

Roars to Whispers: The Calls That Shape Us

Chick-fil-A Corporate Service Center, Monday, January 22, 2024

Did you know the Chick-fil-A Corporate Service Center gathers every Monday morning for a devotion? It's a wonderful way to start the week through worship and an encouraging message.

I was honored and humbled to share some thoughts on the callings in our lives, general and personal, how to determine your calling, and how callings shape us. I'm sharing my talk with you in hopes that you are encouraged to hear your calling and respond to it as well... Enjoy!

Introduction: A Morning of Devotion at Chick-fil-A



Thank you, Chris. I'm humbled and honored to share with you for a few minutes this morning. I appreciate Emi and the Chick-fil-A devotion team for the invitation. And as a Coca-Cola Company alumnus, I treasure our partnership. Thanks for

all that you do.

Today's devotion is entitled "Roars to Whispers: The Calls That Shape Us." I'll share a few anecdotes, stories, scriptures, and ways to determine your calling. My hope is that you'll take away one thing that you'll apply.

The Evolution of Communication: From Telephones to Texts



How many of you remember?... A telephone on the wall, the Yellow Pages, operators, or answering machines. Even the fact that I said "telephone" shows my age. Now, we know it as a "phone."

There are over 8 billion smartphones and only 7 billion people on the planet. It's like some people have a phone for each hand – because why text with one thumb when you can use two?

Closer to home, did you know that Atlanta has the highest call volume per capita? Now, I understand what we're doing during our lengthy commutes.

Texting has become our primary mobile communication method. An astonishing 19 billion texts are sent daily. And hopefully, you're not texting while driving, especially if you have two

phones.

Of all the interesting statistics that jumped out at me preparing for today's devotion, mobile phones have 18 times more bacteria than a toilet handle. Who studies this stuff? I don't know. But it'll make you think twice when someone asks you to take their picture.

The Personal Touch in a Digital Age

We make or receive all kinds of calls. Think about it. Conference calls, telemarketing calls, survey calls, robocalls, prank calls – I remember being at sleepovers when I was a kid– we'd randomly call people in the middle of the night: "This is Johnny's Repair. Is your refrigerator running? Yes. Better go out and catch it." We'd immediately hang up and giggle for hours.

Side note: A boy named Anderson, 11 years old and son of a Chick-fil-A associate, approached me after the talk. He said, "You missed something today. Do you want to know what it was?" "Sure," I replied with a smile, appreciating his boldness. He said, "butt dial! You forgot butt dial!" He was right. We all have probably made or received the accidental butt dial during our lives. I laughed, loved his courage, thanked him, and affirmed his confidence—one of my favorite post-talk interactions.

Many of our calls are personal and involve good news (like a promotion, a wedding engagement, or the birth of a child), sad news (like someone's passing, illness, or tragedy), or surprising (a friend or mentor from our past – out of the blue).

I call or FaceTime my mom and dad every Sunday evening just to see them and hear their voice – a tradition we've held for almost 35 years.

When we FaceTime with my father-in-law, we enjoy looking at

his ears. He still hasn't figured out the video call thing.

If you're like me, I spent hours on the phone talking to my wife, Carla, when we were dating. Now, it's a brief call: 'I'm headed to the grocery store. Need anything?' If you know, you know. It's funny how things change.

Spiritual Connections: The Call of the Divine

Whether it's a phone call, text, or FaceTime, all calls require a caller and a callee.

That takes me back to the word 'telephone.' Did you know the Greek meaning for telephone is "distant voice?" The first distant voice heard over a telephone was, "Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you." Were Alexander Graham Bell's words to his assistant the first voice-to-voice call? Maybe.

But through a different 'technology,' one of the first telephone calls, think distant voice, was from a burning bush. Talk about a holy hotline.



Exodus reads: ² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and

behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."^[1]



You know the rest of the story. Moses questioned God at first but then accepted his call and faithfully led the Jewish people to the promised land. It all started with that fateful burning bush call.

By the way, the above picture depicts what it might have looked like with Moses taking a selfie after crossing the Red Sea.

Discovering Your Call: A Six-Pack of Considerations

Before I go on, let's pause here. Here's a 6-pack of ways to prayerfully consider your calling:

- **LISTEN**
- **BEING BEFORE DOING**
- **OPPORTUNITIES**
- **TAKE INVENTORY**
- **DESIRE**
- **INFLUENCE**

1. What is **good** that I can celebrate and protect?
2. What is **missing** that I can contribute?
3. What is **evil** that I can oppose or resist?
4. What is **broken** that I can restore?

Before I go on, let's pause here. Here's a 6-pack of ways to prayerfully consider your calling:

1. **Listen to and for God.** He speaks to us through his word, prayer, other people, and circumstances.
2. **Pursue being before doing,** form before function – think Moses in the desert for 40 years, getting to know God and learning his ways, becoming humble. Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
3. Think about **opportunities** you see around you...
 - What is good that I can celebrate and protect?
 - What is missing that I can contribute?
 - What is evil that I can oppose or resist?
 - What is broken that I can restore?
4. Take **Inventory** of how God made you. Consider your values, talents, strengths, and competencies. How can you leverage your God-given gifts to act on the

opportunity?

5. **Desire.** Are you passionate about the opportunity?
6. Lastly, define your sphere of **influence**. Sociologists tell us that even the most introverted person will influence 10,000 people during their lifetime. Your sphere probably includes work, community, school, or church.

I'm reminded of a quote from Philosopher Alastair McIntyre I learned in the Colson Fellows Program. He said, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question of 'What story or stories do I find myself a part of?'"

Influence and Purpose: The Chick-fil-A Way

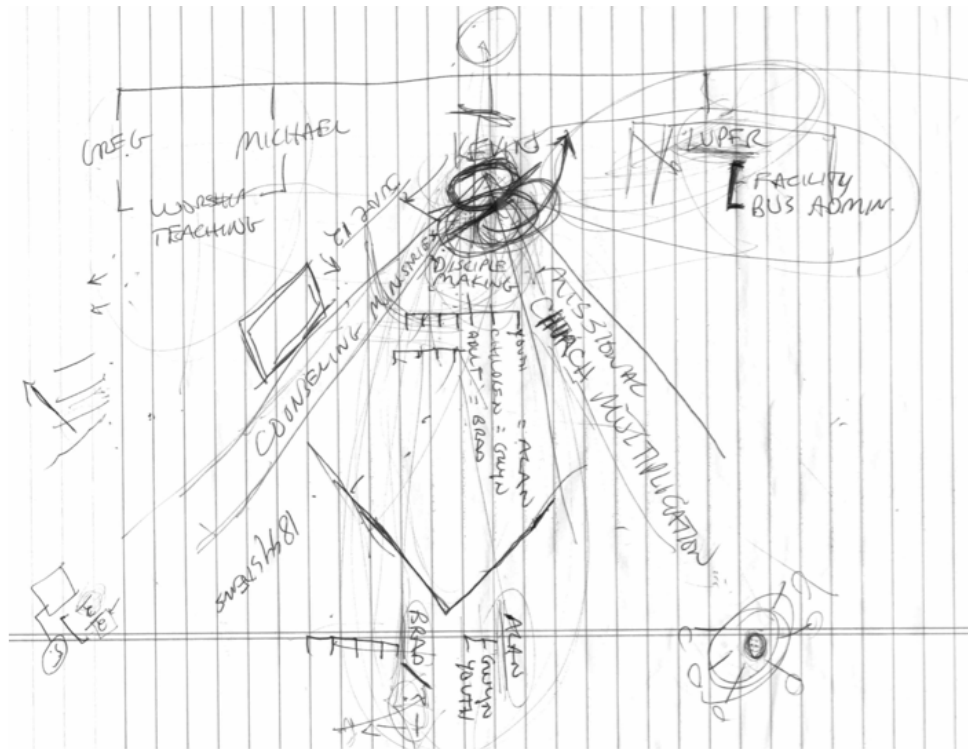
Speaking of influence, I'm reminded of Chick-fil-A's commitment to positively influencing all who come in contact with you. Whether through your work, community involvement, or interactions with each other and your customers, you're not just fulfilling a role; you're living out a purpose and calling entrusted to you.

Questions for you: Who are the 10,000 people you'll influence? What stories do you find yourself a part of? How will you represent Chick-fil-A?

Discerning Your Path: Personal Reflections on Career and Calling

But that's not all.

What happens when you hear a call but can't confirm it's the right thing, the right timing, the right opportunity?



That's where I found myself in 2010. I was in the midst of another Coca-Cola organizational change. By the way, I survived 11 reorganizations during my 20+ year tenure. This reorg found me without a position in Knoxville, where we'd lived for eight years, and required us to relocate to Atlanta. We were blessed with a wonderful church family where I served as an elder and was passionate about making disciples. Our family didn't want to leave East Tennessee. My Pastor at the time, knowing of our predicament, invited me to lunch a couple of weeks before relocating. He shared his vision for the church, drew out an organization chart (see above), showed me the role he had in mind, and said with almost a roar, "this might be your burning bush moment!"

His offer humbled me. I went home and told Carla about the opportunity. We prayed, played out all of the scenarios, and prayed again. The decision process was heart-wrenching. We wanted to stay in Knoxville, but something wasn't right. Was it the right opportunity? Maybe. Was it a stretch role that leveraged my gifts and skills? Yes. But – I never felt a burning passion in my heart and wasn't inspired to make a radical career change.

So, I turned down the opportunity. I chose to stay in the marketplace and not enter the ministry. Honestly, I've often wondered what would have happened if I had taken the role.

Life is messy, but I believe God engineers all circumstances.

Since then, God's done immeasurably more than I can imagine by helping me become a minister of reconciliation in the workplace, an ambassador for him, and even writing a book, *Disciplined Leader*, about how to live out your faith in the workplace – A message I never would've written had I not decided to stay at Coke.

How about you? Have you heard a call and aren't sure what to do? I encourage you to hang in there and be obedient. Like you, I'm still trying to figure it out.

A Call to Trust: Lessons from the Garden of Gethsemane



Fast forward to last spring. Carla and I, along with some friends who are here today, were on a Passion City Church Holy Land Tour. I'm sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane. Maybe you've heard of it. It's this little garden where Jesus submitted his life and will to God before he went to the

Cross. It's a weighty place, to say the least.

I'd recently taken early retirement, and after being untethered from Coke, I was floating – the structure, the accolades, and the sense of importance that came from my corporate life all vanished. I was grappling with a loss of identity, a crisis of purpose.

“Lord, where are you in all of this,” I implored.

But I found a semblance of solace in the garden where Jesus grappled with his destiny.

He whispered, “follow me.” – two words I'll never forget hearing.

It was a directive that required no roadmap, no strategic plan, and no business acumen. It was a call to surrender, to trust, to let go of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ and to embrace the ‘who.’

Os Guinness speaks of calling as a summons by God that infuses our very existence with meaning. It's not about starting with ‘why’ but ‘who.’ And in that moment, I realized that my identity wasn't tied to my past achievements or future endeavors—it was anchored in Jesus. It was about being His, first and foremost.

The world tells us to find our purpose through self-exploration and experiences, but I've come to understand that it's not about crafting our narrative—it's about stepping into the one already written for us. It's about responding to the call of Jesus, the most revolutionary invitation ever extended.

Have you heard his call, “Follow Me?” If you've heard it and haven't responded, what's holding you back? Answering his call will be the greatest decision you've ever made.

Responding to the Greatest Call

In closing, I leave you with this...

Acts 17:26 says, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."

This speaks to our time, our place – ordained by God.



John F. Kennedy, Jr. once asked, "If not you, who? If not now, when?"

You are the 'who,' now is the 'when.'

All God asks is that we are available and faithful. If we answer his call, he will do the work.

Conclusion: Answering the Call

Let's pray – Lord, whether it's a roar or a whisper, help us listen to you and for you. Shape us and move in our hearts and minds to show us where you are working and help us join you. May we seek you first and foremost, knowing that everything else will fall into place if we trust and obey you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I'd love to hear from you and know your key takeaway.

Thank you.

Thanks for reading. If you'd like to learn more about leadership and how I can work with you, please visit my website, prestonpoore.com, to learn more.

Cheers,

Pres

^[1] [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Ex 3:2–4). (2016). Crossway Bibles.