

# VOCATION

## The Call to Serve God & Others in All Areas of Life

### “Call & Response”

#### Introduction

- We live in a time of unprecedented knowledge, wealth, and technology. All of this, combined with a therapeutic view of life, means that we face an almost overwhelming amount of choices regarding what to do with lives. What do you want to be/do? What are you passionate about? Is this really the life you want? Is there more?
- As believers, we know that we are not to answer these questions in the way that the world encourages us to, but we often find it difficult to understand how we are to live in the world, particularly in light of certain passages:
  - 1 John 2:15—*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*
  - James 4:4—*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
- The world tells us that meaning is created through our choices and in the fulfilling of our desires. Scripture, however, shows us that lasting meaning and purpose can be found in God alone and must derived from Him.

**Key Point:** The biblical doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_ helps us to recognize that true meaning is found in God’s call upon our lives and how we then live in response to it.

#### The Doctrine of ‘Vocation’

“The doctrine of vocation is one of the greatest—though strangely neglected and forgotten—teachings of the Reformation. Contrary to the common assumption, it is much more than a theology of work. Vocation has to do with God’s providence, how He governs and cares for His creation by working through human beings. Vocation shows Christians how to live out their faith, not just in the workplace but in their families, churches, and cultures. Vocation is where faith bears fruit in acts of love, and so it grows out of the Gospel. And vocation is where Christians struggle with trials and temptations, becoming a means of sanctification.”

— Gene Edward Veith, “The Doctrine of Vocation”

#### Vocation Defined

- Our word ‘vocation’ is derived from the Latin word *vocatio* which could refer to summoning, inviting, or bidding. It is, however, primarily understood as “calling.”

“call”— *καλέω (kaleō)* — To identify by name or attribute; to name; to invite, summon or choose for receipt of a special benefit or experience; **to call**.

⇒ This is an ordinary term that takes on greater significance throughout the Scripture, becoming a technical term in the NT that often refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Cor. 4:26-27, 29a— <sup>26</sup> *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.* <sup>27</sup> *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...* <sup>29</sup> *so that no human being might boast...*

⇒ It also refers, however, to the life that have been \_\_\_\_\_ by the Lord and to which He calls us.

1 Cor. 7:17— *Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*

**Key Point:** To understand ourselves as “called” by God is to recognize that our lives have true meaning and purpose because they are \_\_\_\_\_ Him, \_\_\_\_\_ Him, and \_\_\_\_\_ Him (Rom. 11:36).

#### Important Historical Considerations

##### 1. Vocation in Roman Catholicism

⇒ The danger with this understanding was that it created a two-tiered Christianity, with one class of people engaging in greater \_\_\_\_\_ work while the other toiled at the less important work of ‘the world’.

## 2. Vocation in Protestantism

### The Spheres of Calling

(1) The \_\_\_\_\_

(2) The \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Wider \_\_\_\_\_

⇒ The importance of recognizing our vocation or calling is so that we might better fulfill the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:26-38) by loving God and our neighbor who He calls us to \_\_\_\_\_.

⇒ There is a potential danger here in that vocation can simply become another word for 'work.'

**Key Point:** Understanding the various areas of our life in terms of vocation serves to \_\_\_\_\_ us from both an unbiblical dualism and a functional secularism.

## The Biblical Background for a Theology of Vocation

### 1. The \_\_\_\_\_

Gen. 1:27-28a—<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..."

### 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Believer

1 Pet. 2:4-5—<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

### 3. The Household \_\_\_\_\_ of the NT

Titus 2:1-6, 9-10—<sup>1</sup> But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. <sup>2</sup> Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. <sup>3</sup> Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, <sup>4</sup> and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup> to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. <sup>6</sup> Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled...<sup>9</sup> Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, <sup>10</sup> not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

⇒ See also Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:21-6:9; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:18-3:7.

## Concluding Thought

- To understand ourselves as "called" by God is to acknowledge that, in salvation, God has called us out from the world and unto Himself. He then, however, sends us back into the world to serve others as His \_\_\_\_\_!

"... 'calling' is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to His summons and service."

—Os Guinness, *The Call*

Rom. 12:1—I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.