

2/8/15  
Session #4

## Gary Brandenburg God's Masterpiece

Tom Brady was the MVP of the Super Bowl. He is a super star with four Super Bowl rings, a supermodel wife and a super-sized bank account. If anyone should be living the dream he should. But there is something missing. I'll let him tell you about it...clip.

Sounds like a prayer...“God, there's gotta be more than this.” What's the answer? “I wish I knew. I wish I knew.” That interview was 7 years ago. Maybe Brady has changed his tune but his question resonates with millions, “Why do I think there's still something greater out there for me?” In her book, *Restless*, Jenny Allen answers the question with some questions, “*What if the things you love to do collided with the plans God has laid out for you from the foundation of the earth? What if the random relationships and activities in your life all of a sudden had a focus and felt intentional and meaningful? What if the things that have caused the most hurt in your life became the birthplaces of your deepest passions? What if you could get past your fears and insecurities and spend the rest of your life running your guts out after His purposes for you?*”

The call of God turns these interrogatives into imperatives. Question marks become exclamation points when you discover your calling. God's call is not some mysterious secret hiding like a needle in a haystack that can only be discovered by the truly religious. The earth is flat, not physically but metaphorically. God created a flat world, a world where there are no “special” people but everyone is unique, created for a special or specific purpose but all to His glory. But the world is not the way it's supposed to be. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Sin distorts the call of God and hierarchies emerge. Plato, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. divided the world into “higher” and “lower” callings. The early church suffered from this philosophical hangover and divided all labor into “sacred” and “secular” work. Still today the church is divided into “clergy” and “laity.” The distortion is still with us. How can we overcome the hierarchical thinking that elevates some to superstar status while devaluing the gifts and calling of others? How can we sharpen the focus of our own calling? I want you to join me as a full-fledged member of the flat earth society by making **four affirmations**. Your calling in life will grow clearer when you can declare these **four truths**:

**1. “I am called by God.”** I beg you to reject the notion that some are called and others are not. If you are a Christian you have been called. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that the terms “calling” and “salvation” are practically synonymous. “(He) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.” 2 Timothy 1:9-11

God's calling begins with God's choosing. He chose you before you ever thought about choosing Him. “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom

He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” Ro. 8:28-30

**He** chose **us**. That means His calling is not our doing. He called us...“not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” We respond to God’s call by accepting His free gift of salvation. “By grace you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift from God; not as a result of works so that no one may boast.” Eph. 2:8-9.

In the first message of this series I made a distinction between “first things” and “next things.” We are called to some-One before we are called to some-thing. Let’s make sure we keep first things first. First and foremost you were called to know God and then to make Him known. When Jesus called His original twelve disciples, Mark says, “He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, **so that they would be with Him** and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.” Mk. 3:13-15. Knowing Jesus is the first priority of a disciple. Only as we grow in our understanding of who He is can we make Him known.

One of those first disciples, Peter, tells us that making Him known is the reason He chose us. “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Pe. 2:9.

**2. “I am called to good works.”** Eph. 2:10. This word “workmanship” is “poema.” You are God’s poem, a living expression of His heart. The God who made creation just right to accomplish His purpose, equips you and me to fulfill His purpose through us. We were created for good works. You are God’s masterpiece through whom He accomplishes His purposes on the earth.

“Good works” are not just random acts of kindness but specific works tied to the nature of the workmanship. A sovereign, all-knowing God, looked down the road to 2015 and saw what needed to be done on the earth. Then He dreamed up a person with the right combination of skills, gifts, personality, and motivation to get the job done. When He created you He stepped back and pronounced you “just right.”

I have met some people who seem to hesitate in their devotion to God out of fear He will make them do something they won’t like: “If I give God complete authority over my life, He’ll make me wear bad clothes, get a bad haircut, and ring a bell during holidays.” In other words, he won’t let me be who I really am. Why would God do that? It just doesn’t make sense. It doesn’t take much observation to see that the plan of the Creator for His creation is not one of conformity but endless diversity. God created you and equipped you with unique gifts, skills and abilities that no one else can duplicate. And then all of the sudden he asks you to do something you’re not suited for? Not likely.

**3. “I am gifted.”** God gifts those He calls. The first gift we receive is the gift of the Holy Spirit...Jn. 14:16-18. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is lives in you. God has given us this power to do the very thing He has placed us on the earth to do – to reestablish shalom...14:25-27. According to 1 Cor. 12:7, your spiritual gifts are a “manifestation of God’s Spirit.”

The Spirit of God distributes supernatural abilities to all who are called. In the book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Father Christmas gives gifts to Peter, Susan and Lucy. Peter gets a sword and shield, Susan a bow, arrows and a horn and Lucy gets a dagger and a vial that contains a healing cordial. After handing out the gifts, Father Christmas says soberly, “These are your presents – they are tools, not toys.” Your gift is not a toy but a tool.

(Show tools). These tools are not interchangeable – they were created to do a specific job. Have you ever tried to use a pair of pliers for a wrench or a hammer? What happens when you use the wrong tool on a job? Failure and frustration. Even if you manage to bang a nail into a board using a pair of pliers you will bend the nail, damage the pliers or damage your fingers. God has assigned you specific tools to do specific jobs. Having some awareness of how God has equipped me keeps me from being immobilized by needs.

The need is not the call. “The great danger in the missionary enterprise...is that God’s call may be effaced by the needs of the people until human sympathy overwhelms altogether the significance of Jesus Christ’s sending.” Oswald Chambers, *So Send I You*, p. 76.

**4. “I am a follower of Jesus.”** No amount of spiritual gifts or job satisfaction or uniqueness of calling will fill your soul. It has been suggested by some that the first half of our lives is focused on success then we can pursue significance. The scriptures commend neither. The only thing that will satisfy our soul is the presence of Jesus. We have become obsessed with understanding ourselves as if the little story we live is more important than the big story we live into.

When Jesus approached His first disciples, He said, Mt. 4:19...The call of Jesus is an invitation to a relationship, a challenge to change and an opportunity to join Him in His mission on the earth. The invitation still stands. “Follow Me and I will make you who I want you to be and show you what I want you to do.”

That’s what happened to Jamie Lyons. I want you to hear her story. She was pursuing a business degree to give her success and significance. She was not following Jesus closely but, by His grace, He was still compelling her to Teach for America. As she has grown in her faith she realizes that teaching, particularly teaching kids who need someone to believe in them, is what she was made to do.

Say it with me, “I am called by God. I am called to good works. I am gifted. I am a follower of Jesus.”