

# Sample Chapter



# more

FIND YOUR PERSONAL CALLING  
AND LIVE LIFE TO  
THE FULLEST MEASURE

TODD WILSON

FOREWORD BY RICK WARREN AND ROBERT COLEMAN



## CHAPTER 8

# Discovering My Unique Role

Yet you, LORD, are our Father.  
We are the clay, you are the potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.

ISAIAH 64:8

Several years ago, a single statement by a mentor changed my trajectory. Bob Buford, author of *Halftime*, a book I read during my own struggle with calling, approached me about working together on several projects. I was considering investing about 20 percent of my time in these projects when Bob said, “I want you to function 100 percent in your sweet spot in the work you do with me. I don’t want you to do anything that is not in your sweet spot.”

In an instant, this simple statement sent shock waves to my soul, expressing itself in three different, almost simultaneous thoughts and emotions. First, Bob’s comment totally energized me. Every cell in my body cried out in unison, “Yes! A role where I can function 100 percent in my sweet spot.”

That excitement quickly dissipated as a practical question entered my head: “What would it look like to function

more

100 percent in my sweet spot?” I came face-to-face with the truth that I might not know what my sweet spot looked like if it hit me between the eyes. That wouldn’t do.

As an engineer, I’m naturally conditioned to compare reality to possibility. In this case, the possibility of what could be—living within my sweet spot, designed by God uniquely for me—was not something I’d ever thought about. Accepting a position with the requirement that I function 100 percent in my sweet spot would require further work on my part to even know how I was doing.

As the reality of not understanding my own sweet spot set in, a third question filled my mind, further deflating the momentary excitement. “Why in the world am I getting so excited about spending only 20 percent of my time in my sweet spot? Why do I settle for such a low standard? Why am I satisfied with anything less than 100 percent of my time in the sweet spot of God’s handiwork for me?”

Bob’s simple comment put me on a journey of discovery. A journey into the mysterious land of calling. A journey I’m now convinced is part of who God made me to be. A journey I’m passionate about helping as many other people as possible take. This journey transforms our hearts and positions us as God’s people to live the abundant life Jesus came to give.

This chapter provides the framework I’ve used in coaching others and in discovering and refining my own sweet spot of calling.

## A Masterpiece with a Sweet Spot of Calling

Check out what David says about us being God’s masterpiece:

*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.*

## DISCOVERING MY UNIQUE ROLE

*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  
before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand—  
when I awake, I am still with you. (Psalm 139:13–18)*

Let these words about God's handiwork in our lives sink in: We are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator of the universe. He envisioned our lives before the substance of our bodies was formed. David's words are deeply personal and reflect a potter who is lovingly shaping clay into a masterpiece. As his masterpieces, we see that we each have a sweet spot, a unique design, custom built to serve the Creator's purposes.

### What Is a Sweet Spot?

Sometimes it's easier to understand a concept by starting with what it is not. About a year after purchasing new tires for my car, I began feeling a slight vibration through the steering wheel. Several months later the symptoms expanded to include an audible "thump, thump, thump." Within six months the vibration had gotten so bad that I began to worry about potential damage to other parts in the suspension system from the violent nature of the shaking.

After taking the car to a mechanic, I learned that the root cause of the problem was the tires being out of balance. Amazingly, the fix was to position a small weight in precisely the correct position on the wheel. The improper positioning of this four-ounce wheel weight was preventing a two-thousand-pound car from performing as it was designed.

more

Think of it. A wheel weight perfectly positioned produces a seemingly frictionless and smooth ride. In a similar way, perfect contact with a ball on the bat's sweet spot produces a home run, and a perfectly tuned and conditioned musical instrument played by a master resonates with a mysterious harmony to the soul.

In the physical world of God's creation there are thousands of sweet spots. Rooms have acoustic sweet spots, gun scopes have sweet spots, and musical instruments and sports equipment have sweet spots.

Calling is a sacred whisper from God. He calls us to himself and sends us to others. His handiwork in our unique design is part of that mysterious whisper. Like the pattern he established in his creation of the world, we are each uniquely and individually made with a sweet spot. These sweet spots are inseparable from our calling to and from God.

## Characteristics of a Sweet Spot

When something functions within its sweet spot, the effort applied appears natural, smooth, and frictionless. You might say there is joy and a harmony in a sweet spot. Sweet spots are also multipliers of an input to produce an even greater output. They naturally turn one unit of effort into 100 units of result. Fruitfulness results from a properly functioning sweet spot.

So how does a sweet spot function? Every sweet spot in nature involves a design, a purpose, and a position. We can always ask, "Is it positioned correctly, doing what it's designed to do, and producing the results intended by its creator?"

This begs the question: Are you positioned correctly, doing what you are divinely designed to do, and producing the fruit intended by your Creator? Are you in his sweet spot for your life?

## Three Questions of Purpose

Recall from chapter 3 that the consequence of sin and separation from God produces three natural questions in our lives. These are the questions you were already asking before

you picked up this book, and they are the reason you're investigating the nature of calling. These three questions will help us to apply the truth of our sweet spot to real life.

1. Who am I created to BE? (a design or identity question)
2. What am I created to DO? (a purpose or mission question)
3. Where am I created to GO? (a compatibility or position question)

It's no accident that these three universally asked questions line up perfectly with the three elements of a sweet spot (i.e., every sweet spot has a design, a purpose, and a position). The answers to these BE-DO-GO questions represent our unique sweet spot of calling. The longing of our heart to respond to and live on the right side of our calling screams out to us through these questions, questions that reflect the natural elements of our sweet spot.

### The Sweet Spot of Calling

The Creator of the universe uniquely designed me before I was born for specific good works that he wants me to accomplish. Remember that this promise is for every believer and not just a few heroes of the faith. Let the weight of this truth resonate deeply. God has a destiny for us, crafted by him and worked into the very fabric of creation. It is a perfectly fitted plan, forming a sweet spot of who we are.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Just as nature shows us that every sweet spot exhibits (1) a design, (2) a purpose, and (3) a positioning, we see these elements in Ephesians 2:10:

**Design:** We are created by his workmanship. He gives each of us a custom design that helps uniquely shape our sweet spot. We are a masterpiece of his hands, and because

we are created in his image, our unique design is a reflection of him to the world. We are called to be stewards of what he's uniquely given each of us. Who we are created to BE is about our unique identity.

**Purpose:** We are created for unique good works prepared and planned by God. We yield and surrender to his purposes. He is the potter and we are the clay. Our good works, prepared by God, are part of his larger epic plans for redeeming human-kind. Just as our lives are like puzzles with many pieces, our lives are one piece of God's larger purpose. What we were made to DO is about our unique mission.

**Positioning:** God intends for us to use our unique design in the specific good works he's prepared for each of us. The King James Version of Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "That we should walk in them" is a call to action in specific places. Where we are to GO is about our unique position.

This framework of sweet spot represents the integration of issues of our heart, our head, and our hands. At its core, our sweet spot is about who we are in Christ Jesus. Our growth and maturity in being and becoming are to overflow and shape our doing and accomplishing.

Our sweet spot of calling is defined by the intersection of our unique identity, the good works he calls us to accomplish, and the place we are called to do it.

## Primary and Secondary Calling

Calling is God's sacred whisper that draws us into his mission on earth and plans for eternity. This whisper draws us to have the fullness of Jesus in us and to channel it through us to others. You might say there are two parts: a general calling and a unique calling, or what some theologians have called a primary calling and a secondary calling.

## DISCOVERING MY UNIQUE ROLE

Cotton Mather, the American colonial historian, theologian, and author who cofounded Yale University, described two parts of calling. He referred to the first as a “general calling” to be a witness to the truth of Jesus in our lives. This general calling applies to all Christians, everywhere, all the time. This general calling unites the body of Christ in a shared response to God’s plans. Other theologians have referred to this general calling as our “primary calling.”

Our general or primary calling is to be disciples who make disciples where we are! This element of calling is the fullness of Jesus flowing in us and through us to others. When the Bible refers to “calling” it is most often this primary or general calling.

However, Mather also identified a second element he referred to as “personal” or “unique calling.” Personal calling represents the unique, divine equipping God gives each believer to help carry the fullness of Jesus to the world. In Mather’s words, this personal calling finds its context in a “certain particular employment, by which [a person’s] usefulness in his neighborhood is distinguished.” Other theologians have referred to this personal or unique calling as our “secondary calling.”

As discussed previously, the church’s mission is to be the fullness of Jesus everywhere and in every way. That starts with the fullness of Jesus in us, and then extends to his fullness through us and to others (primary or general calling). We each have a personal responsibility, as part of the larger church family, to be disciples (the fullness of Jesus in us) who make disciples (the fullness of Jesus through us), in the mission field where we are.

We simultaneously have the responsibility to use our unique giftedness, given by Jesus himself, to do good works where we can be most effective in taking the fullness of Jesus into every nook and cranny of society. Our secondary or unique personal calling equips us to play a unique part in accomplishing God’s mission in our community.



In *Courage and Calling*, Gordon Smith writes, “First, there is the call to be a Christian.... Second, for each individual there is a specific call—a defining purpose or mission, a reason for being. Every individual is called of God to respond through service in the world. Each person has a unique calling in this second sense. We cannot understand this second meaning of call except in the light of the first.”<sup>1</sup>

You may be tempted to say, “I understand the general calling to be a disciple who makes disciples. I want to focus on my unique personal calling. That’s where I’m confused.” Avoid that trap. The two must function in tandem.

Cotton Mather gives us a picture (“model”) for how the two elements of calling should integrate. He says: “A Christian at his two callings is a man in a boat rowing. If he mind but one of his callings, be it which it will, he pulls the oar, but on one side of the boat, and will make but a poor dispatch to the shore of eternal blessedness. It is not only necessary that a Christian should follow his general calling, it is of necessity that he follow his personal calling, too.”<sup>2</sup>

Mather highlights the consequence of only putting one oar in the water (or engaging one of the two dimensions of calling). We will move in circles, never accomplishing the mission we were made for.

Bob Buford highlights this with two questions he says we will all face someday before Jesus.

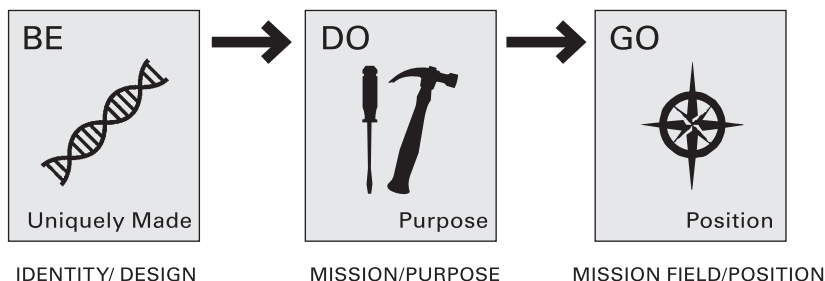
First, how did you respond to who Jesus said he was? Did you respond and surrender to his lordship, living your life in submission to him? This is our primary or general calling at its heart.

Second, what did you do with what he uniquely gave you to work with? How did you respond to the unique abilities and design he gave you and the good works he called you to? This is our secondary or unique personal calling.

Notice how the answer to the second question only finds true meaning and significance when it grows out of our answer to the first question. Primary and secondary calling must function in tandem.

## A Framework for Calling

Our unique design or identity (our BE) informs our mission (our DO), which in turn informs our mission field (our GO). Our design or identity is a question of “who.” Our mission or purpose is a question of “what.” And our mission field or position is a question of “where.” The model might look something like this:



A good model deconstructs the Be-Do-Go sweet spot into simple parts, allowing us to isolate and study the characteristics of each part. The parts include our identity (BE), our mission (DO), and our position (GO).

Instead of trying to figure out the entire picture at once, we can focus on the individual parts and then integrate our learning into a more comprehensive understanding of our calling. You might say that we can put each element under a microscope for study. As we gain increasing clarity on the parts, we then seek to integrate them into a better understanding of how the parts work together.

In applying our BE-DO-GO framework to both primary and secondary calling, as discussed above, we end up with six core elements in our model (three for primary calling and three for secondary). Let’s take a deeper look at these six elements, looking at the integration of both primary and secondary calling.

### MY IDENTITY: WHO AM I CREATED TO BE?

All Christians are called to be children of God and to be disciples of Jesus. Unlike other titles and roles such as

husband, wife, boss, engineer, and coach that are temporary, the role of child of God is permanent and transcends this life into eternity. We are called to be healthy, functioning children in God's family. The BE element of primary or general calling shared by all Christians is to BE DISCIPLES. In being disciples of Jesus, we seek first to have his fullness in us and to become more like him.

Our **core identity (cI)** is to be a child of God and a disciple of Jesus.

As we move toward our secondary or unique personal calling, this is also a question of identity. At my core and in my deepest, truest self, who am I? Who has God fashioned me to be uniquely? How does the essence of who I am inform the nature of calling? I am UNIQUELY MADE.

Our **unique identity (uI)** is our unique design that distinguishes us from God's other children.

## MY MISSION: WHAT AM I CREATED TO DO?

At its heart, this is a question of mission or purpose. In universal terms, our answer is clear.

All Christians are called to make disciples. We are to be witnesses of his love that others may be drawn to him and become disciples. In our primary or general calling, we are to MAKE DISCIPLES.

Our **core mission (cM)** is to make disciples.

We are to be fully surrendered to Jesus and his commands and to be love in action. The overflow of Jesus' love for us prompts us to love other people through our good works and deeds. But what specific good works should I focus on? That's the right question. Answering it individually will be part of the journey, which will continue far beyond the reading of this book. In our secondary or unique personal calling we are to do unique GOOD WORKS AND DEEDS.

Our **unique mission (uM)** is the unique purpose assigned to us by God that produces unique good works and deeds in our lives.

## MY POSITION: WHERE AM I CREATED TO GO?

Where am I created to go? It's a question about positioning.

We are to be disciples and make disciples wherever we are and in whatever we are doing. We are to be the love of Jesus everywhere we go with intentionality and urgency. Our general or primary calling shared with all Christians, everywhere, at all times is to be disciples who make disciples **WHEREVER WE ARE**.

Our **core position (cP)** is the opportunities right where we are.

In our restlessness to “go,” we must first look at our stewardship of what’s been given to us where we are. We need to be a disciple who makes disciples here and now. There is no elusive “tomorrow” in some yet-to-be-determined foreign land. Faithfulness to our calling begins with being a good steward of the opportunities every day where we are.

He might call you to radically change your lifestyle or your expected level of comfort for the sake of where he is leading you. And the destination may be right where you are, or it might not be completely clear yet. The amazing thing is that not only is he preparing you internally to fit his plan, he is also working out the external place you will serve as well.

Our secondary or unique personal calling prompts us not just to serve where we are, but to be willing to reposition ourselves to go **WHERE WE CAN BE MOST EFFECTIVE**.




Our **unique position (uP)** is the context where we can be most effective.

In pulling these elements of primary and secondary calling together into a single framework, we get the following:

My primary or general calling	=	My Core Identity (cI)	+	My Core Mission (cM)	+	My Core Position (cP)
----------------------------------	---	-----------------------------	---	----------------------------	---	-----------------------------

My secondary or unique personal calling	=	My Unique Identity (uI)	+	My Unique Mission (uM)	+	My Unique Position (uP)
---	---	-------------------------------	---	------------------------------	---	-------------------------------

more

	<b>BE</b> <i>My Core Identity (cI)</i>	<b>DO</b> <i>My Core Mission (cM)</i>	<b>GO</b> <i>My Core Position (cP)</i>
Primary or General Calling	Be a disciple of Jesus	who makes disciples	where I am!
	<div><b>BE</b>  Uniquely Made IDENTITY/ DESIGN</div>	<div><b>DO</b>  Purpose MISSION/PURPOSE</div>	<div><b>GO</b>  Position MISSION FIELD/ POSITION</div>
Secondary or Unique Personal Calling	I am uniquely made	to do good works and deeds	where I can be most effective!
	<i>My Unique Identity (uI)</i>	<i>My Unique Mission (uM)</i>	<i>My Unique Position (uP)</i>

We can treat each of these six elements as lenses that give insight into who we are. Our job ahead is to look more deeply at each of these six lenses.

## Applying Lenses

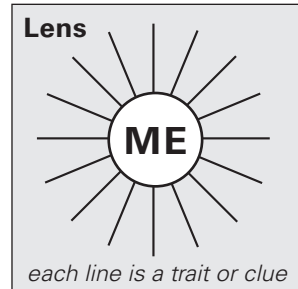
A lens provides insight and clarity, bringing the characteristics of whatever is studied more fully into focus. Within each lens are “clues” or “traits” that give insights into who we are. The more clues or traits we can see, the better the clarity of the picture.

Generically, the graphic below represents one of our six lenses. At the center of each lens is “me,” as if I’m looking in the mirror or as if a lens is projecting a truth about me and my unique design onto a wall. Each of the lines projecting

## DISCOVERING MY UNIQUE ROLE

from the center is a space to insert words (or word phrases) that describe me. The lens simply serves as a tool to help me collect an increasing number of traits that help clarify this particular element of calling.

Each line extending from the center is a characteristic that brings more clarity to what is in the center of the lens. Think of each line as a clue to be discovered and understood. The more clues you discern, the better your clarity. The clues emerge throughout our lives, ready for discovery.



In coming chapters we will apply these lenses to gain clarity on each of the six elements of calling.

### Looking Ahead . . .

We find ourselves back at the question sparked by Bob Buford at the beginning of this chapter: What would it take to live 100 percent in our sweet spot? Answer: It takes work. We must go through the discipline and hard work of discovering who we are created to be in Christ Jesus.

You probably picked up this book to gain more clarity on your secondary or unique personal calling. Have patience. A core truth of sweet spot is that our unique calling and good works can only find purpose and meaning within the context of our primary and general calling to be and make disciples everywhere we go. The good news is that a lot of the picture is already filled in!

For example, Jesus gives us the general direction of our primary or general calling that applies to all Christians, everywhere, all the time. We are called to be disciples (core identity—cI) who make disciples (core mission—cM) where they are (core position—cP). Our job is to find the unique contextualization of these elements in our lives and in the sphere of the relationships we find ourselves in.

more

In chapters 9–11 and in the supporting resources on [www.personalcalling.org](http://www.personalcalling.org), we use the following shorthand acronyms to refer to these three elements of primary calling: cI, cM, and cP.

All Christians are also uniquely made to do specific good works and deeds where they can be most effective. The elements of secondary or unique calling require time and work to discover. Chapters 12–14 will go into greater detail in defining these elements and providing a roadmap for discovering them. In these chapters and in the supporting resources on [www.personalcalling.org](http://www.personalcalling.org), we use the following shorthand acronyms to refer to the elements of secondary calling: uI, uM, and uP.

In the coming chapters, we will look more deeply at each of the six elements (cI, cM, cP, uI, uM, and uP). The story God has already written in your life reveals hundreds of clues or traits ready for you to bring into sharper focus with each of the six elements. The people in your life, including your spouse, children, parents, friends, and coworkers can add hundreds more clues. Various tests and self-assessments will be introduced to provide even more detail.

You will begin to apply the process of collecting and aggregating clues and traits about your calling. Along the way we will discuss the process of integrating and condensing the words into simple and memorable elements that define your call. This calling model can continue to be used and refined over your entire lifetime. Our goal throughout the rest of this book is to establish a discipline and some momentum in applying this model, hoping that it becomes a lifestyle.

## Making It Personal

To embrace the truths of calling, I will be a disciple of Jesus seeking to become more filled with his fullness, allowing that fullness to overflow to others as I seek to make disciples wherever I am. I will be a good steward of God’s unique identity and mission in my life, wherever I can be most effective.

# discovering

## My Unique Role

Our primary or general calling is discovered in being disciples of Jesus (the fullness of Jesus in us) who make disciples (the fullness of Jesus through us) where we are. This is true of all Christians, everywhere, at all times.

Our secondary or unique calling is discovered where God's unique design in our lives overflows to specific good works and deeds wherever we can be most effective.

Calling moves us from being imperfect stewards of our unique gifting to being who we were created to be and doing what we were created to do. That shift is an incredibly exciting transition.

Calling equips us to be fully devoted disciples of Jesus.

## Calling Foundations

Clarity of calling emerges when we learn to:

1. Trust deeply the author of our story.
2. Step forward in faith, even when we cannot see clearly.
3. Abandon the earthbound kingdom of me in order to gladly serve in the eternal kingdom of God.
4. Submit to the lordship of Jesus.
5. Embrace our mission to carry the fullness of Jesus to every corner of society.
6. Live in common with a healthy, local community of faith.
7. Take personal responsibility of the unique role Jesus gives us.
8. Trust the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.



more

9. Follow our general calling to be disciples of Jesus who make disciples where we are. Core Identity (cI) + Core Mission (cM) + Core Position (cP)
10. Fulfill our unique personal calling to play our role in God's mission where we can be most effective. Unique Identity (uI) + Unique Mission (uM) + Unique Position (uP)

---

Visit [www.personalcalling.org](http://www.personalcalling.org) for supplemental resources.