

Community and Callings

In the First Book of Samuel, we find the story of God calling to Samuel in the middle of the night. Never having heard God's voice before, Samuel assumes that his teacher and mentor, Eli, is behind the call. Twice, Samuel goes to Eli and wakes him up, saying earnestly, "Here I am." Eli sends him back to sleep both times but soon realizes what is happening. The next time Samuel wakes him up, Eli explains that God is calling him and that Samuel should respond, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." Samuel follows his teacher's advice, answers the call, and begins his prophetic relationship with God.

The story of Samuel's call is one of my favorite Scripture passages for a number of reasons. First, Samuel has such a human reaction to God speaking to him in the night. Immediately, he thinks that God's call is something other than it is. He assumes that the call comes from Eli.

I am positive that there have been many times when God has been present in my life and I simply didn't see God. I have jumped to my own conclusions, made my own assumptions, completely blind to what was really going on around me. Perhaps at times, like Samuel, I've been eager to do what's right and good, but I haven't slowed down to really listen and direct that eagerness.

I also like the way that Samuel ultimately responds to God: "Speak, your servant is listening." He doesn't respond, "Hey, God, can you call me some other time? I'm a little busy right now." Nor does he say, "God, I know exactly what you're here to tell me." Rather, Samuel simply listens and places himself in the presence of God. I'm here and I'm listening.

Recently, when a student invited me to join his Common Prayer and reflect on the role of community in our callings, I began to look at this passage in a new light. I found myself drawn to the role of Eli in the story. It is only through the wisdom of Eli that Samuel is able to understand who is doing the calling. It is only through Eli that Samuel learns how to respond. God is present in the late-night voice, but God is also present in the person of Eli. Just as Samuel needed Eli's help in discerning God's call for him, so do we need one another to discern God's

call in our own lives.

This summer, I spent four weeks traveling in South America. For two of those weeks, I was part of a program run by the Maryknoll order, a movement of Catholic missionaries. Together with a group of Americans working in ministry on college campuses, we visited students and staff doing similar work in Peru and Bolivia.

To be honest, I was more than a little nervous about where I would hear God's call on this trip and what God might call me to do. Would God call me to work among the poor and become a lay missionary? The thought had occurred to me at other points in my life. Would this be the experience that pushes me in that direction? Or would I be called to some other major lifestyle change?

In time, the call came, but not quite as I had expected (perhaps one of these days, I'll learn that God never works as we expect). Throughout the trip, I had to describe my job multiple times to the different people I met. I would describe the ALIVE Team and the peer ministry work that they do in the residence halls. I would talk about the Program of Faith, Learning and Vocation and the many ways we've addressed vocation and callings on campus.

On more than one occasion, after I stopped talking on and on about what I do, the person would say something like, "Wow. You really love what you do, don't you? I can hear it in your voice."

After this happened a few times and I had the chance to reflect on the many amazing experiences I had on the trip, all I could say was, "Thanks, God. Message received." Somehow, it took traveling to a different continent to be called home. It took the words of people I had just met to understand how much I do feel called to be right where I am. If those people were my "Eli's" then I hope that I can have Samuel's courage to simply say, "Here I am. Speak, your servant is listening."

Becky Welch '00
Assistant Director

Program of Faith, Learning, and Vocation

MINISTRY INTERNS

*Justin Krueger
Old St. Joe's Music Ministry*

*Kay Lechner
Brown County Jail*

*Linda Maier
St. Agnes Church*

*Ann Pederson
Old St. Joe's Religious Ed.*

*Jake Sircy
St. Agnes Church*

MEET OUR STUDENTS!

ALIVE Team Members

APPRENTICES

Adam Anderson

Kyle Bastable

Theresa Beaumier

Alisa Christensen

Bryanna Gauger

Tim Kasprzak

Kelly Levenhagen

David Mangless

Casey Olson

INTERNS

Rachelle Barina

Beth Baumann

Erica Behm

Aaron Benson

Brittany DeLaruelle

Caitlin Froemming

Kevin Funk

Ashley Gill

Sam Hanson

Janelle Wanta



LOOK WHAT WE'RE UP TO!

Fall Book discussion—Tuesday, October 28 at either 12 Noon at the Union in Room 101B or at 3:30 PM at the Alumni House.

The selection is Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin's book, *Three Cups of Tea*. Please register at <http://www.snc.edu/vocation>

Vocation Conference—October 23-25

The Program of Faith, Learning, and Vocation will be hosting a conference for Catholic colleges and universities in the PTEV initiative to explore together the concept of institutional vocation.

Fall Vocation Dinner—November 10, 2008
Men of Distinction; Men of color mentoring program



Fall 2008 Book Discussion *Three Cups of Tea*

The book selected for the Fall 2008 Faculty & Staff

Book Discussion is *Three Cups of Tea*, the story of Greg Mortenson, a young man who found his life's calling after getting lost while coming down a mountain. That unplanned detour redirected his life and dramatically impacted the lives of thousands of others. As the author relates, "After a failed 1993 attempt to climb K2, Mortenson arrived in Korphe, emaciated and exhausted. In this impoverished community of mud and stone huts, both Mortenson's life and the lives of northern Pakistan's children changed course. One evening, he went to bed by a yak dung fire a mountaineer who'd lost his way, and one morning, by the time he'd shared a pot of butter tea with his hosts and laced up his boots, he'd become a humanitarian who'd found a meaningful path to follow for the rest of his life."

The hospitality and kindness he received from strangers who had so little not only nursed Mortenson back to life, but also permanently changed him. Upon leaving the village of Korphe, Mortenson makes them a promise to return and build a school for the children there. But unlike so many lost mountaineers who had made the people of Korphe promises before, Mortenson keeps his. He returns to Berkeley and, while living out of the back seat of his car and working part-time at a hospital, looks for ways to raise the money he needs to enhance the lives of the people who saved his. Within a year he returns to Korphe with the money he needs to build the school. Still, no dream is easily achieved and Mortenson, in his quest to help people in need, encounters more obstacles, discouragement, and adversity than any looming mountain ever presented him. But he perseveres and is drawn so deeply into his mission that after building his first school, promises to return to build many more. Back-and-forth, from Berkeley to Islamabad, he goes year after year, so that by the time of the book's publication in 2006, Mortenson and the foundation he began were responsible for more than fifty schools, primarily for girls, in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Along the way Mortenson is kidnapped, shot at, and slandered. He struggles with intense

loneliness, discouragement and, not surprisingly, moments of terrible fear. But as with anyone who allows a calling to take hold—to seize their heart and turn their life upside down—Mortenson can't look back. His vocational journey takes him deep into the cultures of Pakistan and into the world of Islam. The son of Christian missionaries, Mortenson becomes beloved by the persons our post 9-11 society regularly teaches us to fear. As David Relin, author of *Three Cups of Tea*, observes, "In a part of the world where Americans are, at best, misunderstood, and more often feared and loathed, this soft-spoken, six-foot-four former mountaineer from Montana has put together a string of improbable successes. Though he would never say so himself, he has single-handedly changed the lives of tens of thousands of children, and independently won more hearts and minds than all the official American propaganda flooding the region...Greg Mortenson...is fighting the war on terror the way I think it should be conducted."

Three Cups of Tea is an unforgettable, inspiring, and challengingly hopeful story of a man not afraid to scale whatever mountains might confront him as he looks for ways to use his passion and his gifts in response to the world's pressing needs.

Please join us for the discussion of *Three Cups of Tea*. *Tuesday, October 28 at 12 Noon in the Union 101B or at 3:30 pm at the Alumni House*. To receive your copy of *Three Cups of Tea* or if you have your own copy of the book and would like to attend the discussion, please register at <http://www.snc.edu/vocation> or contact DeEtte Radant at x3155 or deette.radant@snc.edu

If you have a suggestion for a future book discussion selection, please contact Paul Wadell at paul.wadell@snc.edu or at 403-3084.

Faculty/Staff Grant Opportunities

The program provides financial support to members of the institution who wish to deepen their vocation-related efforts and learning.

Vocation Initiative Grants

- Vocation initiative grants are available to faculty or staff who have completed the Study Group on Vocation and need support for the execution of their implementation plans.
- Vocation initiative grants are reviewed on a rolling basis by members of the program's advisory council.

Vocation Exploration Grants

- Conference funding is available for colleagues seeking to deepen their understanding of vocation as it relates to their work at the college. Monies are available for travel costs and conference fees.
- Conference grants are reviewed on a rolling basis by members of the program's advisory council.

*Please see our website at
<http://www.snc.edu/vocation/development/grants> for grant applications.*

For additional grant information please contact DeEtte Radant at (920) 403-3155



Intersections is an occasional newsletter published by the Program of Faith, Learning, and Vocation.

The editor invites your comments, suggestions, and contributions.

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