

Fresh Start
Week 10: Unique Position

This is our last week in our fall teaching series, "Fresh Start". Next week **we celebrate our fresh start** as a church after one year of being one church, two locations.

Do you need a fresh start after the last year and a half? **You blinked your eyes** and life changed radically. While others are trying to **get back to normal**, are you **wanting something** more than the old normal that wasn't all that great?

It's time to ask the big questions anew. Who is God? He is good and gracious and we can know that by looking at Jesus. **Jesus gave people an opportunity** to have a fresh start in him. Then we ask who am I and why am I here? **This brings us to our unique design and our calling.** What does God have us here for?

If you are new to Eagle Ridge at either of our campuses, or online, you can **jump on our website and listen** to all of the teaching in this series. **Maybe you know someone who needs a fresh start** and you want to invite them to listen to these sermons and discuss them with you.

Look at this diagram from the book "More". **Diagram 214.** I would encourage anyone who wants to dig deeper into this subject to **read it.** And as we keep saying, contact **Tammy Naffee, our Director of Mobilization,** and she can help walk through this process with you.

It shows that we all have a core identity (Be), and core mission (Do), and a core position (Go). Those are the things that are the same about all of us as Christ followers. **Then we come to the unique part** of you and me.

I thought it might help for you to see how I put this all together for my calling.

My unique identity or be... To think, assess and, then visualize what comes next.

My unique mission or do... Teach, coach, make disciples, and make a kingdom present for others from a place of brokenness.

My unique location or mission field... Leading within the church and the Church of God, and being present in public spaces in Midland.

As you can see, the spaces are open for the parts that are unique to you because. As we know from Ephesians, you are a **masterpiece**, meaning not only **skillfully put together**, but also **one of a kind**. Those spaces are not filled in. **The Bible doesn't give us the answer to what is unique about us. We have to...Discover and embrace my unique identity (Be) and my unique mission (Do).**

One of the great stories of God calling someone to go comes in the story of Isaiah the prophet. It is believed that he was either a priest or a prophet connected to the temple in Jerusalem. Either way, he was in the temple where sacrifices and prayers were made to Yahweh/Jehovah, the God of Israel. It is here that God revealed himself to Isaiah.

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. ² Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ They were calling out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" ⁴ Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies."⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven." Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me." ⁹ And he said, "Yes, go, and say to this people, (And the rest of the book is what God gives Isaiah to say.) **Isaiah 6:8-9a**

God tells him that he is to go to the nation of Judah, who are God's people. This is where the temple, the place where God lived, was in Jerusalem, the capital of this country. But he is to go to them and tell them that because they have left following God alone and have dabbled in the religions of the local people and of the nations near them, they will be punished. Their nation was destroyed and the capital and temple overtaken by foreign powers. Sounds like a great job. You go tell everyone that they are wrong and that suffering is coming, as God is about to discipline them.

God was giving him a location of a particular nation of people, an ethnic group. Keep in mind, coming up in advent we will read prophecies about Jesus generations before he is to arrive. Those will, in large part, come from Isaiah. God is asking Isaiah to give a message of punishment, but

also a message of God preparing them to be the host for the messiah who has come for all people. That is the mission field, the location God has chosen to call Isaiah to.

For most of us, this will not be as dramatic or as definitive. We tend to think of this as one event, because it is the part of Isaiah's story that we know. But it's not like standing in the temple and seeing this vision and hearing these words is the last time that God spoke to him about who he was, what God wanted him to do and where he wanted him to do it. At this point, we know that it is to the nation in which he lives. God is going to reveal more in his lifetime about what he is to say and to whom he is to say it.

So how do I get the clarity that Isaiah was given? I must make the effort to...**Locate my unique position or mission field (Go).**

God has uniquely designed me for good works that he has created for me to do. The question is location. How do I position myself to not miss all of this?

Remember our core position is right here! We assume that God knows what he is doing by putting me where I am.

If we simply leave it at that, then I can say that I don't have to do anything I'm not already doing, talk to anyone I'm not already talking to, or go into any other contexts that I am not already going. "Thanks pastor, you've made it clear that I don't have to change at all to locate my unique position or mission field, because I'm already hip deep in it. Thanks for the confirmation, now let's go have lunch."

Locating my unique position is definitely about changing, even if that doesn't mean changing address or career. **Staying here is still "going" when we view it differently.**

Because of the great commission saying, "Go make disciples of all nations," we cannot remove the idea of going or rather being sent.

How can staying where I am mean "going?" Staying means going when we see where we work, live, study, and play differently.

I have to be able to see within the place God has already put me, the specific situation or context I am being sent into to be the fullness of Jesus. I must see the opportunities to make the Kingdom present for others and to help people learn to follow Jesus. That last part is code for, "make disciples."

I am being sent into those places to be the fullness of Jesus. **That's why it's still "going."**

Within my "right here," is there something more specific that I'm uniquely designed for? It's already there, **I just need to see it.** When I see it, then I will have no trouble feeling as if I am sent.

Where can I be the best steward of my unique be and do?

Let's remind ourselves what a steward is. A steward is someone who cares for what someone else owns. That person is a **caretaker who is responsible** for what he or she does not own. **I don't own my wife and kids,** I am a caretaker, or steward, because they belong to the King. **I don't own the money** I earn. It comes from the gifts, abilities, and blessings that came from God. **I just manage it for him and try to give a good accounting for it.**

All of this means the real owner of who I am and what I am made to do, is Jesus. To be a good steward is to make the most out of what I have been put in charge of.

Listen to the words of Jesus.

¹⁴ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven (Kingdom of God and Kingdom of heaven are interchangeable. This is the **restoration of God's rule over all things.) can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them** while he was gone. **¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. ¹⁶ "The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money. ¹⁹ "After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money... ²⁶ "But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, ²⁷ why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' ²⁸ "Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'** Matthew 25:14-19 & 26-30

Let's break this down simply. Who is the man who leaves on a trip putting his servants in charge of his money? Yes, that is God. And who are the servants who have been made stewards of the man's money? That would be you and me.

The question is, does where I am make it really difficult to be a good steward of who God designed me to be and those good works he has designed me do.

If you find yourself consistently in places where you cannot use who you are for service to others and for the Kingdom of God, then something needs to be done. If you are able to talk with people and help point them in the right direction, then you shouldn't be in a lab all day and then in front of the TV all night. If kids simply respond to you and you love pouring into them and you look around and there are no children where you work, live, play, or relax, then something needs to change. If God has put into your heart the poor and disadvantaged and yet you are never around those people, then something needs to change.

Don't forget a change in location might not be necessary just noticing the opportunities around you. That being said...Sometimes "go" means leaving something.

Apostle Paul, his unique position is to the gentiles. His "be" is an apostle.

¹⁵ But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake." Acts 9:15

Paul couldn't very well stay in Jerusalem as a Pharisee, making sure the people of Israel kept the law as accurately as possible. He couldn't stay there if Jesus was going to put him in front of kings. And this is the difficult part, he wasn't going to need to suffer much if he stayed with his people and just tried to be a Pharisee who happened to believe in Jesus. To leave what is comfortable where you have achieved success to go to do something that "your people" will not understand is to suffer.

By the way, these are the type of people we are looking for to be interns at Cultivate, people who are entrepreneurs or apostolic in their spiritual giftedness. They have it in them to conquer new territory and to start new things. They are bored doing what has always been done. Do you know someone like that?

Abraham's calling also demanded that he leave where he was to go somewhere new. Abraham's "be" would be leader, revolutionary...

Here's the retelling of Abraham's calling to be the patriarch of God's people.

³ At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴ **"This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!** ⁵ What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! ⁷ "I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸ And I will give the entire land of Canaan, **where you now live as a foreigner**, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God." Genesis 17:3-8

Abraham wasn't originally from Canaan. He had already left his homeland, where he was a really big deal, packing up all of his family and property to move to someplace where God wanted to set him up to become the father of many nations and, in particular, one through whom God would bring the messiah, Jesus Christ.

Does God still do this sort of thing? Yes, and I'll give some examples a little later.

Whether locating your unique position means leaving something or staying, we need to focus in a little tighter on what that position really means.

My unique position could be...

- **A cause**

Human trafficking.

Clean water.

Church planting/multiplication.

- **An outcome measurable**

Exponential's goal is 10% of churches in North America are level 4 or 5.

Ending illiteracy in my community.

No kid goes hungry.

- **A role**

Robin, the cause remained somewhat the same but the role changed.

Pastor, as you noticed this role, is part of my calling

Nurse,
School Teacher.

- An organization

Big brother, big sister
Reach the forgotten
The Bonheoffer Project
The Gideons

We met Steve from the Gideons and the person from Reach, the forgotten

- A people group

Teens

For the first 20 years of my professional ministry this was my location. I did it in Columbus, Ohio, and Alma, Michigan. **The address changed by the group, the people did not.**

Homeless

Widows

Muslim

Immigrants/refugees

Keep in mind that if we are disciples of Jesus, our core mission is to take the fullness of Jesus to all parts of society and to help people learn how to follow Jesus. That means that when we find that our location is centered on a calling to a cause, outcome, role, organization, or people group, we are to take his fullness there and help people learn how to follow Jesus.

Let's read it again. **And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Ephesians 1:22-23 NIV**

The church is me and you and we are to take his fullness, the Holy Spirit taking up residence in us into every crack and crevice in society.

Speaking of The Holy Spirit, to locate our unique location or mission field you must...Follow the Holy Spirit changing your heart.

Did your heart burn at some point when I was reading that list of different locations?

God gave me a new desire when I left being a youth pastor. Suddenly I had a desire for something that for the previous two decades had been of **no**

interest to me. You could even say the idea of being a Senior Pastor was repulsive to me.

- **Deb Yats**, our campus director at Beaverton, left teaching...
- **Tammy Scully** moving to Midland.
- **Al Bitler** works at Cultivate, building relationships after retiring.
- **Jen Coleman** was given a desire to come alongside people in Uganda in order to love like Jesus and expand his kingdom.

It all comes back to this...**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** Ephesians 2:10 ESV

It may seem impossible that I could make a living for my family and still be in my unique location. Unless I really believe this verse, then anything is possible. It's not about trying to find the perfect fit where I will get paid all the money I need and get to spend every day in my sweet spot of be, do, and go. No, it's not like that; it's messy. **In the same way, it's not about finding Mr. or Miss right.** It's about becoming the person you were designed to be and then you'll probably be ready to recognize someone as not "the one," but rather someone I could be a really good team for the Kingdom with and grow with.

Has the Holy Spirit been changing your heart? Are you even open to that? **As disciples we have to be open to that.** After all, a disciple is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and committed to Jesus' mission.

Reflect on what you believe you are hearing from the Holy Spirit within the body of Christ. This is where you trust that the Holy Spirit can talk to you through the body of Christ, God's people.

Steps to a Fresh Start
Is God calling me to stay and refocus?

Is there something right in front of you that you've been missing? Is there a people, group, cause, need within where you are that God is breaking your heart for? Then refocus on that.

Is God calling me to leave?

Is there a Jerusalem you need to leave, like Paul? Is there the safety of what I am familiar with that I need to leave in order to find where God wants me to be his fullness and make disciples? **We are a sending church, not an accumulating, warehousing church!**

Leave a department within my job so that I can create more margins for what God is calling me to do. **Turn down a promotion.** After all this is the “**great resignation.**” I moved this from below to the next point.

Who will I reflect with?

I want to end this series by praying this scripture over you. This is my hope and prayer and belief for everyone who is here in person, watching online, whether young, old, rich, poor, white, black.

So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. 2 Thessalonians 1:11