

REAL SUCCESS

— *at work* —



BRIAN RAY *Founder of Crossroads Career Network*



Real Success at Work

Hearing and Following God's Calling

imagine

Imagine getting up every day with the conviction that you are on the planet for a purpose. How fulfilled and fruitful would you be to know that you and your work matter to God and that He is pleased? How great would it be to experience real success?

What do I mean by real success? I mean a comprehensive success that transcends the workplace, a success that permeates your home, school, community, and all areas of your life. This success is not a fake that promises fulfillment and delivers only emptiness after you arrive.

Real success is accomplishing genuinely purposeful work, not only for blessings and benefits in this world but also for eternal impact and rewards. Let's start by looking at the core of success:

[You] are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that [you] would walk in them. EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB

1. You are God's workmanship
2. Created in Christ Jesus for good works
3. Which God prepared beforehand
4. So that you would walk in them

If this is true, what are the implications and applications in your life, your work, and your relationships? Who are you as God's workmanship? What does it mean to be created in Christ Jesus for good works? How can you discover works God has already prepared? How will you walk in them? The answers to these questions lie in the truth that you can hear God's calling—not only calling you into relationship but also calling you to follow Him. This truth can transform success into a reality in you.

In each chapter you will find thoughts and questions, key verses and summary points, group discussion questions, and suggestions to help you go deeper in your time with God.

So grab a Bible, pen, paper, this study and a few good friends and discover there's more to living than you thought.

Hearing and following God's calling,

Brian C. Ray

Founder, Crossroads Career® Network

Contents

discover the real you.	6
created for good works	15
God prepared beforehand	24
you can do it	33
congratulations	41
tools for the facilitator	42

discover the real you

When you were in middle or high school, what did you dream of doing as an adult?

As you think about your dreams as a teen and reality as an adult, consider this:

We are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB

How does your life compare with what you had imagined? Are you where you thought you would be? Are you doing what you expected? Do you lie in bed at night wondering, "Is this really all there is?"

Perhaps you find yourself stuck in what seems like an endless daily routine, wondering whether life will ever deliver more.

Get up. Get ready. Eat Breakfast.
Go to work. Have more coffee. Say hello to the boss. Read emails.
Answer the phone. Go to meetings.
Get some work done.

Go to lunch.
Go to more meetings. Return phone calls. Answer emails.
Get more work done.
Go home. Watch the news.

Eat dinner.
Read the mail. Pay the bills. Watch "must see" TV.
Answer emails. Return phone calls.
Go to bed.

Repeat.

Or maybe it's even worse than that. Maybe you work for an impossible boss. Maybe your job is filled with tasks you despise, which leaves you feeling used, abused, and refused.

On the other hand, your work situation might be great, full of activity, accomplishments and prosperity! Maybe you're thinking, "It doesn't get any better than this!"

I'm suggesting that it can get better—even if it already seems great. God's idea of "abundant life" JOHN 10:10 is likely to be much greater than any of us imagine!

Are you doing what you thought you would be doing at this point in your life? Why or why not?

Do you believe you were created for more than you're currently experiencing? Why or why not?

No matter what you are doing, you have the opportunity to define your existence by who you are—not merely by what you have done. Gary O'Malley, a consultant on performance improvement, explains it this way:

"If what you do is who you are, then when you don't, you aren't." LIFE PURPOSE IN A NUTSHELL

If your real identity is not the sum of your accomplishments, then we are back to the question: who are you? I finally found my answer to that question when I studied this key verse:

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB

It is an amazing revelation to really know that I am God's workmanship! As we begin in our journey together, we will explore the meaning of each key word in that first phrase:

We: *who we are*
are His: *whose we are*
workmanship: *why we are here*

Who are you?

If your life were investigated, what would the report reveal about who you are, aside from what you do?

Whose are you?

As you seek to discover who you are, you must first understand whose you are. Let's start by looking at who God is. The MERRIAM WEBSTER DICTIONARY ONLINE defines God as:

The supreme or ultimate reality: as the Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness who is worshipped as creator and ruler of the universe.

The best-selling book of all time, THE BIBLE, describes who God is throughout.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them.

GENESIS 1:1; 27-28 NASB

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-17 NIV

So, whose are you? You are much more than the offspring of your parents; you are God's own creation and possession! Read through this wonderful praise to God from the Psalms.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book. PSALM 139:13-16 NIV

Why must you know whose you are before you can really know who you are?

Why are you here?

Now, let's look at our key verse again, using a different translation:

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.
EPHESIANS 2:10 NLT

A masterpiece is "a work done with extraordinary skill," as defined by Webster. I don't believe you get a masterpiece by accident. A masterpiece is intentional, carefully considered and planned—created on purpose by the Master!

God made you on purpose.

God made you for a purpose.

Therefore, you and your work matter to Him!

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. COLOSSIANS 1:16 NASB

Wow! There is a sense of freedom and exhilaration that comes from knowing we are made on purpose by Him and for Him. What experiences and qualities do you have that suggest that you are His unique workmanship made for some purpose?

When teaching career events, I often play a song by Michael W. Smith called "My Place in This World." I ask the participants to close their eyes and listen to it. Then I read the verses aloud

The wind is moving, but I am standing still
 A life of pages waiting to be filled
 A heart that's hopeful, a head that's full of dreams
 But this becoming is harder than it seems

If there are millions down on their knees
 Among the many can you still hear me?
 Hear me asking where do I belong
 Is there a vision that I can call my own?
 Feels like I'm

Looking for a reason
 Roaming through the night to find my place in this world
 My place in this world
 Not a lot to lean on—I need your light to help me find
 My place in this world

What thoughts and feelings came to mind while reading these lyrics?
Have you found your place in this world? If so, how did you do it? If not,
how will you?

As you've answered these questions about your identity and purpose, you
might have found yourself still searching for the "right" answer.

Let me encourage you. The discovery of your identity and purpose
requires hearing God call you into relationship with Him and following
wherever He leads. You were made to glorify God and responding to His
call will lead you to experience real success at work.

If you were to rate your real success at work on a 10-point scale, with 10
being the maximum success score, what rating would you give and why?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Scripture

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB

Summary

1. You are God's workmanship
2. Created in Christ Jesus for good works
3. Which God prepared beforehand
4. So that you would walk in them

Discussion Questions

1. When you were young, what was your dream job? How does it compare with where you are now?
2. What struck you most during your study of this chapter?
3. If you are God's workmanship made on purpose for a purpose, what experiences and qualities do you have that suggest that you are His unique workmanship?
4. Have you found your place in this world? If so, how did you do it? If not, how will you?

Going Deeper

I think everyone can benefit from this encouragement regardless of where you are in your relationship with God. In your search to find your identity as God's workmanship and to discover the works He has prepared for you, commit to daily time with Him. If having daily quiet time with God is new for you, let me share some tips from Bob Foster's plan, *Seven Minutes with God: How to Have Daily Quiet Time*.

Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. Thank Him for the good night of sleep and the opportunities of this new day. "Lord, cleanse my heart so You can speak to me through the scriptures. Open my heart. Fill my heart. Make my mind alert, my soul active, and my heart responsive. Lord, surround me with Your presence during this time. Amen."

Now take four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear from God. I recommend beginning with the Gospel of John. Soon you'll want to read the entire New Testament!

After God has spoken to you through His word, then speak to Him through prayer. Use these last two minutes to appreciate who God is, to confess the bad stuff in your life, thank Him for the good and ask Him for more.

This is simply a guide. My prayer is that you will find it impossible to spend only seven minutes with the Lord. Soon seven minutes will become ten, twenty, even thirty! During your time with the Lord this week, ask Him to reveal evidence that He has made you His masterpiece.

Further Study

Use an online Bible search tool like www.studylight.org and look up "purpose." Choose a few passages to study in context. What revelations do you have about your purpose?

created for good works

As you discovered in the first chapter, God made you on purpose for a purpose. This means, He must have created you uniquely to fulfill that purpose. We studied Psalm 139 and learned that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. So, what exactly does that mean?

Let's explore how you are gifted and impassioned. You are a one-of-a-kind creation with specific experiences, abilities, interests, personality and values. Let's revisit our core verse:

*We are [God's] workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.* EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB

Let me share with you a true, biographical story I call "PIGEONS, PEOPLE AND GOOD WORKS."

I wanted a meeting with the Vice President of Sales for a company I wanted to represent. He had a reputation as impossible to meet, so I decided to do something unusual to get his attention and an appointment. I rented a homing pigeon.

Seriously! I put the pigeon in a special delivery cage and attached a note:

Introducing Flash, the homing pigeon!
If you would like your sales to fly,
Please write a date and time that I can see you.
Put your note in Flash's special pouch.

I included a business card and instructions. A few hours later, the pigeon's owner called; the pigeon had returned and I had an appointment with "Mr. Impossible."

There are two lessons that I have taken from this experience:

1. God has gifted people with a wide variety of abilities. There are people passionate about breeding, raising and training homing pigeons. There are others who are crazy enough to rent them to make sales calls!
2. God intends for you to use your gifts—whatever they are—in service to others. Both the pigeon breeder and I employed our gifts and passions in our work. As a result, we were led to greater

opportunities for service. The breeder was able to make money through renting their pigeon and I landed the meeting. When you use your gifts in service to others, you will likely be led to greater opportunities for service—not only at work but in every area of life.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 PETER 4:10 NIV

What does it mean to use your gifts to serve others? Are you using your gifts and passions to serve others? How or why not?

As God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, you are unique. You were designed for a specific purpose that only you can fulfill. This distinctive role causes you to reflect a unique aspect of God's glory.

How are you currently reflecting God's glory?

This counter-cultural shift in thinking provides a unique market advantage for you. Consider this principle:

There is no one like you—anywhere.
 There never has been—there never will be.
 You are unique—individually crafted by the hand of God.

Let's explore the relationship between our individuality and the good works in Christ Jesus we were created for in three parts.

1. Five Factors of Your Unique Design
2. Introducing the X-Factor
3. For Good Works

Five Factors of Your Unique Design

These five factors can help you discover and better understand you gifts, passions and calling. Completing this exercise will help you get a snapshot of your unique design.

1. **Experiences:** your background—personal, educational, vocational

2. **Abilities:** what you do best—talents, knowledge, skills

3. **Interests:** what you like best—people, places, things, activities you enjoy

4. **Personality:** how you do what you do best—natural behavior

5. **Values:** what is important to you—work and life purpose and principles

Now, let's summarize the five factors of your unique design in two ways: gifts and passions. Your gifts are the combination of your experiences (personal, educational, vocational), abilities (talents, knowledge, skills) and your personality (natural behaviors).

Experiences + Abilities + Personality = Gifts

Your personal passions include both your interests (what you like most) and your values (what is really important to you).

Interests + Values = Passions

Introducing the X-Factor

Dictionary.com defines X factor as, "a variable in a situation that could have the most significant impact on the outcome." As believers, our X-factor is the active presence of Jesus Christ—through the Holy Spirit—in our whole lives. It is His presence that has the greatest impact on our situations and helps determine the outcome. It begins the moment you are created anew in Christ Jesus by accepting Him as your Lord and Savior.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 NASB

The X-factor brings to life the real you as God's workmanship. Many people believe that your capacity and passions, ignited by the Holy Spirit, are transformed into spiritual gifts.

I must confess that as a Christian, I went a lot of years without being aware of the Holy Spirit and the important role He could play in my life. I was aware of my capacity and passions, but it never occurred to me that they might become supernatural.

I don't mean to frighten you or give you the heebie-jeebies; I just want to open your eyes to the thought that you have much greater power and wisdom available to you when you follow the Holy Spirit's leadership. So, let me ask you, what might happen in your life if you allowed the X-factor to ignite the unique qualities you identified in the Five Factors? What would change? What would stay the same?

You are gloriously unique. Made on purpose for a purpose in Christ to do good works for which He created you. As a formula, it would look like this:

Experiences + Abilities + Personality + Interests + Values

Multiplied by the X Factor

Equals Created for Good Works

For Good Works

In the beginning, God worked and it was good, creating the heavens, earth and man.

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

GENESIS 1:31 NASB

God commissioned that man should work too.

Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. GENESIS 2:15 NASB

After the man and woman broke God's command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God said:

"Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you..." GENESIS 3:17B–18A

Let's look at your current job as "good" or "bad" and rate your current work life on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the best.

Fun tasks	_____
Competent/cooperative people	_____
Pleasant environment	_____
Meaningful mission	_____
Positive results	_____
Lots of money	_____
Nice boss	_____

Now, consider what the Bible says about our attitude toward work:

. . . obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. COLOSSIANS 3:22–24 NASB

Good works are not determined by external factors, rather, works are made good when we work whole-heartedly for the Lord. The issue is not only what work you are doing, but HOW you are doing it.

A friend once came to me with his struggles at work. He felt that his boss was unreasonable and overly demanding. He proceeded to tell me this story:

"My boss is constantly on my case. He thinks my office is a mess, that I make personal calls on company time and that I am always

late. What he doesn't understand is that to the untrained eye my desk might look like a mess, but I know exactly where everything is. I might make a personal call here and there during the work day and occasionally I have been known to slide in a little late, but I stay late every day to make up for it, so it shouldn't matter to him as long as I am getting the work done, right?"

I understood his plight. It was not the first time I had heard this similar story. Can you guess what advice I gave him? It was simple: clean up your office, quit making personal calls during the day and arrive on time—or better yet—early. I asked him to implement these changes over the next 30 days, and then we would revisit the issue of his unreasonable boss.

Can you guess what happened 30 days later? He and his boss were changed men. My friend honored his boss and the boss was pleased! The issue wasn't the boss or even the work. The issue was how my friend did his work.

Are you working "heartily, as for the Lord" in your work? If yes, how? If not, how can you affect the circumstance by adopting this biblical mindset?

Scripture

*Whatever you do, work
at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord.*
COLOSSIANS 3:23 NIV

Summary

1. God has given you unique gifts
2. God has created you with unique passions
3. God's Spirit empowers you for your calling
4. Your diligence results in good works

Discussion Questions

1. What struck you most in this chapter?
2. How would you describe your gifts, passions and calling?
3. For what good works do you think you are created?
4. On a 10-point scale (10 is the highest), do you work with your whole heart?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Going Deeper

Increase your alone time with the Lord by five minutes. Ask Him for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ as it relates to your experiences, abilities, personality, interests, values and spiritual gifts.

God prepared beforehand

Now comes the fun part of our core verse—the part that almost stops you in your tracks as you wonder, “how’d He do that?”

*We are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand** so that we would walk in them. EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB*

Walking in the good works He has for you requires the application of your gifts and passions with all of your heart for the Lord. Think about the implications of the phrase “which God prepared beforehand” and write down your thoughts and feelings.

When I first read this phrase, I freaked! After all we have studied so far, you might be asking yourself the same questions that I pondered.

- Is that really His voice?
- What if He calls me to Africa?
- What about MY goals and MY plans?
- How in the world do I figure out His plan?
- What if I misunderstand and botch it all up?
- What if I don’t want to do what He has prepared?
- Am I seeing His vision for my future or a hallucination?

Which of these questions do you identify with the most? What other questions occur to you?

Everything I knew about my profession as a recruiter was turned inside out. My whole process of career planning reversed. Just imagine this opening line: "I am looking for the person God selected for the work He prepared." It sounds crazy! I tried to ignore this truth for years. Then, on a trip to China, the Lord absolutely ripped the floorboards out of my foundational principles of career planning and recruiting.

I listened to testimony after testimony from people of all walks of life—factory workers, managing directors, orphanage helpers and missionaries—about God calling and them following, even though they felt neither equipped nor impassioned. Here are two sound bites out of the multitude of stories that I heard:

"I was a computer consultant in London visiting in Dallas, believing God wanted me to network for a job in China. I met business owners who wanted to start a factory there, and they believed that I was the person God had selected. I knew nothing about their product line, nothing about manufacturing and nothing about management. I did not speak the language very well. That was three years ago."

When I heard this story, we were touring his very successful, growing factory with 70 employees, low turnover and high productivity.

"I was a factory worker, and through my church, a friend invited me to volunteer working with children in an orphanage. I did not want to go and did not like working there. Yet, afterward, I felt God wanted me to go back and apply for a job. I said to Him, "Please God, if you want me to work there, would you please give me a heart for the children?"

I can still see her in the orphanage with her arms around her adopted son, talking with great joy and peace about God’s faithfulness to give her “skills and a heart for the children.”

These stories, and many others, led me to the conclusion that God’s calling is more important than gifts and passions. These are crucial for being a good steward of that calling, but they are not the determinants of His plan. His calling was placed on our lives before we ever even knew what our gifts were. God doesn’t always call the equipped, but He always equips the called.

Practical Application

You may find yourself wondering how to discern God’s will for your life. How do you find the work that He prepared for you? As you seek to find where God is calling you, it is important to evaluate, understand, and present your current situation to Him. Wisely manage all He has already given you—especially your abilities, interests, personality and values. Here are four steps to help you steward yourself well:

1. **Plan:** Develop a plan. How are you currently managing your time, talent and treasures? Where might He want you to invest them? What are the current opportunities that you have? Seek wise counsel. Submit your plan to the Lord through daily quiet times.
2. **Organize:** Identify what you need to do to accomplish the plan He has given you. Ask the Lord to order your steps.
3. **Act:** Get started. Faith always requires an action. Whatever He’s called you to do, do it. Ask Him to open and close doors. Actively listen for His guidance and direction.
4. **Follow Up:** Are you getting the results you planned for? Why or why not? What is God trying to teach you through this process? Ask for His will, not yours, to be done.

How are you currently being a good steward of your resources (time, talent and treasure)? Knowing what you know now, what might you do differently?

Ask God for a spirit of wisdom and revelation with your whole heart—the seat of all understanding and discernment. When Solomon asked God for an understanding heart to discern between good and evil, God responded by increasing not only his heart, but his mind.

It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord. . . God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. 1 KINGS 3:10, 4:29 NASB

While seeking God's wisdom and revelation, wait actively. Bloom where you are planted. LUKE 16:10 shows us the value in stewarding what we have wherever we find ourselves "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much..."

Spiritual Application

Finding God's will requires a deep desire and effort on your part. As we shift from practical to spiritual applications, think about this Psalm:

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. PSALM 37:3-4 NASB

Drawing near to God will help you know who He is and what He is calling you to. Some basic principles in connecting to God that we can practice are: worship, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, confession, journaling and obedience.

1. **Worship:** When you begin to see God for who He really is, awesome and majestic, you cannot help but to praise and worship Him! When you focus on God instead of your circumstances, the very things that have brought you to your knees begin to shrink at the might of God. When we get in God's presence through worship, He changes us. Then, we can change and impact our circumstances.

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. PSALM 29:1-2 NIV

2. **Bible Study:** The Bible is God's authority and manual for living. Consider it daily bread and eat from it daily. If you have never read the Bible, I would recommend beginning with the Gospel of Mark or John, Ephesians and Psalms or ask someone who studies the Word to recommend a good Bible study.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light on my path.
PSALM 119:105 NIV

3. **Prayer:** God is always available and wants to know you and your story. Converse with Him daily. Try praying scripture:

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life. PSALM 143:8 NIV

4. **Listen to God:** Remember that prayer is a conversation. It is important to listen to the Word of the Lord.

Be still and know that I am God. PSALM 46:10 NIV

5. **Be alert for God's Peace:** When you pray and study the Bible, be aware of any thoughts or feelings that you have and be alert for God's peace. He can bring calm into the midst of any storm.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
PHILIPPIANS 4:7 NIV

6. **Be with other Christians:** Spend time with other Christians. Study the Bible together, pray and encourage one another. Follow the ABC's: Accountability, Belonging and Care.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more... HEBREWS 10:24-25 NIV

7. **Seek Wise Counsel:** In fellowship, seek wise counsel. This can be received from friends or acquaintances that have specific wisdom they can share. If you are making a decision in a specific area of your life, find someone who has what you are looking for and glean from their knowledge. For example: if your work feels empty and you want it to feel full, find someone who loves their work and is walking in the fulfillment of God's calling at their workplace.

Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. PROVERBS 1:5 NIV

8. **Unfolding Circumstances:** Consider unfolding circumstances. Consciously invite God into your decision-making process as you pray about each situation. Evaluate counsel, circumstances, what you sense in prayer and God's word and remember that when the Bible speaks clearly about an issue, all else must yield. Open doors do not always equal God's will.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. EPHESIANS 5:15-16 NIV

9. **Confession:** A clear head is critical in thinking through options and seeking God's calling. It is easy to become confused, especially if sin obstructs your relationship with the Lord. As soon as you become aware of sin in your life, confess it and clear it away each day.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 JOHN 1:9 NASB

10. **Journaling:** It can be helpful to keep track of what you learn from your Bible reading, thoughts you have during prayer, advice you receive from your friends, unfolding circumstances and things that bring you God's peace. Over the coming days, weeks or even years, you will see trends and revelations from which you can draw instruction, encouragement and stimulation.

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book." JEREMIAH 30:2 NASB

11. **Trust and Obey:** There is no other way! If you think the Lord wants you to do something that aligns with scripture, counsel, peace and presence, then do it! If He calls, obey immediately. If He shows you the next step, walk it. Obedience operates like a power company: obey God in each step and He generates the power and light for you to see the next step. Consider what Jesus said:

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

JOHN 14:21 NIV

As you hear and follow God's calling, you'll learn more about the gifts and passions He has given for accomplishing His unique purpose for your life. As you follow God step-by-step, you will find yourself to be the right person in the right place at the right time.

On a 10-point scale, how well you are hearing God, 10 being perfectly?

Take comfort in the fact that God designed you beforehand. Discovering what God is calling you to do should be neither fearful nor restricting; rather, it is exciting and liberating. What I've learned is that spending time alone with Him is the key to discerning what He wants to do with you. When we seek to know God earnestly, He reveals Himself to us.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you . . .

JAMES 4:8 NASB

Based on the principles listed above, how can you position yourself to hear God's voice more clearly?

Scripture

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. PSALM 37:4

Summary

1. God created unique works for you
2. Walking in them is a present-tense activity
3. Practical steps guide our discovery
4. Our Father knows what's best

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about the idea that God has prepared good works for you?
2. What work do you think the Lord is preparing for you?
3. How well do you think you are hearing the Lord's calling?
4. In what ways can you improve your hearing?

Going Deeper

Try to increase your time alone with the Lord by an additional seven minutes this week. As part of your extended time with God, try the ACTS prayer model provided below.

Adoration:

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 1 CHRONICLES 29:11 NIV

Confession:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 JOHN 1:9 NIV

Thanksgiving:

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18 NIV

you can do it

*We are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand **so that we would walk in them.*** EPHESIANS 2:10 NASB

By now you know that God designed you uniquely with gifts, passions and a specific purpose just for you. No one else fits His description of you and no one else ever will! You were created in His image to reflect His glory and walk in the works He has prepared in advance for you. If God prepared it, you can do it! So, what does that look like? Like David when he faced Goliath!

And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" ... Then Saul clothed David... So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off. He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground.

1 SAMUEL 17:37-40, 48-49 NASB

In 1 SAMUEL 17, I saw several principles of how to walk in the work God has prepared—regardless of how impossible and fearful it might seem:

- Trust and obey
- Show up and step out
- Remember past victories God has given you
- Compare how our big God makes things that seem impossible small
- Use the weapons with which He has trained and equipped you
- Face the fear and when it is time, run quickly into the battle

So, what Goliaths do you face in your life?

To walk in the works God has prepared for you requires both strength and courage. Look at the story of David and see how his brothers mocked him, how the king challenged him and how Goliath taunted him. Not only did David have to face his enemy, but he also had to overcome his family and king.

Isn't this a small picture of what life is like today? You get a sense of what God might be calling you to do, but as soon as you mention it to someone, doubt and fear creep in to convince you that will fail. As a result, many of us give up on the calling altogether. But what are we missing when we give up so easily?

If EPHESIANS 2:10 is true about you, that **you** are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works that He planned in advance so that **you** would walk in them, what work has He prepared for you? (Remember, no work is too big or too small.)

What changes or decisions do you need to make in order to walk in the works God has prepared?

Just like David, we need to move forward fearlessly when we are walking in the direction that God has shown us.

This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."

JEREMIAH 6:16 NIV

Crossroads are decisive moments in our lives that are engineered by God. I can picture a crossroads formed by the shadow of the cross of Christ laid across our path—providing a way for us to come to Him.

Crossroads require us to choose a direction. Because of this, our natural tendency is to avoid or rush through them impulsively. But God can use these decision points to develop our character, integrity, patience, perseverance, endurance, faith, trust and obedience. At this place of crossing, there is cost, risk and fear that can create a gap, or a "crisis of faith."

Questions and doubts often surface. Am I hearing God right? What if I fail? What if I have to give something up? Most often I hear some version of "I can't afford" to follow. Until we are ready to give God all that we are and all that we have, we will miss the abundant life that He offers.

It's one thing to hear God calling; it's another to follow Him.

In what area of your life do you believe God is seeking to take you outside your comfort zone?

What changes do you need to make for God to grow you into the works He has for you?

Do not let fear keep you from walking in the "good way."

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline. 2 TIMOTHY 1:7 NLT

I remember a time when I was afraid to approach a prominent business-person about an idea I thought God wanted me to share. A friend asked why I was afraid. I said, "I don't want to fail!" My friend then told me:

"Success is not the point. Obedience is the point. It's through obedience that God makes us who he wants us to be."

— PATTI GORDON

As you hear and follow God in obedience, you will discover new opportunities. You will learn more about the gifts and passions He has given you as well as His unique purpose for your life. When you walk in accordance with His word, you will find yourself to be the right person in the right place at the right time.

For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

2 CHRONICLES 16:9 NASB

You will have to shut out the noise of this world, be still, and wait on the Lord to show you the next step. Sometimes it means leaving your comfort zone, surrendering your plans and expectations to Him; learning to embrace His faithfulness, obey His calling, and trust Him with the outcomes. His promise is that He wants to give you immeasurably more than you could ask or imagine. Don't let your fear of failure keep you from experiencing God's best for you.

What do you think God wants you to do? Are you willing to do it? Why or why not?

Ask God to remove the obstacles of fear from your life. Allow Him to show you the "good way." Take courage and steps in that direction. Remember that even if something appears impossible, it is Him-possible if He has called you to do it!

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NASB

Do you believe that this is true? If so, what is the next step you can take to begin experiencing the life that God created beforehand for you to walk in?

As we begin to wrap up our time together, let me encourage you. You are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that you would walk in them. The God who created the universe created you. He has a plan for you. And no one can thwart that plan when you are hearing and following His calling.

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” – Anonymous

The words **success** and **failure** do not define who you are. God does. You, my friend, are His masterpiece, and you can do all things through Him who strengthens you!

Scripture

I can do all things through him who gives me strength.
PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NIV

Summary

1. God prepared works for us to walk in
2. Crossroads are decision points set by God
3. Our focus is obedience rather than success
4. God gives success through our obedience

Discussion Questions

1. What are the good works God prepared for you to walk in?
2. What Goliaths do you face?
3. What can you do to overcome these giants?
4. What will you do if you don't earn or have enough money?

Going Deeper

Hopefully you have discovered that your time alone with the Lord each day is invaluable. It gives you an opportunity to hear from Him and order your thoughts for the day.

As you continue to seek the work He has for you to walk in, I would encourage you to take a personal retreat. Spend a half-day alone, away from the noise of the world and be still with the Lord. Together you can explore His plan for your life through prayer and His word.

- Ask God to reveal the good works He has prepared for you
- Meditate on how to walk in them
- Offer praise and thanksgiving
- Ask Him for your next steps

Find one short passage to concentrate on this week. If you don't know which one, consider this:

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18 NASB

Further Study

Many people that I counsel often voice some version of “I can’t afford” to follow Him. Please don’t let money be a stronghold that keeps you from experiencing all that God has for you in this life. As you consider your life, work, career and job, there are two competing truths:

1. It’s always about money
2. It’s always about more than money

God has a lot to say about money. There are 2,350 verses in the Bible that deal with it, including most of Jesus’ parables. These four principles will help you see God’s perspective on money.

1. How we handle money impacts our relationship with God:

“Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of [worldly] wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?”

LUKE 16:11 NASB

2. God is the owner of all:

“Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord”

1 CHRONICLES 29:11 NLT

3. God requires absolute honesty:

“You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.”

LEVITICUS 19:11 NASB

4. Jesus taught that faithful and profitable handling of money is rewarded:

“Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents,” His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master’”

MATTHEW 25: 20-21 NASB

congratulations

We encourage you to celebrate your successful completion of this study with a time of fellowship. Also, remember each other in prayer this week. Here is a simple prayer to start you out:

O God, please help me to hear and follow your calling and know the good works that you have prepared for me. Grant me Your wisdom, strength and courage to walk in Your works successfully.

If this study has stimulated you to look deeper into finding God's calling for your life, please visit www.crossroadscareer.org/store to check out "7 steps to jobs, careers and God's calling," the Crossroads Career Work Book. It teaches the 7 steps to exploring crossroads in your career.



The Work Book combines teachings, exercises and devotionals all designed to lead you in discovering and reaching your gifts, passions and God's call on your life. Signup at www.crossroadscareer.org for free online Career Dashboard with fresh job postings, career tips and Scriptural encouragement daily. Explore more than 200 career development and job search resources.

tools for the facilitator

Thank You for You

Crossroads Career® Network has prepared a comprehensive study to bring the principles of this series alive in each participant's life. Your job is to guide your group through the study sessions, discussion questions and exercises, allowing them to discover the concepts, embrace their meaning and apply them to their lives.

Real Success at Work: Hearing and Following God's Calling is a four-week experience that equips the people in your group to experience God's presence in their lives when they wonder "What is God's will for my life?"; "Is there more to life than just this?"; or "Is it okay to want to be happy in the work I do?"

The study leads participants through a multitude of scriptures in the process of understanding EPHESIANS 2:10 through reading and analysis during the week. They can reflect on God's word and apply it to their circumstances.

At the end of each chapter, there are discussion questions to create conversation for your group. You will also find "Going Deeper" and "Further Study" sections after each chapter that offer additional quiet time suggestions and more in-depth study.

Getting Started: 5 easy steps

Several basic ingredients are essential to any successful group study. Before you plan the first meeting, you should work through these fundamental elements to get a great start for your group.

1. **Pray:** Only God can change people's hearts and prayer is your most powerful tool. As the leader of your group, start here.
2. **Organize:** Consider asking one or two other people to share the leadership load by helping you plan, promote the series, distribute materials, etc.
3. **Gather Materials:** Before starting the course, make sure that every participant has their own copy of the study guide. You may want to have extra copies on hand to accommodate late additions to your group.
4. **Send Reminders:** Send emails to the group every week to encourage them to attend. Remember to follow up with participants to make them feel welcome.

5. **Prepare:** Prepare to lead the sessions by completing the chapters ahead of time. Notice which questions you are drawn to and think of personal, relevant experiences that you can share with the group. Feel free to improvise and adapt this study to fit your participants.

Tips for the Successful Facilitator

Love and encourage: The leader's primary responsibility is to love and encourage group members. People are more receptive to spiritual truth when they have been loved. People want to know how much a leader cares before they care how much a leader knows.

Be Yourself: The others in your group will appreciate and follow your example of openness and honesty as you lead, so set a good example! Your sincere desire to live out these principles in your own life will show your group your commitment to truth and transparency. When they feel loved and safe, they will be more likely to share the challenges they are facing and give them the courage to overcome them.

Guide the Discussion: The discussion questions will encourage interesting conversation in your group. However, you can also lose focus if the topic wanders. Try not to discourage people by suggesting that their opinions are inappropriate; instead, gently guide the discussion back to a related topic that is covered in the study. This will help you make sure that the discussion always represents biblical teaching.

How to Structure Your Group Time

This study is designed to fit into a 60- or 90- minute segment over four weeks. You can take longer for discussion or to review the previous week's material if time permits.

Before the Course: We recommend an introductory meeting to start your group where you hand out materials and get acquainted with your group members. Encourage everyone to share a little bit about themselves: name, profession, how they heard about the group, one thing they hope to gain and maybe a funny or interesting personal fact.

Before Each Class

1. Complete the study and review the discussion questions.
2. Spend additional time in the “Going Deeper” section, particularly in prayer for the group. Remember to check out the available online resources and encourage your participants to do the same.

In Class

1. Review the Content: What stood out to you? What challenged you? What were the top one or two takeaways from each week’s study that you want to implement?
2. Discussion Questions: Encourage everyone to share and participate
3. Meeting Format: 10-15 minutes to meet, greet and pray.
10-15 minutes to review the content
20-40 minutes for group discussion
10-15 minutes for prayer requests and group prayer

After Class

1. Encourage group members to complete the study prior to each meeting.
2. Pray for each member by name every week.

About Crossroads Career Network

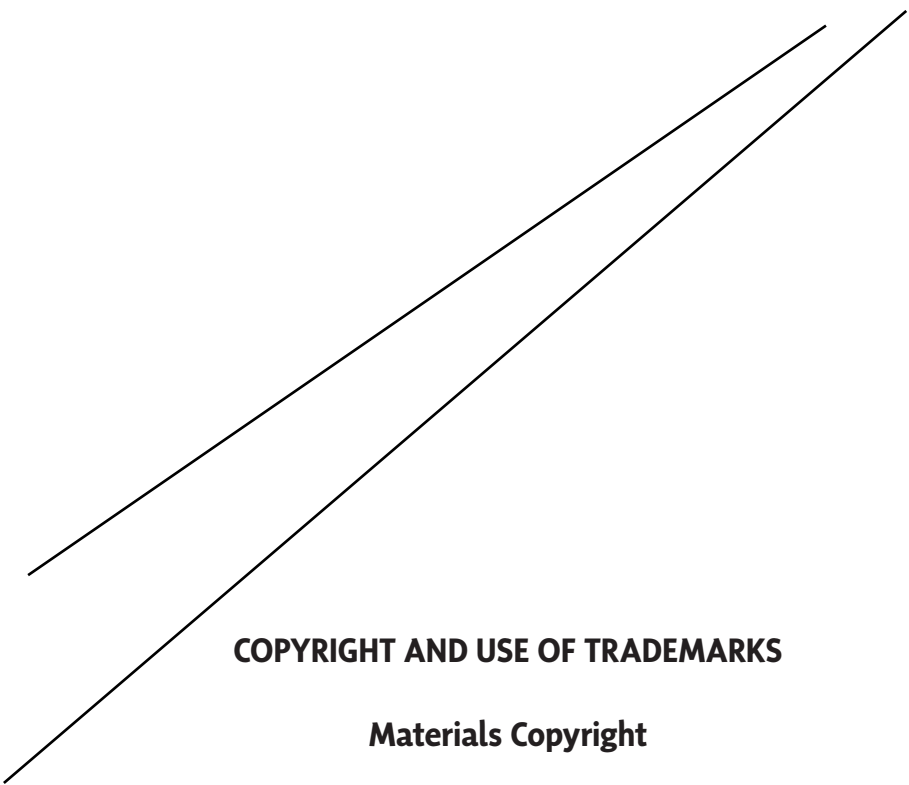
Crossroads Career Network helps people find jobs, careers and God's calling. It is a national membership of church and community organizations, schools and colleges, and professional affiliates in workforce development, coaching, counseling and consulting. We provide faith-based career and job search online resources combined with on-the-ground, person-to-person help.

More than 150 million Americans face crossroads in their careers every year. Over 20 million are unemployed or underemployed. Of those employed, 72% are actively disengaged or unengaged in their jobs. We teach a 7-step process that helps people to hear and follow God's calling, as they explore careers and search for the right job.

About the Author

Brian Ray is the founder of the Crossroads Career Network. Formerly, he was VP for Human Resources and Administration for the Chick-fil-A restaurants chain and owner of Primus Consulting, an executive leadership search and consulting firm.

Brian is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a BA in Journalism and the University of Illinois with an MS in Communications. Brian and his wife, Kristy, reside near Charlotte, North Carolina and are members of Transformation Church.



COPYRIGHT AND USE OF TRADEMARKS

Materials Copyright

Crossroads Career® Ministry materials are copyright © 2001-2015 by Crossroads Career® Services, Inc. All rights reserved. Paid annual member organizations and professionals of the Crossroads Career® Network are granted permission to duplicate these materials for use in conjunction with a local Crossroads Career® Ministry or job club.

Limited Use of Trademarks

“Crossroads Career®” is owned by Crossroads Career® Services, Inc., a Georgia non-profit corporation, and has been registered with the United States Patent and Trademark office. Crossroads Career® Services, Inc. retains ownership of these trademarks and grants purchasers of Crossroads Career® Ministry materials limited license for use of the trademarks for publicizing and using materials in conjunction with a local Crossroads Career® Ministry.

