

Other people's calling

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I am intrigued by the emphasis on call in 1 Samuel 16. Because I am a theological educator, I am even more fascinated by the role each of us can play in nurturing someone's sense of call.

Saul and David are the key "called" protagonists in the story. But it is Samuel who carries, clarifies, and extends God's call. As educators and believers, we cannot carry or extend someone else's call. But we can help clarify it.

Here is an excerpt from my *Century* lectionary column on this passage:

Can someone be called and not know it, at least until God does something to reveal God's intentions? Apparently David is an example of this—and yes, one can lose connection with God's call and not know it. When God's intentions were revealed to Saul, for example, he was in total shock. As Samuel knew, it's a very difficult challenge to help someone recognize a call that's been lost or to grow into a call that's been issued. But having received his own call, Samuel understood how God works. He surprised Saul by revealing that God intended Saul to be king (1 Sam. 9–10); later he was sent to rescind the kingship that had been given to Saul and deliver it to David. Samuel's work was difficult, demanding, sometimes heart-wrenching, and necessary.

We are not Samuel. I doubt that any of us would want to carry the agonizing weight of responsibility that burdened him as he made the trek between Saul and David. And yet as part of God's community of faith, as members of the body of Christ, we too have a role to play in helping those around us recognize how

God is moving people in ways that they may not see.

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