



## Who You Gonna Call?

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I've been saying it a lot lately. For several months, it has been my go-to question whenever I'm with people and we get stumped. I say it without realizing it mostly, but now even my family notices. After we've read the instructions or watched the YouTube video, or when the website doesn't provide the answers, I find myself asking again and again: "Isn't there someone we could call?" I long for the person who will hear my situation and questions and provide an answer... or, if not an answer, then maybe some commiseration or sympathy. I want a live person who will hear me explain what I need, instead of me trying to nuance my question just perfectly to fit into the computer's algorithm.

I have to believe I'm not alone in my hunger for meaningful human interaction, especially interactions that meet us where we are in our state of puzzlement. Partly because I'm paid by you to think about these things, I wonder, in turn, whether people in our communities long for answers that only **the church** can provide. They might have questions about good and evil, or sin and grace. They might be curious about the meaning of Easter or why being a Christian matters to you. They might have stories about being hurt by the church.

These musings led me, of course, to my computer, because that's where all [insert sarcasm] the answers can be found. I tried googling the basic question of when to call the church. Google will auto-populate the most popular search fields as one types. "Should I call..." instantly brought up options: should I call my ex? ...after an interview? ...a debt collector back? I continued typing: Should I call church...

The proposed search queries – based on those most frequently typed – were less than satisfying:

- Should I call church's chicken? [It is tasty, so I guess I can understand this.]
- Should I call a church with a woman pastor? [Really?!? Ouch.]

I tweaked my search: "should I call a pastor..." The top related query was "can I call myself a pastor?" [Whaaat?] More refinement: "should I call a pastor **when**..." Bingo! At last, something church-y popped up: "Should I call a pastor when someone dies?" Is that it? Is that our niche in popular culture: a space to mourn what is dead?

Once again, I find myself asking, "Isn't there someone we could call?" When the deepest questions in our lives are raised, we gravitate toward Scripture and the witness of the church. Why don't others? Why are we relegated to that brief passage from life to death? Friends, I believe the deep questions are being asked and those askers are longing for meaningful human connection to help answer them or, if not to answer them, to find commiseration and sympathy. Our call is to make known Christ's claim on our lives and to be the light that shines brightly where darkness invades. Authentic evangelism isn't pushy or obtrusive. It doesn't force a conversion or set of beliefs. Instead, through our personal stories, our patient listening, and our humble approach to tough questions, we reveal God's love. Authentic evangelism sparks curiosity in those around us. Then, we pray, the Spirit will move them to ask, "May I give you a call? I've got some questions."