

Have you ever known you were just made to do something? Or how about this? Have you ever known that you were NOT made to do something?

Summer of 2004...just outside of finishing my undergrad, one the jobs I tried out was being a local tow truck driver. It was great. I got to help a lot of people...which I like to do. I learned how to break into cars really fast. I got to drive some pretty fancy cars back in the yard. So how it would typically work is that the dispatch would get a call, and if it was local, they would send me out. I got to say, the directions weren't always clear. So this time I had to search for a bit. I'm downtown, driving around some of the government buildings and I cannot find this car! Then I see it, the one place I didn't look, the parking garage below. Yes! Another parking garage! The one place I didn't look. So I venture down...until I hear the most earth shattering SMAAAAAACK! And my tow truck couldn't move. I'm pressing on the gas, and it will not move forward! My heart is pounding. I'm instantly sweating. I'm frantically looking around. I look in front of me. Nothing. To the sides...and behind me...NOTHING! But my truck cannot move! I step out of the tow truck wondering what in the world happened. And then I see it. The boom—the arm that extends to pick up the vehicle—I had left it up, extended—and now it sat lodged in a concrete pillar in the ceiling of the parking garage. The force was so strong, that is literally bent the frame into a triangle.

...so that ended my career as a tow truck driver. And moved me forward to find what God would have for my future.

Sometimes it is easier—and a LOT clearer—to figure out what you are NOT meant to do—than what we are made to do—but those can be harder and more humbling lessons. ☺

But here is what I believe and have seen again and again to be true:

You are most satisfied, and God is most glorified, when you operate within your FIT

What are you made to do? How do you know? How do you figure that out? What do you do with that once you know?

If you have your Bibles, would you open them up to Ephesians chapter 4. Eph 4.

While you are turning there, let me say “Good morning!” to each of you! If you are new, if you are our guest today, we are especially excited you are here! Maybe you came to the garage sale yesterday that we had here and you thought you would come check out this church. If so, we are glad you are here, and got a good deal on some good items. And let me give a shout out to our 1) our students and our student ministries pastors and leaders who worked so hard—and long hours this weekend to make the garage sale happen. 2) to all of you who donated items, and those of you who came and bought items. All those proceeds go straight to our student ministries missions fund. You buying nick nacks, plates, and tools goes to fund the

changing of people's lives—in our students who serve, and in the people they are going to minister to!

We have been going through, and are in our last week of our “I Belong...” series, where we have been walking through our core beliefs as a church, our doctrinal statement, and our distinctions—focusing on our foundational roots of what makes us followers of Jesus and know that we belong... Today, we look at how, I...you...we Belong to a Ministry...

That is truly the heart of Paul's letter to the Ephesian church. He spends the first half of his letter sharing powerful doctrine—these core beliefs—of who we are in Christ—and Jesus' ministry toward us—not just redeeming us to God—but breaking down the walls that separated us. In Christ, we all belong in the family of God.

So in Ephesians 4, Paul gets real practical in the real life implications of who we are in Jesus...as followers of Jesus.

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (how do we walk—live out our faith—in a manner that is worthy?) ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Some of you might be wondering, “Why are we doing this series?” This is the “I Belong...” series in a nutshell. **Unity of the Spirit. One Body. One Spirit. One hope. One Lord. One faith—One baptism—One God and Father: Paul is saying: “You belong to God... You belong to a relationship with God...You Belong to a Church and a Community!

These are the things you believe and hold onto tightly and don't let go. These are the things that bring us and unify us in this room. What we are unified in is not created by man. This is a unity in the Spirit. It is unity in what God has created. The work of Christ is what has broken down the walls of racial division. Has broken down the division of economics. Unity in Christ has broken down divide of political parties. Has broken down the divide of male and female or of the generations. What unifies us in not our race, our social status, or politics, or our age. We are ONE in Christ.

Scripture does NOT instruct us to unify around a certain teacher or personality. We are not unified by a teaching style...or a worship style. We will have seasons of topical preaching. We will have seasons of going verse by verse through a books of the Bible. We will have Sundays where our worship is quieter and more subdued, and we will have Sundays where we corporately ROCK OUT!

This is why I've been sharing and hammering home this idea of "Being married to the Mission and NOT to the method". It's why we have spent the last 9 weeks working through and clearly laying the foundations of our beliefs and the mission of the church: Leading people to a Jesus first life! These are our roots that anchor our souls and lives.

And we have to keep coming back to this because there are those in this room that love change—and want to see it at a rapid pace. And there are those in this room that HATE change! There are those who will come up to who ever is speaking and say, "Best message ever! God was speaking directly to me!!!" Same day there will be some of you who will say, "That was probably his worst message yet. I didn't get anything out of it. Where's the meat?" Chis talks so fast! Why does he have to stand on the edge?!? Best worship ever! OR...Eh, not my favorite. Or...It's too loud! It's too soft. There is a popular saying, that no matter who you are, no matter what you do, or what you decide: 20% of the people around you will like it. 20% can't stand it. 60% don't really care.

This is why we can't seek UNITY by pleasing people. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE UNITY THROUGH UNIFORMITY. GOD MADE US DIVERSE! WE ARE DIFFERENT. SO WE WON'T DO THINGS THE SAME. One of the best tools for your success in life—or any organization:

KNOW WHO YOU ARE...AND LIKE IT.

There is nothing more powerful or freeing than knowing who you are, how God has made you. Knowing how your past and experiences have shaped you. What you excel at and what you don't. Not just understanding it. But liking it. Not trying to be something you are not...but rather seeing the beauty and value of how God has uniquely created and molded you.

That was our process of looking at our core values and vision of where we feel God is leading Morning Star over the next 3-5 years. Those 8 values of: Biblical truth; Missional living, Community, Family, Stewardship, Cultural Relevance, Authenticity, and Excellence—this is our heartbeat, these are what burden us. It is our identity as church. And this identity is going to guide what we do.

How has God uniquely made you? What excites you? What breaks your heart? What are you made to do?

Paul says we are united. We are one in Christ in the unity of the Spirit. But then he says we are different.

⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Each one of us have been given, through grace, spiritual gifts—divine enablement's for serving God and building up His Kingdom. And its by grace we have these gifts. We don't earn the gifts. There are no "premiere gifts" for the elite Christian. And we have been GIVEN different gifts. There is a great variety of gifts in

this room. There are gifts of: Wisdom, Discernment, gift of FAITH, of TEACHING, of HOSPITALITY, of SERVICE...and several more.

And they are dispersed by God, to the people he desires, in the time He desires, in the measure He desires. Why, because they are HIS gifts to give and His purposes for which they are given.

But Scripture makes clear, if we have put our faith in the person and work of Jesus, we have the Spirit, and the Spirit has equipped us with at least one spiritual gift. And Paul tells us that the diversity of gifts within the diversity of people within the church is beautiful thing. In fact, he describes that if we were all the same, if we all had the same gifts, it would be a bit grotesque. 1 Corinthians 12, he describes the different gifts like the different pieces of the body, all needing each other to operate and function well. Imagine if I was just all foot—and a head. All hands—and a head. We think of that and it doesn't make sense. There is great beauty and diversity in the pieces of our own body, and how they function together. So when you are missing a piece, the whole body is affected.

It is good and beautiful that God has dispersed His gifts because there are a diversity of needs. But not only there a diversity of gifts.

But God has placed in you a diversity of passions and burdens. Some of you have a heart for investing in the next generations and you pour your life out to children. Some of you have a burden for students and teens. Some for the broken and addicted to find healing. Some for divorced while others for strengthening marriages. Some for the homeless. Other for those in prisons, while others reach business men and women.

You have different abilities or natural talents. Like what we saw this morning, playing an instrument, singing, or dancing. Some of you build things. Or you write.

We have different personalities—where some of you need to be around people. It energizes you. Some of you love to serve behind the scenes. We have loud, passionate people. And we have quieter, deep thinking people. We have people who are ready to tackle the issue and take the hill. And we have planners who patiently think and work and strategize.

And we have different experiences. Some of you have been in church, faithfully following Jesus your entire life. Others have had a Saul experience, where God radically pulled you out of a life of destruction. Some of you have been married for decades. Others of you have been divorced. Maybe you have lost a child. Maybe you have been stung by the pain of an affair. Maybe you have battled the ravages of cancer.

One of my favorite ministries, ran by a woman in this church is a ministry called "Save One"—which is a ministry to women and men who are struggling with the anger, depression, shame, guilt, or lack of forgiveness people feel and battle after having an abortion. It's led by women who know that pain and have found healing in Jesus. And the experiences of their past, God has redeemed and is using to help others heal.

It doesn't matter what our past is. It doesn't matter what our experiences have been—when we live openly and authentically—we have a God who redeems and gets to be the HERO of all of our story.

God uses it all. The Spiritual gifts He has given us. The passions he has placed on our heart. The natural abilities that we have been blessed with. The personality that we have been imprinted with. And the experiences, good and bad. He uses it all—to bring Him glory and to build His Kingdom.

You are most satisfied, and God is most glorified, when you operate within your FIT...or in your SHAPE. Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences.

That is what SHAPE in the SHAPE test stands for. And why we offered that for you to take. We see such value in that. There is such benefit in you understanding how God has uniquely made you...and then starting a conversation of—how then does God want to use that to build His kingdom...to connect and encourage those around you.

Ep 4:11-13 ¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. ¹⁴ So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ But practicing truth in love, we will grow up into Christ, who is the head.

This is Jesus' Church. And he has set up offices of gifted leaders within it. Each one has a different function. But these gifted leaders within the church serve the same function—which is to equip...to build up...to pour into God's people so that God's people are equipped to do God's ministry. We have a staff and gifted leaders in this church—and their primary role is not to DO ministry—it is to equip you for a lifetime of ministry. The result of having gifted leaders building up and equipping the body for ministry—is discipleship—unity of faith and knowledge...mature in Christ.

“God is not trying to produce successful Christian business people who can impress the world with their money and influence. He is not trying to fashion successful church leaders who can influence people with their organizational and administrative skills. Nor is He trying to fashion great orators who can move people with persuasive words. He wants to reproduce in His followers the character of His son—His love, His kindness, His compassion, His holiness, His humility, His unselfishness, His servant attitude, His willingness to suffer wrongfully, His ability to forgive, and so much more that characterized His life on earth.”[173],” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143:571 (July-September 1986):264.

God is less concerned with building your skills—and more concerned with building your character. The Father wants to mold and shape you, by the power of the Spirit,

into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. The goal is not to make you “Super plumber! Or Super Nurse; or Super Teacher...the goal, the work to have you live out the image of Christ—so you take Jesus into your plumbing, into your teaching, into your business, into your schooling as a student—and that Jesus in you—changes everything.

Eph 4:16 From him (Christ as the head...) the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, (as each one serves...as each one lives out their fit as SHAPE) the body builds itself up in love.

We know who we are...and we like it.

We are the most satisfied, and God is the most glorified when live out, or operate within, our fit...our SHAPE.

And as we all serve. As we all live out our Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences—that have been given to us by GRACE—as we allow Jesus to be the King and Hero of our lives and stories—THE CHURCH GROWS. It grows SPIRITUALLY...in unity...in knowledge...and in LOVE. And it grows numerically.

That is why today, we are having a ministry fair right after the service in our South Auditorium. We have ministries that are at different tables, ready to talk to you about what it is like to serve in those ministries. And there are different ministries for different kinds of people. Behind the scenes. Up front, highly relational. Work with your hands. Engage in the arts. Provide lots of coffee. We have popcorn waiting for you. We’ve got face painting and balloon animals for your kids...or for you... We want this to be fun.

Let me close by saying a few things.

- 1) Let me clearly state, ministry and service do not just happen within four walls of a church organization. Ministry is not confined to this location and time. There are great organizations outside of this church that are doing some awesome things for Jesus in our city. But ministry is not just in an organization. Ministry is glorifying God as we serve others. If you are married, your most important ministry is to your spouse. If you have kids, your ministry is to glorify God as you build up and equip your children. Ministry is in your job. It’s at your school. When we operate within our SHAPE, it is in our daily lives.
- 2) We also believe there is some great ministry to engage in here. As a local church body—working through our mission, vision, and values—“We know who we are...and we like it.” And we believe God is and will be doing some amazing things here—and that there is so much more to come. We believe we are called to a great mission: as we...Lead others to pursue a Jesus first life. We believe God is calling us to a great vision and a great future of powerful ministry.

And we believe, that if God has you here, if this is your home church, if this is where you are getting spiritually fed and equipped—that God has called you to engage in the what God is doing here—and being a part of making that vision come to fruition.

We have more than a thousand people that call Morning Star home. We have a total of 22 paid staff members. That is 6 full-time pastors and ministry leaders. 9 part-time...some very part time ministry leaders. We have 6 full time support staff that keep this place running. And 2 full-time maintenance leaders that keep this building standing.

It would be impossible for 22 people to DO the ministry that takes place here. Ministry wouldn't happen here if people like you didn't answer the call, because you believe in what God is doing here—and what He can do—and out of worship—you serve. You bless. You encourage. In so many different ways.

But if you are not, if you are unengaged, if church as become a place where you just come and spectate-- its not just you who are hurting for that, we are hurting as well—as we are robbed of the blessing of your God given SHAPE.

How do you start? You can take the SHAPE test which can guide you in that conversation. But you want to know the best way. Try something. Get some information, see what could be a good fit, and try it. What's the worst that can happen—you lodge your truck in the ceiling of the church.

If you are in Christ—You Belong to God... You Belong to a Relationship with God... You Belong to Church... You Belong to Community...and You Belong to a Ministry.

Let's pray.

So church! Let's in unity, go straight from here, over into the South Auditorium—or grab your kids first—and let's engage in the different ministry opportunities here at Morning Star.

May the Lord bless you and Keep you...