population as a threat. He thought if there were too many of them, then they were sure to rebel against the Egyptians.
    - So, with the snap of his fingers, he made a decree:
      - Every Hebrew baby boy must be killed.
    - At that moment in history, "Hebrew" was the worst label you could have.
      - If you were an adult, it meant that you were a slave without dignity.
      - If you were a baby, it meant you were so worthless you could be killed and thrown away into the Nile river.
- So Moses is born… and his mother desperately tries to keep him alive by putting him in a study basket and sending him down the river.
  - He ends up floating down stream, and is spotted by Pharaoh's daughter… by God's provision… she is stirred to compassion and keeps him and then raises him!
    - Moses immediately becomes part of Pharaoh's family.
      - In about 10 seconds, Moses goes from having the worst possible label ever to the best label anyone could have in his culture - He became royalty.
        - We don't hear much about his upbringing after that, but the story opens back up into an interesting scene.

- **Let's continue with Exodus 2:9-15**
- Moses went from labeled as worthless to royalty and then as a murderer and a refugee and later, a shepherd.
    - At the time, each of those labels seemingly determined how the rest his life was going to play out.
- But then, God enters the scene. **Read Exodus 3:1-6**
    - God called Moses.
        - God still called Moses.
            - It didn't matter that Moses was considered so worthless that he should just be tossed into a river…
            - It didn't matter that Moses had not only sinned from killing someone, but he also was an Egyptian prince. He probably worshiped false gods. He was oppressed his own people in slavery.
            - It didn't matter that he had regret in his life and label after label placed on his forehead in big red ink.
                - God still chose to reveal himself to Moses.
                - And he wants to reveal himself to us to…
                    - No matter what labels have been put on us.
                    - No matter what shame and guilt we have built up…He calls each of you by name.
- He calls you by name, and says, "I am the God of your father… of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob."
    - Yeah! That same God that flooded the earth, that was faithful ALL of those years that we read about in the Bible and continues to be.
        - He says, "I'm your God."
        - Come, and know me.
            - You don't have to be stuck by your label… or your past.
            - Or even stuck by this year.
            - **His calling is greater.**
- **And he calls you by name.**
- **And this calling is to know him by his name.** Yeshua…. Jesus.

- It doesn't matter what's in the past.
- It doesn't matter what you've done.
- It doesn't matter what record you have.
- It doesn't matter what other people have called you or what you have called yourself.
    - Because God calls you by your vey name!
        - And he gives you a new identity called loved.
            - Forgiven.
            - Child.
            - Chosen.
            - His!

- Moses may have felt limited by his label, but God wasn't. As soon as God enters the picture… the tides begin to change!
    - What mattered was God's calling in his life!
        - And his first calling was to know God to know of his faithfulness and all that he had already done for his people!
- Some of you may feel like you're limited by a label that you're born into.. Or you just sort of inherited like you didn't even have to try to obtain it. It was just given. Your life, your potential, who you could become feels like it has limits because of…
    - The type of family you're in.
    - The amount of intelligence you have.
    - Where you live.
    - The amount of money your family has.
    - Your friend group.
    - The set of skills or talents you feel like you were born without.
    - What you've done
    - What you haven't done.
        - All of these things might as well burn up in that same bush Moses saw.
        - Because when God enters the picture.
        - When we see and hear him….they no longer have a hold on us.
            - Because his calling is greater than all of these things combined.

# Greater Calling
# Small Group Questions 1

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

• Icebreaker: You can have anyone fictional as your friend, who do you choose and why?

• What were some of the labels Moses experienced?

• What was the first calling of Moses all about (3:4-6)?

• What are some of the labels you wrote down for yourself?

• Has there ever been a time when one of these labels kept or hindered you from doing something?

• What does God do despite all of these labels or past regrets?

• God describes himself as I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Why do you think this is?

• How have you seen God be faithful in your life?

• Why is it important to remember times he has been faithful in our lives and in Scripture?

# Personal Devotion 1

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

**Read John 10:1-30 slowly and attentively.**

- **Read the passage again. Underline or write down any phrases, words, or verses that stand out to you.**

- **Why are these words/phrases/verses important? In your own words, what do they say?**

**Answer the following questions:**

1. **What's the shepherd's responsibility (v. 3-4)?**

2. **Do the sheep have any responsibility? What will a "good" sheep do? How will a sheep react to strangers (v. 4-5)?**

3. **What is the correlation between this and how a believer should be act?**

4. **How do we come to know the difference between the Good Shepherd's voice and the thief's?**

5. **What kind of life does Jesus call us to? What about a believer's life makes it abundant?**

**Let this passage and these questions prompt a conversation with Jesus in prayer.**

# Greater Calling Large Group 2

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

- Have you ever been afraid of something?
- I'm sure everyone here has at some point.
- When it comes to fear, there are some rational… and some not so rational fears.
  - There are some common ones like:
    - Fear of small spaces…. big spaces, thunderstorms
    - Fear of snakes…. Spiders…. Heights
    - Driving over bridges or through tunnels.
  - But then we got some really strange ones that I looked up… But hey, no judgement if this is you.
    - Fear of balloons
    - Fear of teenagers…
    - Fear of clowns
    - Fear of having a murderer behind your shower curtain
- Some of these you might see as legitimate fears. Others, you may think there's no way anyone could be afraid of that. We all have different fears. I don't mind heights when I know I'm secure.
  - But put a snake in front of me and I'm gone.
- But sometimes we have fears that don't look like these… sometimes, they're hard to see.
  - Some people have the fear of being inadequate.
  - Or fear of failure.
  - The sin of comparison might get a hold of you, and you start to fear that you're not good enough, smart enough, talented enough, not skinny enough or attractive enough.

        - Whatever it is. All of us have this thing - something about us that keeps us from feeling confident in who we are - that makes it hard not to compare ourselves to others, that puts pressure on us.
            - And if we aren't careful, that thing can end up consuming us.
                - It can go from just being something about us to being the most important thing about us.
                    - A nonathletic build, a challenge with studying or getting good grades, whatever it is, can become something that defines us. Something that we use to disqualify us from doing certain things in life.
            - We begin to play a message in our minds saying things like….
                - "I could never do _____ because of this."
                - "I could never be _____ because of this."
                - "That's impossible for me because I'm ____."
    - No, what we're talking about is more than just being realistic about what we're good at and what we're not.
        - We're talking about when we our weaknesses decide who we are and what we can be.
            - It's about when they become the final word.
- This may not be something we broadcast for everyone to see, but that doesn't mean it's not a very real thing for a lot of us.
    - The people around us may not know the insecurity we feel over whatever this thing is.
        - They may see us make fun of ourselves over it, or overcompensate for it, or have so much confidence in other areas they would never guess we struggle with this weakness.
            - But the truth is, a lot of us, if we're honest have a hard time forgetting it…
            - It's always there reminding us that we are not as good, that we don't measure up, that we're not what we could be, compared to other people around us.

- If that's you… I've got good news. All of us can relate.
  - And so could Moses.
  - When we think of Moses, I think the image that usually comes to mind is him with his staff in his hand parting the Red Sea and leading the Israelites out of Egypt.
    - We are about these accomplishments and all that he did and all the ways that God used him.
      - You may get the impression that he was just a natural born leader.
      - But Moses was a man with a nature just like ours. He was just a man…
        - And like all of us, he had that one thing he couldn't quite get over himself.
          - There was one thing he saw as a disqualifier, limiting who he thought he could be.
            - He had a pretty intense speech impediment. Some scholars are led to believe that he was a stutterer.
              - Moses saw it as a disqualifier, but God saw it differently…
- We're going to pick up in our story right where we left off… Moses encountering God through the burning bush.
  - Now while the whole idea of this seems crazy, God wasn't just doing something cool to get Moses' attention (although I'm pretty sure he had it).
    - God not only had a message for Moses… but a purpose.
- **Let's read Exodus 3:7-14; 4:10-15;28-31**
- And so, God, through this fire, tells Moses that He is sending him to deliver the Hebrew people from the Egyptians. But Moses isn't exactly sold on this idea. He left Egypt on purpose, and for a good reason- he killed someone important. So, he was on the run. He had created a new identity and a new life, and now God wanted him to go back.
  - Moses responds… "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex 3:11).
    - But God isn't hearing it. Again, He tells Moses, the job falls on him, that God will be with him, and this is what he should say when he makes hi ways back to the land he fled from.

- ❖ Moses is still hesitant.
    - ➢ He responds, “I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (4:10).
        - ■ Moses is basically saying, “Um, you clearly have the wrong guy. I don’t sound good when I speak, and I’m not just talking about right now when you scared me to death by talking to me from a piece of shrubbery. I’ve never sounded good.
            - ● This isn’t Moses trying to be humble.
            - ● Moses is getting real about he doesn't think he has what it takes to say “yes” to God’s calling.
            - ● And he makes a fair point.
                - ◆ How’s a guy supposed to be a national spokesperson and have a speech impediment? That’s a big deal.
- ❖ But God I LOVE how God responds to his insecurities and fears!
    - ➢ God made him. God knew what he could and couldn’t do.
    - ➢ God made his mouth. He knew he struggled.
        - ■ But God is greater than any of our weaknesses.
            - ● Moreso, he LOVES to use our weaknesses.
            - ● Because where we are weak, He is strong.
            - ● Our weaknesses bring is to a point of NEEDING to depend on God!
        - ■ God is telling Moses, “I created who for who you were meant to be and do! You're not alone. I made you and I will be with you!
            - ● I am the Same God that was faithful to Abraham through all of his trials. Same God that was faith to Isaac and Jacob!
                - ◆ You know, in the movies, this would be a killer time to cue some epic music and watch Moses leave the mountain with confidence and a mission and with flames behind him burning!
                - ◆ But Moses responds… “LORD PLEASE SEND ANYONE ELSE!” (Ex 4:13).
                    - ➢ BAHH!!

- God is now like, listen here, buddy!
  - Moses needed some serious convincing.
  - Even after God himself explains that a speech problem couldn't limit him, Moses still needed a shot of confidence. And when Aaron was brought in to be the front man, God made sure Moses knew just how certain He still was that Moses was the right choice.
    - He tells Moses to give Aaron the words to say.
    - God was still calling Moses to lead the people of Israel, even though Moses had a speech problem.
    - God was still planning to use Moses, even though had a confident problem.
      - Because even though Moses felt weak… fearful… insecure.
      - God's calling was greater.
- And that's just as true for you and me! God isn't in denial about the things that we think limit us. He just knows He's capable of working in spite of them. To allow us to be part of His plan, even when we feel unqualified to do it.
  - And here's what I want you to take away from this exchange between God and Moses.
    - Don't let fear hold you back when God is calling you forward!
- It's so easy for us to disqualify ourselves.
  - It's so easy for us to make excuses and focus on our insecurities and fears.
  - But God calls us…
    - Beloved.
    - Forgiven.
    - Chosen.
    - Redeemed
      - And what he calls us is so much greater than any fear or any insecurity.
        - Weakness, insecurity and fear do not limit God's plan for you.
      - When we start focusing on what God calls us… things change.
        - Fear and insecurities flee when we embrace what God has called us.

- ➢ Imagine a life where you live out of what God calls you, rather than what you call yourself.
- ➢ Imagine a life where you live out of love from the Lord… rather than fear and insecurities.

❖ Life would look pretty different.

- ➢ A life where we get to go share the greatness of God- like Moses to the Israelites.
  - ■ A life where you can abandon your fears and insecurities and follow God and listen to His voice!
- ➢ That's a full, abundant life. That's a greater calling.

❖ I want to share one more Scripture with you.

- ➢ 1 Timothy 1:9
  - ■ He has saved us and called us to be a Holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace.
- ➢ Let us pray.

# Greater Calling Small Group Questions 2

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

• Go around and talk about the day. What were some of your favorite moments?

• What stood out to you during personal devo time?

What was that experience like to have time set apart to be in God's Word and prayer?

• What was Moses' fear when God called him to his purpose?

• What fears do you think teens struggle with the most these days? Why do you think that is?

• When was a time you let fear hold you back from doing something? When was a time that you didn't let fear or insecurities hold you back? What was that like?

• What would your life look like if you lived less out of fear and more out of love for God and others?

# Personal Devotion 2

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

**Read Ephesians (Chapters 1-6)!**

- **As you read, make note of all the verses about what Christ has done for you.**

- **What does this book tell us about how Christ calls us to live?**

**Let this reading and these questions prompt a conversation with Jesus in prayer.**

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**The Gospel is This:**
**We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves that we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ that we ever dared hope.**

**– Tim Keller**

# God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

**What are the labels others or maybe even you have placed on yourself?**

**Write them down here:**

# Challenge

## God's Calling > Labels or Our Past

Jesus is the good shepherd who knows his sheep, cares for, and protects his sheep. As sheep, make it your desire to follow Jesus wherever he may lead or call you this week. He may lead you into an uncomfortable situation. He may lead you into a difficult conversation. He may call you into the life of someone you don't know yet, because you are able to lead them to Jesus. Be a sheep who will follow when it's not easy!

**God called to**
**him from within**
**the bush,**
***"Moses, Moses!"***
**And Moses said, *"Here I am."***