

Made for More

2. Masterpieces

Feb. 27-28. 2021

Teach for America hires the brightest students and places them in some of the nation's worst public schools. A few years ago, a representative from *Teach for America* visited Duke, which is one of the nation's top-flight schools.

The representative stood before the crowd of Duke students and said, "I can tell just by looking at you that I've come to the wrong place... Just looking at you, I know you've achieved success and that you're on a track for even more success. Yet I'm here today to convince you to throw your life away in the toughest job that you'll ever have. I want people to go into the hollows of West Virginia and the ghettos of South Los Angeles to teach in the worst schools in America. Last year two of our teachers were killed on the job. But just by looking at you, I can tell that you're not interested. So go to grad school, make your millions, and live for success and comfort. But, if by chance you're interested in the toughest job in America, I have a few brochures, so come over and see me." With that, he walked to the back of the room. The Duke students immediately mobbed him, signing up for more information.

God has wired each of us for a sense of mission. Sometimes it gets buried by the urgent details of making it through each day, but it remains because we are made for a challenge.¹ We're made for more.

The book of Ephesians tells us that each of us who follow Christ are meant to make a difference in the world. That's true no matter what our jobs are, or whether we even have a job.

Last week we looked at Ephesians 1, which says that when we put our faith in Christ, God adopts us as his children. So as children of the Father, our purpose is to do

¹ *The Ultimate Challenge* – David Woodley (Preaching Today)

life WITH God. We are made to share each joy with God and face each problem by God's power.

Today as we look at Ephesians 2, we're going to talk about our Calling – how our lives make a difference and advance God's purpose on the earth.

Purpose and calling are related but different:

Purpose is Universal – it applies to everyone.

Calling is Unique – it will be different than the person next to you.

Purpose is Who we are -- we don't have to work to fulfill it, we simply embrace it.

Calling is What we do – we need to choose to fulfill it; it requires us to act.

We are made for both a purpose and a calling, and we won't feel fulfilled until we embrace both. Ephesians 2 tells us that once we know God, we then get to serve God. New life in Christ comes with a calling. **Ephesians 2:8-9** Tells us how we are saved:

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

God gives us new life as a gift, not because we earn it by being good enough. When we hear the good news and let Jesus lead our lives, then our spirits move from death to life and we become part of God's family. That's what being saved means. The next verse, Ephesians 2:10, tells us that once we are saved, we are called to make a difference:

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.

What a statement: *For we are **God's masterpiece***. Other versions translate it to say we're God's handiwork – So wait a minute – did the Bible just call me a piece of work? Yes, we have been hand-crafted by God.

In Psalm 139:13-14 (NLT) the psalmist prays,

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.*

You and I are bespoke creations of God. We are God's workmanship – and whatever God creates is a masterpiece. And verse 10 tells us that we are crafted by God to do good things which will bless the world. Once God makes us alive in Christ, then he turns us loose to do the good things he set up ahead of time for us to do. That is our calling.

A few years ago, I participated in a packing party. An anti-hunger organization used donations to buy food basics and supplies. They set it all up ahead of time in a large room, so that when we walked in all the equipment and food items were laid out on the table and ready to go. We just walked up to a station and followed directions. Every so often we'd celebrate our progress with announcing how many meals we'd packed to that point; they'd ring a bell, play some party music, just have fun. We packed 20,000 meals in just a couple of hours. It felt good to walk away knowing there would be hungry people around the world fed by the meals we'd packed.

And by the way, later this fall, Crossroads is going to be one of ten churches in the Pittsburgh area to join together to pack 1 million meals – so you'll have a chance to get in on the action!

Ephesians 2:10 says that just like the packing-party organizers set things up so that all we had to do was walk in and make a difference, God does the same thing in our lives. He sets us up to *do the good things he planned for us long ago*. And those works are our calling – and they are not the same for everyone.

So how do we find our unique calling? Do we wait for an angel to appear and tell us, or for God to give us a vision? It might work that way for a few people, but for most of us it is not so dramatic.

Rob Wegner wrote a helpful book called, *Find Your Place* to help us discern our calling. And by the way, Rob will be coming to Crossroads on May 1 for our first-ever Discipleship Conference – so mark your calendar.

In his book Rob uses the acronym "GPS" to stand for: Gifts, Passion, Story. Just as the GPS on our phones guide us to where we want to go, our GPS of Gifts, Passion, and Story guide us to find the sweet spot of our calling. Using Rob's framework, let me summarize how we can do that.

Finding our calling "sweet spot" > Discover your GIFTS.

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to Christ-followers to build up the Church and reach the world. If you are a follower of Jesus, God has given you some spiritual gifts. Ephesians 4:8 says,

However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.

“Each one of us” includes you and me. Spiritual gifts are tools of ministry -- and they are a clue to our calling. For example, if I see someone pull up and unload a lawnmower, that gives me a clue about their job. If I see someone else walk up carrying a stethoscope, I don't assume they have come to mow the lawn – I figure they are a health care worker. Their tools point to their jobs.

The spiritual gifts God has given you point to your calling. If you have the gift of teaching, for example, that is a clue that your calling involves teaching – maybe as a teacher in public schools, or a pastor, or another role that involves teaching people.

If you don't have the gift of teaching, then your calling is something else. If you have the gifts of mercy and helps, you might be called to be a great nurse. (I don't want to be the patient of a nurse who has no mercy!) Or maybe it is to support people in crisis or pain.

God calls us to play a part in his plans for the world – which is for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. And he has given each of his children spiritual gifts to fulfill our calling.

I could say a lot about how to find your gifts, but here is quick summary. To discover your gifts, get familiar with what they are. There are a few lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and in Ephesians 4. They include faith, helps, administration, prophecy, healing, and so on. All the gifts in the Bible are still operational today. Familiarize yourself with what the gifts are so that you know what you're looking for.

Don't over-analyze, just pick something that appeals to you and start serving. It might take a few tries to figure out what you're suited for, but you'll find it if you keep serving because you will be drawn to the area you are called and gifted.

So, start serving. You can serve in the church: like leading kid's groups, being an adult encourager to students, worship team, parking lot, and so on. Pick an area and try it out. Or you can serve outside the church in community organizations, mentoring kids, and so on. Your LifeGroup might serve somewhere during this series and that might give you some ideas.

As you serve, ask yourself 2 questions:

1. Is God blessing this? If you teach and people fall asleep every time, you might not have that gift. But if people say, “That really helped me.” Then you might have that gift. Of course, the first time you serve in an area might be kind of rough; gifts need to be developed through practice and training.
2. Do I enjoy it? When you are serving in an area of giftedness it will seem right. When you are really flowing in it, you might say “I was born for this!” That is an indicator of calling.

> Identify your PASSION

By “passion” we mean – a people or cause you care deeply about. That is a way to find your calling. Do you have an affinity for a certain group of PEOPLE? For example, the Apostle Paul said, “I’m an apostle to the Gentiles, Peter is an apostle to the Jews.” They were each apostles but had different callings.

Two people might have the gift of teaching, but one relates to 3rd graders and the other for teaching English as a second language to immigrants. Two different callings. So, what group of people do you intuitively care about? To what group of people can you be a missionary?

Do you have a passion for a certain CAUSE? What cause lights you up? What issue of injustice makes you ready to battle? If there was one area in which you could make a difference what would it be?

There are all kinds of possibilities:

- * Families/marriage
- * At-risk children
- * Sanctity of life
- * Education
- * Race relations
- * Business/economy
- * Environment
- * Health/fitness
- * Science

A guy named Josh texted me recently: “This may sound odd, but I feel called to make a difference in the private equity world, where money is god and there is very little Christian influence.” I replied that it did not sound odd at all— it sounded like he was called into a mission field. By the way, I know that because Josh is my son!

> Listen to your **STORY**

Over 15 years ago, Helen Barrata’s friend invited her to Crossroads Church. Helen said “no’ to the first invitation, and the second, and the third. But finally, Helen said yes. She not only came to worship, she came to Christ and found deep joy.

Then the changes started, first inward, then outward. At the time Helen was obese that she couldn’t walk without pain. Eventually she found a ministry called First Place for Health which helped her see herself and food in a Christ-centered way. Helen adopted a healthy lifestyle and went on to lose over 100 pounds .

She was so impacted that she started helping others by leading a First Place for Health ministry at Crossroads. In fact, she became the national director of that ministry. And she just told me that she is working on her second book now. Helen’s life

experience – her story – led her to make a difference in others' lives like the way Jesus changed hers.

What clues does your story give you about your calling? Review the significant experiences in your life – both positive and negative. Do they point you to where you want to make a difference?

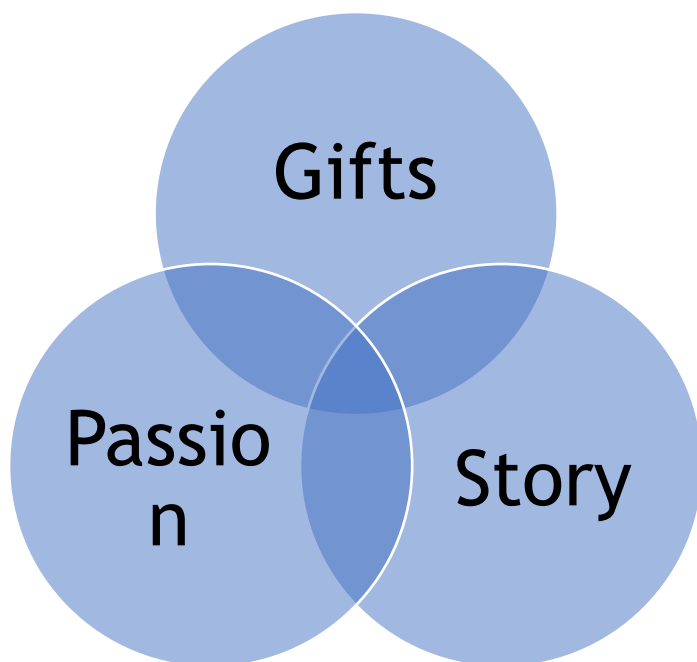
As you do this, be sure to disarm guilt and shame, because Jesus did that for you. When you look back on life you might see some events which do not look pretty: mistakes, sin, brokenness. You might hear: “Who are you to serve God when look at what you did...”

That is the enemy of your soul – Satan – which means “the accuser.” Don't let him steer your life! Don't let your future be determined by accusations over failures Jesus died to forgive!

After all, the Apostle Paul had parts of his past he wasn't proud of. He organized the jailing and execution of Jesus-followers. What if he would have let that stop him from serving as an apostle?

Peter denied knowing Jesus – what if he would have let that memory keep him from preaching on the day of Pentecost? Thousands would have missed new life in Christ! You are being redeemed by Jesus! The Church is not a collection of perfect people, but redeemed people! And any way if God only used perfect people there would be no one to serve.

Our calling Sweet Spot is where gifts, passion, and story intersect.



You might find your sweet spot at your job or you might not. You might be using your gifts, working in an area of your passion that flows out of your story. If so, that's great! You probably find a lot of meaning in your work.

For some, your work uses a couple of the three circles, but not all three – at least not fully. Still other people have jobs that don't hit any of those marks. That's OK! You can fulfill your calling no matter your job. Colossians 3:17 says,

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If you baby-sit, do it as unto the Lord. If you play point guard, do it as unto the Lord. If you audit books or stock shelves, do it as unto the Lord. "Everything is spiritual. God is redeeming it all and filling all."

You are being released into the mission filed every day! God has created you uniquely: gifted you, given you passions, you have your own story. All together – you are a masterpiece!

Decades ago, I went to the Louvre Museum, where I had a chance to see the Mona Lisa. It was created by Leonardo Da Vinci, one of the greatest artists ever. It is considered a masterpiece of Renaissance art.

It was smaller than I expected, and it was just hanging there on the wall. To a casual observer like me, who didn't know what to look for, it was sort of unimpressive. But those who know art recognize it is a work of genius.

You and I have been created by an even greater artist: God himself. We are his workmanship, -- a masterpiece --- created in Christ Jesus to good works that he has prepared for us to do.

You have been made by with a unique blend of gifts; with your own passion area, and story that is different than the person next to you. God has prepared you to make a difference in the world. You are a masterpiece of his handiwork. You are made for more than just existing.

Perhaps you are using your gifts in an area of passion and consistent with your story. You are making a difference, whether people notice it or not, God does. If you are not in your sweet spot, what can you do this week to step toward it?

Crossroads Church is expanding our Equipping Track this year to help you find your sweet spot. We've just added an experience called Calling Lab to help you in your journey. If you want more information, just use the Communicator Card or contact the office.

You are a masterpiece of God's grace!