

2: WHEN GOD CALLS YOU IN THE GAME

By John
In Calling, Discipline, Mindset

6 Min Read



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Faith in Action Series: The Call to Serve

OPENING THOUGHT

Why do men today think church is a spectator sport? Show up on Sunday—put my time in—check. According to the Barna Group, only 18% of men volunteer at church during a typical week. It's the old 80/20 Rule—more people get involved while fewer people watch. Why isn't being part of the church family seen as a priority? Men have so many gifts to share. Being part of something larger than self is so rewarding.

Research shows that men typically avoid stepping up because they fear they won't measure up, or they'll disappoint the team. Some men sit back because of past church hurts, burnout, or discouragement from a past leader.

Part of the problem may rest with the church's lack of clarity when asking men to "get plugged in." What does that mean? How much time is required? What's expected? Men often are not shown how their skills, passions, and gifts connect with God's work. Men might think, my skills won't translate into "*churchy*" work.

Let's admit it, spectator faith feels safe. Spectator faith starves personal growth. Faith was not meant to be passive. James 1:22 warns, "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*" Passive faith fools men into believing they're growing, yet their faith is becoming stagnant. Spectator faith breeds drift and apathy. Hebrews 2:1 says, "*We must pay the most careful attention... so that we do not drift away.*" Spectator faith robs the church of men's gifts. Paul describes the Church as a body (1 Corinthians 12). Every part has a role. Spectator faith warps a man's spiritual identity. Spectator faith defines them by what they *consume* (sermons, songs, programs) instead of what they *contribute*.

Spectators miss out on the camaraderie, purpose, and spiritual adrenaline that come from serving side by side with other men.

SCRIPTURE

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together...but encouraging one another."

—Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

The writer of Hebrews covers a lot of ground in these two verses. First he tells us to inspire one another, to support one another, or to build each other up, all of which convey the idea of prompting action. Movement toward what—love and good deeds. This is the idea of being kind and helpful to others.

Then the writer moves on to "not giving up meeting together," in other words—brotherhood.

Finally, we're told to encourage one another. Do we encourage one another by rooting from the bench or by being on the field, in the fight, shoulder to shoulder next to the other brothers?

Satan doesn't care what's keeping you out of the game, as long as you're on the bench.

APPLICATION

So, if men's hesitation to get off the bench isn't always about laziness but fear, wounds, and lack of clarity, how does the problem get solved? Let's deal with the church's part first.

“Get plugged in” is unclear, vague at best. Replace generic invitations with specific on-ramps. For instance, instead of “serve somewhere,” say, we need three more men to help with traffic for our weekend worship services—the task takes 20 minutes once a month before and after each service. Often, men don’t believe their skills are relevant to “churchy” roles. But a contractor’s eye for details can help with facilities, a coach’s strategy skills fit perfectly in discipling young men, or a businessman’s ability to plan and manage can strengthen ministry teams.

In cases where men fear being asked to do more than they can handle, consider creating tiered opportunities—some one-time, short-term, and long-term roles. For those men who have stepped back because of past hurt or burnout, partner them with mentors who can walk beside them, not just assign them tasks. And finally, celebrate obedience, not just outcomes. Celebrate the men who step out.

Bottom line, churches can remove barriers by giving men clarity, connecting their skills to God’s mission, lowering the bar for entry, healing wounds through relationships, and redefining success.

As men, we need to do our part. We must own our faith and not outsource it. Don’t wait for the perfect opportunity and just the right time. Step out in faith—being passive doesn’t work. Face the fear and failure. Failure creates opportunities for success. Proverbs 24:16 says, *“Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again.”*

Turn wounds into wisdom. *“What can I learn from this?” “How can I grow?”* Lone-wolf faith breeds isolation. Isolation results in drift. Proverbs 27:17: *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”* Seek brotherhood. Redefine success. God is not looking for flawless Christians. God is not asking for perfection, just participation.

Another bottom line, men can solve their side of the problem by owning their faith, facing fear, starting small, turning wounds into wisdom, seeking brotherhood, and redefining success as obedience.

TODAY’S CHALLENGE: PUT ME IN, COACH

Pause long enough to listen. Write down the first prompting that comes to your mind, even if it feels small or inconvenient. God’s nudge might not look dramatic—it may be as simple as sending a text of encouragement, inviting a friend to lunch, or taking the initiative to pray with your spouse. The point isn’t how big the step is; it’s that you take it.

Do it within the next seven days. Don’t wait for perfect timing. Obedience strengthens when you act quickly. And when you follow through, share it with another brother. Accountability will lock in the habit and encourage him to take his own step.

Then pray this:

“Lord, don’t let me be a spectator in my faith. Show me one way to get off this bench and step into deeper obedience this week.”

FINAL THOUGHT

God didn’t design men to be spectators in their faith. The Church doesn’t need more warm seats; it needs engaged hearts, willing hands, and courageous obedience. Showing up matters—but stepping up matters more. The view from the bench may feel safe, but it was never meant to be permanent. The real joy, the real growth, the real faith happens when you get on the field.

This week’s step: Look at your life with honest eyes. Where have you settled into spiritual passivity? Identify **one specific way** you can move from spectator to participant this week. It could be reaching out to a brother in need, volunteering your time, or taking the first step into spiritual leadership at home. Whatever it is—get off the bench and into the game.

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