



vocation

How God Calls
and Works
Through
Ordinary People

Vocation: How God Calls and Works Through Ordinary People
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Introduction

Your vocation is so much more than a job. Our primary calling involves a call to live in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, so that wherever we are, whatever we do “we might be with him” (Mark 3:15). But all of us have secondary callings, the roles, relationships, and jobs (paid or unpaid) where God has stationed us. Vocation is the way God assigns and then works through us to govern his creation, release creativity, restrain evil, and provide for human beings. Given the scope and depth of vocation, it drives us into a deep dependence on the life of the Church, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the need for a prayer-filled life.

Whether you’ve finished a career, haven’t started one, are investing in your children at home or other unpaid work, you’ll find food for thought and prayer here.

In these four weeks, we will read scripture, consider the importance of our callings, and ask the Lord for what we need to carry out our vocations.

This study may be done individually or in a group. Each week’s study includes the following four components:

1. Opening Questions. Reflect on your own life and context.

2. Bible Study. Read, mark, and inwardly digest the scripture passage. Read the passage aloud.

3. Life Application. Consider how the scripture impacts your life. Journal on your own or discuss in a group.

4. Prayer. Consider writing your prayers in a journal. If you are doing this study in a group, listen well when others are speaking and ensure time to pray for each person.

May the Lord lead us all deeper into his calling on our lives individually and as a church.

-Father Matt Woodley and Deacon Margie Fawcett

WEEK 1

Primacy and Purpose of Vocation



Opening Question

When you were a kid or a teenager, what job did you dream of having when you grew up?

In his book *The Call*, Os Guinness writes: “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.” What parts of your life feel “invested with a special devotion and dynamism”? What parts of your life feel disconnected from “a response to his summons and service”?



Bible

Read, mark and inwardly digest Exodus 3:1-22. Read the passage aloud.

Describe what happened the day Moses was called by God.

What experiences may have shaped Moses’ sense of his life purpose before he encountered the burning bush?

Moses was doing the ordinary tasks necessary to provide for his family. What choices did he make that helped him step into an extraordinary encounter with God?

Based on the text, what indications do we have that the heart of God has been moved? What are God's expressed desires for his people?

What attributes of God are seen in this text?

How does Moses respond to God and his call in this passage? Consider his expressed emotions, his postures, and his responses.



Life Application

Have you had a turning point or “burning bush” encounter with God that changed the direction of your life? (Don't discount undramatic or ordinary burning bush experiences.)

The Holy Spirit works through ordinary people in ordinary places to provide for his creatures. In what ordinary place do you find yourself? How might this place be a way God is providing for his creatures?

Do you think of your daily activities as aspects of your calling from God? If you began to see them that way, what might change?

WEEK 1 - PRIMACY AND PURPOSE OF VOCATION (CONTINUED)



Prayer

Ask God to give you whatever you need to believe and act on his Word.

How has God revealed himself to you in this passage?

In what ways are you thankful for your vocation right now?

In what ways do you feel confused, aimless, anxious, or overwhelmed about your vocation?



Notes

WEEK 2

Design and Dignity of Work



Opening Question

Describe your dream job. What would you do? Who would you work for? What would be your weekly schedule? How much money would you make?

What is the work that God has given you to do in this season of your life?

What is most enjoyable and most challenging about your work?



Bible

Read, mark, and inwardly digest Genesis chapter 1. Read the passage aloud.

In his book *Every Good Endeavor*, Pastor Tim Keller wrote, “Repeatedly the first chapters of Genesis describe God at ‘work,’ using the Hebrew word *melakah*, the word for ordinary human work.” As you read through Genesis 1, what do you notice about God as a worker? How does he work? What does he “feel” about his work?

Keller also wrote: “The fact that God put work in Paradise is startling to us because we so often think of work as a necessary evil or even punishment.” But based on Genesis 1, how should we view the goodness and dignity of work?

How does that compare to the curse placed on work in Genesis chapter 3? How do we embrace both the goodness and the curse of work in our lives today?

Look at Genesis 1:28-30. God not only works, but he commissions us to work. Keller again: “The word subdue indicates that, though all that God made was good, it was still to a great degree undeveloped. God left creation with a deep untapped potential that people were to unlock through their labor.” What does this mean for how we should think about work?

Read Genesis 2:8-9. What does it mean that God views us as gardeners who are called to cultivate his good creation?



Life Application

Consider how the Scripture impacts your life.

In what ways is your work a delight? In what ways is it drudgery or does it feel like it's under the curse of Genesis 3? What are the particular “thorns and thistles” in your vocation?

Where and/or how is God calling you to view your work as an opportunity to unlock or develop God's intentional “untapped potential” in creation? How are you being called to “subdue” the corner of earth God has given you?

WEEK 2- DESIGN AND DIGNITY OF WORK (CONTINUED)



Prayer

Ask God to give you whatever you need to believe and act on his Word.

Consider these prayer points:

- **Adoration** – Where do I see God's character revealed in my work?
- **Confession** – Are there any unhealthy attitudes, habits, or actions in my work that I need to confess?
- **Thanksgiving** – What am I thankful for in my work?
- **Supplication** – How am I asking God to provide hope or transformation through my work?



Notes

WEEK 3

Competence, Integrity and Ethics



Opening Question

Describe the worst job that you've ever had.

Did you learn anything from that worst job ever?



Bible

Read, mark, and inwardly digest Colossians 3:5-25. Read the passage aloud.

Note especially verses 5 to 11. What strikes you about Paul's description of our process of taking off the old self and putting on our new self in Christ?

Read verses 12 to 16. What challenges you in this description of living a life of virtue in and through Jesus?

Read verse 17 and verse 23. Dorothy Sayers once wrote that a Christian carpenter's main job "is that he should make good tables." A Christian pilot's main job is to fly and land the plane well. She calls this "the ministry of competence." What do verses 17 and 23 say about competence in your work?



Life Application

Consider how the scripture impacts your life.

In his book *Grace at Work*, Pastor Bryan Chapell writes, “When Christ’s nature and our work’s character match, we adorn the name of our Savior with the quality of our labor... If our God is to be beautiful or attractive to the watching world and our own hearts, he must be seen as true and trustworthy. And if we are adorning his nature and name with the quality of our work, then it must be true and trustworthy as well.”

Reflect on the quality and character of your work. In what ways does it adorn the Lord? Are there any ways in which you need to grow in a commitment to quality in your work?”

Are there ethical dilemmas you have faced in your work? If so, how have you navigated those?

What does a “ministry of competence” look like in the work that God has given you?



Prayer

Ask God to give you whatever you need to believe and act on his Word.

Is there an ethical question from your work troubling you? What do you need from God?

Where do you struggle to be competent at work?

What do you need from God in order to adorn the Lord with the work he’s given you?

WEEK 4

Know and Love the World

Our primary calling is a call to live in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, so that wherever we are, whatever we do, “we might be with him” (Mark 3:15). Jesus has stepped into the deep brokenness and losses of the world and he has called us to be with him. As a result of this call, we can find ourselves working in dark, difficult, discouraging, even embattled places. This week we will consider and reflect on the challenges and hope in this call.

Opening Question

When you get discouraged about the state of the world, what is one fun practice or activity that deepens you in God’s goodness and hope?

Bible

Read, mark, and inwardly digest 2 Corinthians 4:1-18. Read the passage aloud.

In verses one and sixteen, Paul tells the church “so we do not lose heart.” But in chapter one, he also confessed, “We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself.” What does this passage tell us about what could cause us to lose heart in our calling? Are there any words or phrases that stand out to you?

How does the paradigm of suffering and challenge in this passage compare or contrast to your own?

What does this passage say about how Jesus can enable us to keep loving the world with an open, trusting, Christ-focused heart in the midst of suffering?



Life Application

Consider how the scripture impacts your life.

What causes you to lose heart about ministering Jesus' presence to the world? When or how do you try to escape?

What people do you struggle to love? What does this passage offer you in such struggles?

What spiritual disciplines keep you rooted in the hope of Jesus Christ?

In what ways does this passage reframe your perspective on your vocation?



Prayer

Ask God to give you whatever you need to believe and act on his Word.

What are you doing to know and yet still love the world and the people all around you? How would you like Jesus to fill and equip you to do this?

What have you sensed or heard from the Lord in the course of this series on vocation? Invite someone to pray into these things for and with you.



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