

WHAT'S MY CALLING IN LIFE?

INTRODUCTION

The Bible study group was studying 1 Corinthians chapter 7. In front of them, sprawled out on the table, was an unlikely collection of items:

- an OSHA manual
- a coach's whistle
- a mud-flap
- a college textbook.

Each person had brought a symbol of whatever it is they do with most of their time.

As the group got started, all eyes were on a rather dated, well-used computer mouse. It belonged to Diane. Diane enters patient records into the computer system of the local hospital. She struggles with the idea that her anonymous record keeping is really what God has called her to do in life. Now...her altar guild and her prayer chain...those service activities actually have something to do with the Christian faith, she thinks. But, punching information into a computer? However...

- What might happen to the patients if she does not enter the data with meticulous care?
- What would you say to a fellow Christian who says, "I'm just a....."

What does God want from a Christian shoemaker?

Martin Luther: God wants well-made shoes. He isn't looking for shoes with little crosses on them. What point is Luther making?

The Parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

1. What does the expert's question imply about the way of salvation?
 2. Jesus' answer probably made the expert feel a little foolish. Why?
 3. In one word, what does God's law demand? For whom?
4. Jesus' parable richly illustrates the meaning of two key words in verse 27. From the context, explain the meaning of:
- a. Neighbor –
 - b. Love –
5. How did the Samaritan find his neighbor?
6. The Samaritan knew what to do for the man. His needs were obvious: he was naked, beaten, and half dead. Compare that to the way we know what to do for our neighbors.
7. In one sense, vocation means simply living out the second table of the law – loving your neighbor as yourself – not hypothetically but with a specific application to the actual “neighbors” God places in your life: your spouse, your children, your boss, your coworkers, etc. How does God presently bless *them* through you? How does God presently bless *you* through them?

GOD'S WORD IN MY LIFE

A homeless person says, “The church down on 3rd Street has real Christians in it. I'm not so sure about the church on 10th Avenue. When I stop by the 10th Avenue church, all I get is a prayer and a tract. The 3rd Street church gives me a hot meal and a place to sleep.” Respond.

Answer: God warns us against using pious words as a substitute for action when we see our neighbor in need. We are not loving our neighbor as ourselves if we simply hand them a tract when they are hungry. Why not do both?

A young person comes to you and says: “I don't know what to do with my life. I've taken tests that show what aptitudes I have, but the careers they recommend for me sound really boring. I have hobbies I enjoy but none that would provide a decent living. What should I do?” How might it help this person to study what the Bible says about our vocations?

Answer: Often we make decisions like this more difficult by focusing on ourselves – our needs, aptitudes, interests, etc. The Bible's discussion of vocation teaches us to get our eyes off of ourselves and onto our neighbor. What if the young person asked instead: “What do the people I know seem to need? With the aptitudes I have, how could I serve others best?”

What barriers or pressures in your life make it a challenge for you to give others the time and energy they need? What can you do to unclutter your calendar and better invest your time?

Two questions we can ask ourselves to help are:

- What's needed at the moment?
- Where will I make the biggest impact?

The Parable of the Good Samaritan spoken of earlier in this lesson teaches us that the time to love is “now.” Putting others first often means being inconvenienced. Emergencies often happen on a day off. Our spouse might want to talk during the 4th quarter of the big game. Martin Luther had a nice quote concerning this: “Let a man not go looking for more works to perform while he is neglecting the woman God put into his arms.”

Summary: The Biblical doctrine, or teaching, of “vocation” is the teaching that God has placed each of us into the stations and positions in life that He wants. It is His desire that we use our time, talents and abilities to serve our fellow human beings through these various stations. Our goal in life as Christians is not to selfishly use what God has given to us to line our own pockets and think only of ourselves. Rather, we are to consider how best we can use our present station in life to serve the needs of others, especially serving them with the Gospel.