

LIFEWORk BIBLE STUDY

ART



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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this Bible study is to help you begin to search the Scripture with “vocational eyes,” the eyes of the accountant, the farmer, or the health care worker. How does the character of God frame your vocation? God is the Master Communicator. What does He have to say about communication? He is the Master Architect. What does He have to teach you, His student, about design or construction? He is the Master Teacher. What does He have to convey to you about the philosophy and methodology of education? He is the Divine Healer. What does Scripture have to say about health, sickness, and healing?

In studying the Scriptures to develop a biblical theology of vocation, we are not looking so much for proof texts as “context.” The Bible does not speak exhaustively on any vocation. It does not give “ten easy steps.” It does speak in terms of principles¹ and precepts.² These provide a context for understanding our work and framing our mind, motivation, and method of our work. As you search the Scriptures, look for principles that have application to your vocation. Be careful not to put human attributes on God, but see things in His nature, as He reveals Himself in Scripture and in the person of Christ. God is the prototype/archetype for human activity.

As you do this study, look from two vantage points. If we think of the Scriptures as a forest, we must first spend some time *inside* the forest studying individual “trees”—verses—as well as their surroundings—the passage or book of the Bible. Second, we must look at the forest from the *outside*, viewing it from a mountaintop. This gives us the big picture—the meta-story, or worldview perspective. The entire Bible is God’s Transforming Story. We may learn details about vocation from examining individual verses—“trees”—of Scripture as well as gain conceptual understanding from looking from the mountaintop of the Biblical worldview. In Genesis 1:29 God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth...” This provides a mountaintop view of agriculture. God, the Creator of the universe, is The Agriculturalist—He created the concept of seed-bearing plants and the sowing/reaping system. John 15:1-2 reads, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” Here Jesus used a particular agricultural technique, namely “cutting” and “pruning” as a metaphor for our lives in Christ. Aside from the spiritual importance, we learn that for a vine or tree to maximize its potential, weak branches must be “cut off” and strong ones must be “pruned.”

As you study Scripture generally or in developing a biblical theology of vocation, be sure to spend time reflecting both on the details and on the big-picture Worldview of Scripture.

Some might say, “This is too much work!” I would respond by saying that developing a Biblical Theology of Vocation is not an event in a person’s life; it is part of traveling on the road of life-long learning. We spend most of our lives in some kind of a work capacity. How much more satisfying it could be if we understood the place of our work within the framework of God’s unfolding Kingdom.

In this study, you will find:

¹ Principle: “..., the cause, source or origin of anything; that from which a thing proceeds; ... A general truth;” [Noah] Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, © 1995, Christian Technologies, Inc.

² Precept: “..., any commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule of action;” [Noah] Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, © 1995, Christian Technologies, Inc.

- ◆ **Nature of God:** Offers insight on that part of God’s character from which the vocation may be framed.
- ◆ **Foundation verse(s):** Offers a potential starting point for exploring the vocation.
- ◆ **Discovery verses:** Identifies a few representative verses found in Scripture that may help to shape our vocational understanding. The verses used in the Discovery section are a small starting point. They are representative, not exhaustive.
- ◆ **Vocational insight:** Provides a place to write any insights you gain from the passage. Each vocation has one of the boxes filled in as an example of a potential insight.
- ◆ **Questions for further reflection and application:** Provides a place to answer the question, “How am I going to apply what I am learning?” It is a place to record questions the passage raises on which you may want to further reflect. Again, an example is presented in each vocation.
- ◆ **Quote:** Provides an insight from one of the “great cloud of witnesses” related to the vocation.
- ◆ The symbol * identifies similar vocations

As you study, pray and ask God to open your eyes of understanding as to how the truth of Scripture may speak into your vocation.

As you study the Discovery verses, ask questions of the text in the following order:

1. **What does it say? (Hear the text!)** Look for new insights about God, man, and creation as they relate to your vocation. As mentioned earlier, look at both individual “trees” as well as the larger “forest.”
2. **What does it mean?** What light does this shed on my occupation?
3. **Look for principles.** For example, a principle for relief work may be found in Ruth 2:15-19. Boaz recognized that Ruth’s dignity was as important as her need for food. How would a relief worker do their work in a way that affirms the dignity of people caught in a crisis?
4. **Look for technical knowledge.** For example, under health care, Deuteronomy 23:12-14 establishes the need for “pit latrines.” In addition, note why pit latrines are necessary. What is the relationship between a Holy God and sanitation? What if there is no concept of a Holy God in the culture where a health promoter is working? What are the barriers of that for sanitation?
5. **How does it apply?** What am I going to do with this? What does God want me to do with this as it relates to my vocation? The passage itself may raise questions in your own mind that require further reflection. Those may be recorded in the column labeled “Questions for Further Reflection and Application.”

An individual may want to pick the occupation closest to their own and work through the study to gain a sense of how a Biblical Theology of Vocation can enliven and give depth to one’s work.

Enjoy!

ART*

Nature of God: The first artist; the Creator of the universe

Foundation verse: Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Discovery

Verses	Vocational Insight	Questions for Further Reflection and Application
Genesis 1:1-31	<i>God is the first artist! Throughout this chapter, like an artist, He stands back to examine what He is making. He declares it “good.” At the end (vs. 31) He examines His work of art and declares it “very good”!</i>	<i>God wants man to fill the earth (vs. 28) with what? With other artists?</i>
Exodus 15:19-21		
Exodus 35:30 – 36:1		
I Chronicles 25:1-7		
II Chronicles 5:11-14		
Psalm 27:4		

* music, poetry, dance, painting, writing, crafts

Psalm 96:1-13		
Proverbs 31:19-24		
Song of Songs 1:1-4		
Isaiah 61:3		
Jeremiah 18:1-6		
John 1:1		
Acts 9:36-39		
Revelation 21:23-26		

Mystified by the power to create, it is no wonder that man should imagine the artist to be godlike. In the West, belief in a Creator-God was a way of confessing that the power to make the new was beyond human explanation. By deifying the Creator, the West somehow encouraged and endorsed the new. Of course man's power to create did not depend on a theory, and the human need to create has transcended the powers of explanation. Peoples of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome who did not know a Creator-God, who made something from nothing, still created works unexcelled of their kind. And peoples of the East who saw a cosmos of cycles created works of rare beauty in all the arts. Across the world, the urge to create needed no express reason and conquered all obstacles.

Still the West, whose unusual hospitality to the new was rooted in many causes and many mysteries, found added incentive in the vision of a Creator-God and a creator man. Creators in the West found their own ways to make a legacy, our heritage of the arts. In this book I describe the who, when, where, and what. But the *why* has never ceased to be a mystery.

Man's power to make the new was the power to outlive himself in his creations. He found the materials of immortality in the stone around him or the artificial stone that he could make. He flexed his muscles of creativity in structures whose purpose would remain a mystery, and in temples of community. He dared to make images of himself and of the life around him. He made his words into worlds, to relive his past and reshape his future.

Daniel J. Boorstin
The Creators, p. 71

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