**What On Earth Am I Here For?**

**Answer the Call**

**Dr. Marty Baker | 1 Samuel 3 | October 9, 2016**

 There are three questions that most of us will wrestle with at some point in life: ***Why am I here? Does my life matter? What is my purpose?*** These questions are not exactly new questions, but people have been asking these questions since time began.

 Many of us have struggled with the “why” question: God, why do I have to put up with all of these problems? Why do I have so much stress, heartache and grief? Then the “what” question: What is the purpose of life? Then, is life worth living. We see this in the fact that the suicide rate in our society has gone up. It's now the No. 3 killer of teenage students. You see, if you take God out of the equation, you don't really have very many alternatives.

 Some people believe that being **a success** and **knowing your purpose in life** are the same thing, but they are not. **You can be a raving success in life and** **still never know**, *"What on earth am I here for?"* Why did God put me on this earth for?

 You see, the purpose of your life is far greater than your own **personal fulfillment.** It's far greater than your own happiness. Even your own peace of mind.

You were made ***by God*** and you were made ***for God*** and ***you were put here for His purposes***.

Until you understand that, life is not going to make sense.

 This series, “What on Earth Am I here for?” is based on the best-selling book, “The Purpose Driven Life.” Over the next 40 days we are going to look at **God’s calling** for our lives and how to live it out.

 You may be asking, **why 40 Days**? Well, the Bible is very clear that God considers "40 days" to be a spiritually significant time period. In fact, in the Bible, any time God wanted to prepare people for His purposes, He took 40 days. For instance:

* + Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain
	+ Moses' life was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai
	+ The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promise Land
	+ David was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge
	+ The city of Nineveh was transformed in 40 days
	+ Jesus was empowered for ministry by spending 40 days in the desert and the disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after the resurrection.

**I believe that the next 40 days can transform your life.**

 There are at least three parts to this series: the Sunday services. Try to be here each week. The weekly small group sessions and the daily devotions from the book: What on Earth am I Here for? You can order that book by texting “Purpose” to 99000.

 If you are not in a small group, it’s not too late. Stop by the welcome center in the lobby and someone will help you get connected to a small group. Or, show up here tomorrow night at 7:00 PM. Patty and I are going to be leading some round table discussions that will help you discover your purpose. We will have child care for younger kids. It will go from 7:00 – 8:00 PM.

 Let’s get started. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Romans 8:28. Some of you have heard this verse hundreds of times. It says:

**Romans 8:28**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him…

I typically stop right there. I leave off the second half of the verse. *“We know that in all things*… [Not just the good things in life, but even in the bad things, the ugly things, the terrible, the tragic things of life*.*] *In all things God works for the good of those who love him…”* It doesn’t say everything is good. There’s a lot of bad things that happen in life. This verse says that when we give it over to the Lord, He will bring something good out of it. Let’s look at the rest of the verse.

**Romans 8:28**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been **called** according to his **purpose.**

Notice the words, “Called” and “Purpose.” Calling and purpose go together. That’s what we’re going to look at for the next six weeks.

If I were to say to you, what do you think of first when I say the word “call, make a call, get a call, be called.” You think of the telephone.

Most of you consider a phone call to be an interruption; that’s why you say, “Send me a text.” In fact there are some here that refuse to answer the call, if you don’t recognize the number. I get it. I am with you. My wife, Patty, is different. Patty will answer every call and talk to every person. I see a phone call as an interruption; she sees it as an opportunity.

That’s how some people approach God. Some of you see Him as an interruption and others see him as an opportunity to make your life better.

 The Bible says you have been called. You have been called according to his purpose. A couple verses down from that verse, Romans 8:30, it says this:

**Romans 8:30**

And those he predestined, **he also called**; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

 That’s a lot of big theological words. We’re going to cover some of those in the weeks ahead. But the word I want us to focus on today is the word “called”. The Bible says, ***“You have been called by God.”***

So, if the phone rings and God is on the other line, how would you respond to his call? Would you even recognize his voice? There’s a story in the Old Testament about a young boy named Samuel.

**1 Samuel 3:3**

The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

            This verse describes the time of day ... it was bed time.  However, it also speaks of the spiritual condition of the people.  Things appeared bleak, there was spiritual darkness and confusion, but God's message had not been completely snuffed out.  God still had a small flame burning in the temple.

            The last phrase of verse three says, “Where the ark of God was”.     What is the ark?  The Ark of the Covenant housed the presence of God.  It was a physical box that contained the Ten Commandments; Aaron’s rod that budded, and manna.   The point is that God' physical presence dwelt in the ark.

            As Samuel laid down, **God called him**.

**1 Samuel 3:4**

Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am."

            When God spoke to Samuel, He called him by name. This simply reminds us that God knows who you are.  He knows where you are.  He has not forgotten you, but He calls you by name.

            Samuel heard the voice, but did not recognize the voice of God.  If God call you, how would you respond to his call? Would you recognize his voice?

 Samuel was around the presence of God and the things of God, but did not recognize the voice of God.   He thought that it was Eli, the priest with whom he lived at the temple, calling him.

**1 Samuel 3:5**

And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

            It is interesting that he "ran".  This implies that Samuel was quick to respond to the call.  Samuel did not recognize God's voice, but he made an effort to respond quickly. Sometimes you just need to make the effort.  ***You may not recognize what God is doing, but if you are willing to respond quickly you will have a better chance of receiving God’s word.***

**1 Samuel 3:6-8**

**6** Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

**7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

**8** The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy.

What we see here is that God has patience with our inexperience.

**1 Samuel 3:9-10**

**9**          So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, `Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

**10**         The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

            Notice in verse 10:  The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times."  With each call God is coming closer and closer to Samuel.  The verse states that the Lord stood there.  God was waiting for Samuel's response.  The same is true for you and me.  God is waiting for you to listen to Him.  He waiting for you to respond to His call.  Like it says in Romans 8:28: You have been called according to His purpose.

**God is waiting for you to respond to His call.**

 Over the next six weeks, we are going to look at five aspects of the call of God in your life. We are going to talk about why you are alive and what you’re supposed to be doing with the rest of your life. How do you specifically fulfill that calling?

 Let’s get started. Today, I want to quickly give you **four things you need to know about your calling in life**. The first thing we learn from God’s Word is this:

**1. Your calling is a GIFT from God.**

Your calling is a gift from God. We don’t earn it, we don’t deserve it, we do not work for it and we do not bargain for it. It’s just a flat-out gift of God’s grace. It is his present to you. When he created you, he called you. You did not deserve it and I didn’t either. That’s why it is called grace.

**Galatians 1:15**

**15**But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace

 Since my calling was given to me by God, it was given to me so that I can serve His purposes, not mine. God did not make you for you. God did not create you to live a self-centered life. **You were made by God and you were made *for* God.** You have a calling that is unique to your life. The Bible says:

**Ephesians 2:10**

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**You are God’s workmanship.** You are God’s masterpiece, created to do good. The good works in this verse refer to your contribution to the world.

**You were not put on the earth to only be a consumer;**

**You were put here to make a contribution with your life.**

Each of us has a unique role to play, a unique calling, that was given to you before you were born. And the Bible says God uniquely shaped you.

**Isaiah 44:2** (CEV)

“I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born!”

You need to remember this when you get discouraged. You are not an accident. When you feel like nobody cares, remember that God does. When you feel like your life doesn’t have a purpose. God planned you before you were born. He gave you a unique calling so you can play a role in His purpose for the world.

Because your calling was given by God, the second truth is that:

**2. Your calling is PERMANENT.**

Your calling is not contingent upon your perfect behavior. It is not contingent upon your successes or failures. My sins and my mistakes do not change my call or God’s call for my life. It doesn’t matter how messed up your life has been.

 **No matter how many dumb decisions you have made in the past, it hasn’t changed God’s call on your life.**

We say it here over and over: ***God loves you and has a plan for your life***. Some of you may feel a little bruised, a little battered, a little beat up by the world. Maybe you had somebody who was unfaithful to you. You had somebody walk out of your life, you had somebody betray you, reject you. I’m sorry.

 *But you know what?*  That has not changed any of your value in God’s eyes and that did not change God’s call on your life. You are still God’s workmanship, God’s masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. The Bible says in

**Romans 11:29**

God’s gifts and his calling are irrevocable.

 ***What does this verse teach us?*** If my calling is permanent it means this: **Your job is not your calling. Your job may change, but your calling never will.**

You’re going to have many, many jobs in life. Your job is not your calling. Jobs change all the time. Calling never changes. This is an eye opener for some of you. The Bible says *“God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn.”* Your calling is permanent.

**3. Your calling is CONNECTED to others.**

Your calling, your assignment from God in life, your purpose, the dream that God has for your life, is connected to other people.

 ***What do I mean by that?*** You cannot fulfill your purpose in life by yourself. It is impossible. You can only do it connected to other people. Calling and community go together. You cannot be what God wants you to be on your own. You cannot fulfill what God wants you to fulfill on your own. You cannot enjoy your destiny on your own. You have to do it connected to other people.

**You cannot live your calling on an island.**

 It’s like the parts of your body. They’re worthless unless they’re connected. You have an **eyeball** which is extremely gifted. It has the ability to take light, translate that to your brain, and you see things. But an eyeball outside of the socket is worthless. It can’t see anything. Because it’s not connected.

 You have to be connected to the body to fulfill your calling. The Bible calls the church the body of Christ, the family of God. But it calls it the body. And we’re all members like a hand, eye, nose, feet everything connected to the body. You’ve got to be connected.

 ***How do you get connected?***  Through a church family. That’s why we talk about small groups all the time. Because in that small group there’s a connection there where you learn from other people. They help you in your weakness, and you help them in their weakness.

Let me show you a couple of verses.

**Ephesians 4:4**

**4**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

It is only in connection, in community that I will fulfill my calling.

**Hebrews 3:1**

“Brothers and sisters, you are holy partners in a heavenly calling.”

The other people in your small group are partners in a heavenly calling. We’re better together. We’re better as a team. That’s why at church you have to be connected. We’ll talk about this more in the future.

**4. Your calling is EMPOWERED.**

 That’s the fourth thing I need to know about my calling***. Whatever God calls me to do he’s going to empower me to do.***  God empowers what he calls me to do. In other words if God has given me an assignment in life he’s going to enable me to do it, he’s going to equip me to do it. God would never ask you to do anything with your life that he doesn’t give you the power to do. Know this:

**Whatever God calls you to do,**

**He will to empower you to do it.**

 So here’s how it works. Once I understand that God has a calling on my life, then I take my next step which is to commit myself to him.

 I say, “God, whatever time I’ve got left on this earth I want to use it to fulfill your calling for me. Whether it’s a week a month, years, decades, whatever. I commit to your calling for my life.” God commits his resources to help you to do it.

**Ephesians 4:1**

“I urge you to live the life to which God called you.”

 Notice, the calling is a lifestyle. And you are to live the life to which God called you. Over the next several weeks, we are going to learn how to do it. You are going to learn live out your calling.

 Get the devotional book, ***“What on Earth am I Here for?”*** Get in a group. Invite a friend to join you along the way.

 Let me review: My calling is a gift from God; I’m called for God’s purpose, not my own; My calling is permanent – nothing can take it away; My calling is connected to others – I’ve got to be connected to the body or it doesn’t work; God will empower me to do what he calls me to do.

 We are all at different stages in our spiritual journey. Some of you are seekers, and you're saying, "I'm not even sure I buy this, but I'm intellectually honest enough to check it out." Some of you are brand new believers. The next forty days are going to help you start your Christian journey off right.

 Some of you are what I call ***"stumblers."*** You say, "I call myself a Christian, but I'm not really very close to God. And I've been really, honestly, living for my plans and not God's." Well this 40 days is the time to come home.

 Some of you are strong believers, and you're going to go deeper with God than you've ever gone before and you're going to bring others along, too. Regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey, I want you to take your next step. I want you to answer the call.

 **Let me circle back to those who are seekers**. We talked earlier about the story of Samuel in the Old Testament. God called him three times, but he did not recognize God’s voice.

 There are some of you listening to me today that are just like Samuel. God is calling, the spiritual phone is ringing, are you going to answer the call?

***Are you going to pick up the phone?*** God’s call for you has been ringing from the point of your conception.

**God is waiting for you to answer His call.**

 Some of you have just been ignoring it! God’s saying, I’m not hanging up. Will you pick up the phone and today say, I’m going to begin to discover, develop and live the call that God made for me. That I will learn what on earth am I here for and I will spend the rest of my life learning to do that.

 I’m going to pray for you in just a second. We’re going to pray a prayer of blessing. ***But you have to make the decision, am I going to answer God’s call?***

You were made ***by God*** and you were made ***for God*** and ***you were put here for His purposes***.

Until you understand that, life is not going to make sense.

 Will you give your life to Him today? Ask Jesus to be the leader and the Lord of your life? Are you ready to take that step? Let’s pray.

**Prayer**