

Fresh Start
Week 4: Why am I here?

This series is called Fresh Start. That phrase just sounds good coming off the lips. It demands that we believe that **no matter our sin, past, weaknesses, shortcomings or brokenness** God is a God of grace who gives fresh starts to people like us. It starts with a clean sheet of paper. **It's about going back to what we know is true.** Starting over at **the beginning.** That means asking some of the most foundational questions.

What is our purpose as a church in this world? Be a bridge, build a bridge.

What do we value? And how does that help create a culture that is outwardly focused? Real, Ready to be changed, Relational and Release.

Series challenge...**five days to own it!** Any student who memorizes this and can give it to me or Matt or Miss Jen will receive a scholarship to Warner Camp or to any upcoming youth trip.

You are not here just to escape hell and get to heaven. Is this life just about getting off of a **sinking ship** or is there more?

Another way to answer the question, "Why am I here?" That is vital for Christ follower is...**What is my calling?**

We are going to **start to answering that today** and for the rest of this series. What I will say right off the bat is **what a calling isn't.** It isn't reserved for **special people** who hear a voice out of a burning bush, a cloud, an angel, or a bright light. One guy from the Bible actually heard through a donkey. It's not that those aren't real or aren't God calling someone, **but they are the exception, not the rule.** It's not that God calls special elite Christ followers to **do the really spiritual important work while the rest simply come to church,** try not to sin too much and put some money in the plate to keep the doors open.

I believe that the Bible teaches just the opposite. I believe that you were created to be someone whose **presence matters** in this world. **There are things you are supposed to do, that God wants done, that fit the person whom he created you to be.** And there are places **God is placing you or sending you** in order to do those things he needs done.

Here's the way we are going to break it down during this series. I think this will help to **demystify** the idea of a calling. We break it down with 3 simple words.

3 boxes

Take a look at this for just a moment and then we are going to take it apart.

Be > Do > Go

Now what does that really mean? Let's go a little deeper.

Be is a way of describing how you are Uniquely made, Identity. We are going to read a verse that describes you as a **masterpiece**. There's only one. It starts there with God created you that way.

Something that is uniquely made must have a Purpose, Mission/purpose that is connected to the way it has been made. **A claw hammer is uniquely made** for two main purposes, driving nails, and removing nails.

"Go" is a way of describing the Position, Mission field/position, or place that this uniquely created person can do what it was proposed in the father's heart to do. This is why a hammer is located in the workshop, not sitting beside the laptop on the desk or with your toothbrush in the bathroom.

Here's how I first felt a sense that God was calling me to something. I was at a Sunday night worship service. I found it **repetitive** even as a kid. I heard a sermon in the morning and went to Sunday school. My pastor was a wonderful speaker and a great man, but I'm quite sure that he used his **best stuff** on Sunday morning. Sitting there, bored to death, watching our missionary go through slides of the ministry somewhere in the world that wasn't Springfield, Ohio, where I was going back to **another brutal day of middle school**. Sitting there, probably daydreaming. You need to understand, we called it being a daydreamer **before you got diagnosed** with something. Suddenly a warm feeling came over my body and I knew that God was there, breaking through to my 11 or 12 year old heart and mind. I didn't hear a voice, but I knew that **I knew I was going to be a missionary**.

But you said we were going to talk about how that kind of stuff is the exception, not the rule. You see, if we stop right there and say, "Bill was called by God to be in full time ministry." **But that would miss all of the other stuff** that was a part of God calling me that weren't mystical at all. You miss **teaching VBS** with the pastor's wife, Charlotte Reynolds, who told me I was teaching when I thought I'd be the **cool older kid** who went to get the cookies and sharpened pencils. **You miss a kid who was being drawn** to God and the church. **You miss the youth pastor** who took much criticism from the Pharisees in our church for putting kids like me in charge of doing the ministry. **You miss the mission trips** in college that changed the way I saw the world. **The wonder lust** that made me a kid who knew he wasn't

going to live in the same town as his parents. **You miss Seminary in Los Angeles, California**, where I saw all cultures and real poverty and division.

If you focus only on that kid sitting, bored in Sunday night church, you miss this truth about a calling. **This is discovered through experience.**

Which is how anything worth learning is truly learned. You don't get this from simply studying the Bible. Now before you start throwing chairs or produce, let me explain. This is not denigrating the Bible. It's actually elevating the Bible. **The Bible is powerful in helping us find our calling, but it must be lived out, tested, experimented with in the lab of life.**

Remember middle school Billy Greiner thought simply because of association, thought God was calling him to be a **foreign missionary** in Africa.

Tennis strategy for growth is train, reflect, compete, reflect.

But just like my experience in Sunday night church, it wasn't clear. There was some fog obscuring my view of God's Be, Do, and Go for me. But, there are two kinds of fog. When we are trying to find our calling, it's about...**Knowing the difference between God fog and my fog.**

In other words, is this **something my own sin or brokenness is keeping me from seeing** or does God know that **I'm just not ready** to see this yet. It would be either too much for me to handle or I wouldn't be mature enough to even understand it.

Then, spitting on the man's eyes, he laid his hands on him and asked, "Can you see anything now?"²⁴ The man looked around. "Yes," he said, "I see people, but I can't see them very clearly. They look like trees walking around."²⁵ Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again, and his eyes were opened. His sight was completely restored, and he could see everything clearly. Mark 8:23b-25

Jesus has the ability to enable us to see more clearly. That means we are able to recognize what is in front of us and better understand what is happening around us. It's the ability to **see yourself and your environment accurately.** That is being **self aware** and discerning at the same time. I had to learn the ability to **recognize that my breathing is shallow and fast** in order to handle the anxiety that wants to derail me. My dad is a very self-aware person. He also can **read the room well.**

Here's the verse we have been building toward. It's the center of our desire to find our Be, Do, and Go. **For we are God's masterpiece. He has**

created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Eph. 2:10

This is what we want to be able to see. This is the ability to see that I am uniquely made and that I am placed here for good things that God has planned for me to do. This is the ability to see **God's design** and **God's kingdom**. **Seeing how I am designed for such a time and a place as here and now.**

We can stop right here and say, **I'm too old, too young, too messed up, too afraid, too disappointed** or the big lie is that calling the combination of my design, purpose and position is **only for people who do spiritual jobs like pastoring.**

We can stop there and say I don't need this kind of fresh start or we can choose faith.

Faith means that I move forward on a journey without a clear map or picture of the destination. This is where we meet the **evil twins, fear and control**. I'm afraid of **failing**, I'm afraid of the unknown whatever. And then there's the desire to control that says no, **"I'll make the map and decide the destination."** Right now those two things **are ruining our lives and ruining our relationship with God and his church.**

"Calling moves us from being paralyzed in our perceived insignificance to finding profound significance in our unique design, not because of what we do but because of who created us. Because of trust, we can embrace the fog, taking steps of faith and trust beyond what we can clearly see. As we do, we will learn which fog is self-inflicted and which is provided by God to protect us. This moves us from needing perfect clarity to instead living in loving trust of our heavenly Father." 32

We need to acknowledge in the bigger story how understanding our identity and purpose and position got skewed. **Sin causes the loss of true Identity, Purpose & Position.**

We were intended to find these three things within a trusting love relationship with God. He is the **designer**. When sin, the desire to do what I want and make myself my own God, we **ignored the designer** and went rogue, **going against how we were created.**

Satan twists our true Be, Do, Go.

Matthew 4:1-11 temptation of Jesus. Jesus was tempted to find his identity, purpose and mission field outside of His heavenly father.

The curse of work...when Adam sinned, work became no longer what it was supposed to be. It was toil and struggle. It became about survival and money and creating our own security instead of resting in the security of being God's beloved.

Because of sin and the separation it caused, suddenly we felt like we had to earn our way back into God's good graces. Works salvation.

We have to understand that **outside of the Holy Spirit in our lives, which is the presence of Jesus, we cannot experience** our true identity, our purpose for living and the mission field where we are to be a blessing to others.

Because of sin we have to return to basic trust. Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6

Repent of the sin of doing it your own way based upon your own goals. Believe or trust him to do the leading. Follow his direction obediently, seeking to align your life with Jesus' life.

This brings us to that word we really hate. Surrender. Repentance, believe and follow demands that we...**Surrender the leading role.** 43

"So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"³⁷ Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"³⁸ Peter replied, "Each of you must **repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Acts 2:36-38**

If Jesus is Lord and Messiah, in other words, King, then what is the only appropriate response? Surrender, and you do that by **repenting and proclaiming your allegiance to him through baptism.** Then he will fill you with His Spirit. And it is **The Holy Spirit that allows us** to follow Jesus and discover the Be, Do & Go of our calling.

² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Philippians 2:12

Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning! Obeying is our way of surrendering the leading role in our lives. **If my life were a movie,** it is no longer the movie about Bill, starring Bill, with Jesus in a supporting role. It's a movie about Jesus, starring Jesus, with Bill in a supporting role. **"Deep reverence and fear"** is clearly about understanding that this isn't about me at the center.

But look what happens, what we relinquish the starring role to Jesus; God works in us, giving us the desire and the power to please him. **No, we can truly make it about pleasing God** and achieving that because of God. **He gives me the desire to do what he has designed me to do and then the power to see it through.**

"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. Matthew 7:21

We have to actually surrender the leading role, not just say words like Jesus is my Lord and savior. This verse is stating that many will say this and not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"A calling is very different than a quest for fulfillment. A calling, though we glamorize it, is not glamorous. It is a response to a summons. It is a kind of surrender. It is a willingness to die to the past and move to the future."
Ortberg 45-46 (Theme Verse)

Discovering God's calling on your life you Be, Do & Go, your identity, purpose, and position isn't about finding fulfillment. If your search is for fulfillment then you're aiming at a moving target, you stumble in the fog at something that keeps changing. **And once you get it then it's like the spoiled kid on Christmas morning who sits in a pile of shredded wrapping paper saying those horrible words, "Is that all."**
I really don't know what I want or what will fill me. I need the designer to tell me, to reveal it to me. Fulfillment isn't the goal, it is a byproduct of finding your calling or "why am I here."

Steps to a fresh start

- 1. Confess any fear or control that keeps you from moving forward.**
- 2. Personalize and Pray Ephesians 2:10**

For I am God's masterpiece. He has created me anew in Christ Jesus, so I can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Eph. 2:10