

**“Your vocation is how your station in life serves as a channel of God’s blessings to the people around you.”**

***Historical Introduction***

“Vocation” comes from the Latin word “*vocatio*,” which means “calling.”

In the medieval *Roman Catholic Church*, the term “vocation” was limited to priests, monks, and nuns—persons who were thought to have special “divine callings” that set them above ordinary people. The *Lutheran Reformation* challenged such thinking in several ways:

- Lutherans taught that man-made vows (such as to celibacy) should not take priority over stations in life that God Himself has instituted (such as marriage and parenthood).
- Lutherans taught that all people have vocations from God, including their vocations in the *family* (husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, etc.) and the *community* (baker, butcher, farmer, civil magistrate, soldier, etc.) as well as in the *church* (pastor, bishop, laity, etc.).
- Lutherans viewed vocation through the lenses of both Law and Gospel:
  - As for the Law, vocation comes from God’s commands (not human traditions), and the works performed in one’s vocation do not merit God’s favor, but simply serve one’s neighbor.
  - As for the Gospel, vocation may be viewed as God working through one person to bless another person; my vocation is not so much about *what I do*, but rather about *what God does through me*.

The *Reformed tradition*, following John Calvin, shared with Martin Luther an insistence that lay people, not just clergy, have important callings from God. However, the Reformed tradition, especially among the Puritans, additionally emphasized a zeal for economic innovation, which sociologist Max Weber discussed in his famous study *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Although the Puritans sought to be devout, in time their views became secularized. The result is that many people in America today think of “vocation” as simply a career, without any spiritual significance.

*Lutheran theology* emphasizes contentment within one’s current vocation, rather than the Protestant work ethic’s desire for upward mobility. For Lutherans, a discussion of vocation does not so much center around “what will I do with my life?” but rather “what has God already been doing with me and through me as a blessing to myself and to others?” In answering these questions, Lutherans include the secular benefits of one’s career, but careers do not take center stage. God works through people in the family and in the church as well as in the community, and vocation is God’s delivery channel for spiritual as well as for material blessings.

*Lutheran theology* also emphasizes that God’s face is hidden in vocation, as if behind a mask. It appears on the surface that a milkmaid milks a cow, or a farmer harvests grain, or a soldier defends a nation, or a father raises his child, but in each case God operates behind the scenes—hidden “in, with, and under” these vocations—to deliver *material* (and sometimes *spiritual*) blessings. In an analogous manner, God works “in, with, and under” the water of Holy Baptism and the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper to deliver *spiritual* blessings.

***Linguistic Introduction***

Grammatically, vocation is expressed by the passive voice. People “are called.” They do not call themselves, but rather God calls them. For example, when the *Augsburg Confession* refers to a pastor as being “called,” it uses the Latin verb form *vocatus*, which is the perfect passive participle of *vocare*, “to call.” The *passive* voice means that the pastor receives his call from outside himself. The *perfect* tense means that the action has been completed in a past time but also has an ongoing significance during the present time, and even into the future. God has called him, and God continues to be with him. He is God’s instrument; God is the agent working through him. So it goes with the callings of the laity as well as of the clergy: they “are called” by God.

***From the Lutheran Confessions***

“Even though we experience much good from other people, whatever we receive ... is all received from God. ... So we receive these blessings not from them, but through them, from God. For creatures are only the hands, channels, and means by which God gives all things.” (*Large Catechism*, First Commandment)

## Session 1: “Vocation: The Doctrine of Christian Callings”

Clergy are not the only people “called by God” for special work. Nor is your “vocation” simply your job or career. Rather, “vocation” (from *vocatio*, Latin for “a calling”) encompasses the many ways in which your station in life serves as a channel of God’s blessings to the people around you. In fact, each person has multiple, overlapping vocations, such as husband, father, employee, neighbor, and citizen. In each case, it is God who works through you for the blessing of others, even as He works through other people to bless you.

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### ***Important Concepts in Lutheran Theology***

- *Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria*
- Law (Curb, Mirror, Guide) / Gospel
- Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments)
- Justification (Christ’s Righteousness for Us) / Sanctification (*Simul Justus et Peccator*)
- God’s Two-Fold Reign (“Two Kingdoms,” but God is the King of both):
  - Left hand, temporal realm: civil government—creating, preserving—natural law and the sword
  - Right hand, spiritual realm: church—redeeming, sanctifying—Word and Sacraments
- Theology of the Cross (vs. Theology of Glory)
- Table of Duties / Command and Promise (esp. Fourth Commandment) / Masks of God / ... Vocation

### ***The Three Estates and the Offices within Them***

- Medieval Social Order:
  - Bishops, Knights, and Peasants (like playing chess!)
    - King Alfred the Great of Wessex, ca. A.D. 880: “The king ... must have praying men and fighting men and working men.”
    - Aelfric, a Benedictine monk at Eynsham (near Oxford), ca. 1000: “there are three orders, set in unity: these are *laboratores* [those who work], *oratores* [those who pray], *bellatores* [those who fight].”
    - The *Ancien Régime*, i.e., France before the Revolution of 1789: Clergy, Nobility, and “the Third Estate,” consisting of everyone else.
  - Each person belonged to only one estate: *ecclesia* (church), *politeia* (state), or *oeconomia* (laborers).
- Lutheran Reformation:
  - Three Estates: Family, Church, and Civil Government (narrow) / Society (wide)
  - Re-prioritized (family comes first) and overlapping (the same person may hold an office in each).
  - Although distinct, the three estates have inter-related functions:
    - Family and Church: Teach God’s Word to children, the one privately and the other publicly.
    - Family and State: Punish to restrain sin, the one privately and the other publicly.
    - Church and State: Uphold morality and pardon, the one spiritually and the other temporally.
  - The Three Estates exist within the Two Kingdoms:
    - Spiritual Realm (God’s Right Hand): Church
    - Temporal Realm (God’s Left Hand): Family, from which Civil Government is derived
  - Alternatively, the Family may be seen as spanning both Church and State:
    - Luther spoke of fathers and mothers as “house priests”; Luther urged fathers especially to quiz their household in the Catechism at least weekly (*Small Catechism*, Preface).
    - Civil government originates from fatherhood (*Large Catechism*, Fourth Commandment).
    - Thus, “the family is the Church and State in miniature” (Johannes Ylvisaker, *The Gospels*).
  - Within each “estate” are “offices,” e.g. the office of “husband” within the estate of “marriage” or the office of “pastor” within the estate of “church.”
    - In these **offices** we find the most basic of **vocations**, which please God better than nunnery.
    - “So a woman’s duties [*officia*] [i.e., bearing and raising children] please God because of faith, and a faithful woman is saved who piously serves her calling [*vocationis*] in such duties.” (Apol. XXIII:32, commenting on “She will be saved through childbearing,” 1 Tm 2:15).

***Applying the Lutheran Layman’s Research Method:*** What does your “Three-Volume Christian Home Library” (Bible, hymnal, and catechism) say about ... “vocation”?

BIBLE

HYMNAL

CATECHISM

**The Hausvater Project ([www.hausvater.org](http://www.hausvater.org))**

**Hausvater:** /HAUS-fah-ter/ noun (German) 1. Housefather. 2. Spiritually responsible head of household, including the housefather as assisted by the housemother. Example: “As the Hausvater should teach it [Christian doctrine] to the entire family ... ” (Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*, 1529)

## Session 2: “Your Christian Calling in the Family”

With courts and legislatures redefining “marriage,” much confusion surrounds the nature and purpose of the family as God designed it at creation. God continually renews His creation of the family through the sanctifying of Christian spouses, parents, and children—as well as extended family. In this session you will rediscover God’s gracious design for the family and also recognize your special place in God’s inter-generational plan for blessing you through others, and others through you.

### **Marriage**

- “God has instituted marriage before all other estates, and therefore created man and woman separately (as is evident), not for lewdness, but that they should legitimately live together, be fruitful, beget children, and nourish and train them to the honor of God.” (*Large Catechism*, Sixth Commandment)
- Marriage is the *divinely established* (Gen 2:18) *life-long union* (Matthew 19:4–6) *celebrating sexual complementarity* (Genesis 1:27), *children* (Genesis 1:28), and *chastity* (Genesis 2:25). **WARNING: American pop culture and public policy reject each segment of this biblical definition of marriage.**
- Marriage proclaims the love of Christ for the Church and echoes the submission of the Church to her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:22–33).
- Love and Respect: “Let each one of you [husbands] in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).

Notes:

### **Parents**

- Take primary responsibility for your children’s “education” (whether or not you enroll them in “school”): “First of all, they [parents] should earnestly and faithfully discharge their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but, most of all, to train them to the honor and praise of God.” (*Large Catechism*, Fourth Commandment)
- Marital parenthood is the primary means for evangelizing the next generation. See Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Psalm 78:4–7 (cf. 44:1, 48:13); Proverbs 22:6; Malachi 2:15; Acts 2:38–39; Ephesians 6:4.
- Bless your children, your children’s children, and your children’s children’s children (Genesis 49:1–28). (What a privilege parents have to attach God’s name and God’s blessings to their children as they bring them to the church to be baptized and as they instruct them in God’s Word daily at home!)

Notes:

### **Fathers**

- “I believe in God the Father ...” (Creed) / “Our Father, who art in heaven ...” (Lord’s Prayer)
- “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father [*pater*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family [*patria*] in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ...” (Ephesians 3:14–17a)
- “What Fathers Do” (2008), by Rick Stuckwisch, [www.hausvater.org/best-blog-posts](http://www.hausvater.org/best-blog-posts): 1. Catechize his children in the Word of God. 2. Provide for his family and household. 3. Love his wife. 4. Teach his sons to become men. 5. Give his daughters in marriage.
- “Bring[ing Children] Up in the Training and Admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4):
  - Training (*paideia*): “instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16); “chastening” (Hebrews 12:5,7,8,11); a well-rounded education promoting character development (Greco-Roman)
  - Admonition (*nouthesia*): “examples ... written for our admonition” (1 Corinthians 10:11); “reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition” (Titus 3:10); literally, “reasoning” (nous = mind) with people so that they may recognize God’s good and gracious will.
- Modeling by example—the “working, teaching father” who involves his children in meaningful labor that serves others as a thank offering to God who has forgiven us.
- Self-controlled eyes for sons (Job 31:1; Matthew 5:28; Arterburn/Stoeker, *Every Man’s Battle*)
- Heroic fatherhood: be the most important man in your daughter’s life until the day you walk her down the aisle to marry her husband. (Meg Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*)

**Activity:** Practice leading a home devotion: 1) Read a Bible passage; 2) sing a hymn; 3) pray.

Notes:

### **Mothers**

- The world sees drudgery, but Luther identified “a majesty concealed within” motherhood (*Large Catechism*, Fourth Commandment).
- What other vocation brings a new person into the world, and who else can nourish that baby from her own body? “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you.” (Isaiah 49:15)
- Mothering is a holy work, more precious to God than monastic prayers.
  - “She will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control” (1 Timothy 2:15).
  - Lessons from *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, art. XXIII:
    - God has sanctified the vocations of wife and mother.
    - God has not commanded celibacy; being a nun is of human invention.
    - A woman cannot please God by obeying man-made laws, such as taking a nun’s vow.
    - A woman is justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and being a new creation in Christ Jesus she now glorifies God within her ordinary, daily duties; she need not seek some special church work in order to present herself as holy.
    - “So a woman’s duties [*officia*] [i.e., bearing and raising children] please God because of faith, and a faithful woman is saved who piously serves her calling [*vocationis*] in such duties.” (*ibid.*, commenting on “She will be saved through childbearing,” 1 Timothy 2:15).

- Motherhood is a central focus of the congregation’s ministry: Paul exhorted Titus to train pastors to train grandmothers to train mothers to raise godly children (Titus 2:1–5).
- Men can do housework, but only a woman can be homemaker. Luther: “Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave.” The Proverbs 31 woman is neither isolated nor career-pursuing, but family-centered and home-productive.
- A few “forgotten” functions of the home worth reviving:
  - Nutrition, the foundation for health, requires wholesome ingredients prepared in a healthful manner. Can Great-Grandma’s recipes be recovered (e.g., Sally Fallon, *Nourishing Traditions*)?
  - Daughters (and sons) need mothers who model modesty (“lead chaste and decent lives,” *Small Catechism*, Sixth Commandment; Proverbs 11:22; 1 Timothy 2:9–10; 1 Peter 3:3–4; Jeff Pollard, *Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America*)
  - Sing the Faith: In 17th-century Germany, moms singing hymns to their children in the home preserved the church for an entire generation while public worship was blocked by political turmoil and warfare. Are you ready if this becomes necessary in 21st-century America?
  - Prayer: Monica prayed for her son Augustine ... and God turned a pagan into a saint!

Notes:

### **Children**

- “Honor [i.e., “Honor your father and your mother”] includes not only love, but also modesty, humility, and submission to a majesty hidden in them.” (*Large Catechism*, Fourth Commandment).
  - “Think of parents as standing in God’s place (*ibid.*).
  - “We are not to consider who they are or how they may be, but the will of God, who has created and ordained parenthood” (*ibid.*). Cf. Baptism—the water is mere water, but God’s Word makes it something more than mere water, and likewise Dad and Mom are more than mere mortals!
- “Notice how great, good, and holy a work is assigned to children here” (*ibid.*).
  - God’s command and blessing sanctify parenthood and they direct children toward a work that truly pleases God; the made-up works of the medieval Roman Church lack this command and promise.
  - Notice how God pairs the command to honor with the promise to bless: God demands that we respect the vocations He has established because through those vocations God Himself serves us.
- “We must serve them, help them, and provide for them when they are old, sick, infirm, or poor” (*ibid.*).
  - Does the Fourth Commandment expire when a child reaches 18 years of age?
  - What responsibilities do grandchildren have to their grandparents? What blessings does God seek to bestow from grandparents to the third and the fourth generations?

Notes:

### Session 3: “Your Christian Calling in the Church”

God also calls people for service to one another within the church. Certainly this includes the “divine call” of those serving in the public ministry, but church vocations also include every baptized child of God. In fact, St. Paul exhorted Titus, the Bishop of Crete, to mentor pastors who in turn would mentor older men and older women, who in turn would mentor younger men and younger women, who in turn would train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Yes, your vocation in the church may include serving on church council or teaching Sunday school, but it also involves much more. As you receive spiritual counsel from elders in the faith, you also are maturing into a Christian mentor for someone else.

#### ***The Marks of the Church***

- “The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered” (AC VII:1, repeated frequently in the Lutheran Confessions)
- God’s Word is efficacious (Isaiah 55:11; Hebrew 4:12). Therefore, “we are certain that there must be Christians wherever the gospel is” (LW 39:305).

#### ***Vocations within the Church***

- All believers are “called [*vocati*]” to the Christian faith (Romans 8:28,30).
  - God “has called [*vocavit*]” believers by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).
  - Believers recognize the Good Shepherd’s “voice [*voce*m]” (John 10:27).
- All believers belong to the “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9).
  - All believers may and must judge teachers (Matthew 7:15, 24:4–5; Romans 16:17).
  - All may and must judge doctrines (1 Corinthians 10:14; Colossians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).
  - Therefore, a congregation of believers has both the right and the duty to depose false teachers and to call faithful teachers. “Blameless” in Titus 1:7 and “be tested first” in 1 Timothy 3:10 indicate that the local congregation nominated and evaluated candidates for the ministry; pastors were not appointed solely by a visiting apostle exercising some high office (LW 39:312).
- Not all believers are called to the same task or equipped with the same gifts.
  - The Body of Christ has diverse members, called and equipped by the Spirit for diverse forms of ministry (1 Corinthians 12:1–30; Ephesians 4:7–16).
  - A “bishop” or “elder” has a special calling to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; Romans 10:14–15; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2; the preceding all flow forth from Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:21–22).
  - At the apostles’ urging, the “multitude of disciples” (the congregation) called seven men to serve as “deacons” who would attend to widows’ needs while the apostles devoted themselves “to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:1–4).
  - God, for His own reasons, has called some men to an office within the church to which He does not call any women (1 Corinthians 14:33–35; 1 Timothy 2:8–15).
  - The laity have distinct callings within the congregation (Titus 2:2–8, with a “chiastic” formulation):
    - A—older men: “that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience” (v. 2)
      - B—older women: “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they admonish the young women” (v. 3–4b)
      - B’—younger women: “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, *that the word of God may not be blasphemed.*” (vv. 4–5, emphasizing the climax of the chiasm)
    - A’—younger men: “Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned.” (vv. 7–8)
  - Clergy preach sermons. Laity live sermons (Romans 12:1–2; 1 Thessalonians 1:8–10).
  - The vocations of both clergy and laity within the congregation together serve both the congregation (“for the edifying of the body of Christ,” Ephesians 4:12) and those beyond the congregation (“that the word of God may not be blasphemed,” Titus 2:5).

**Theological Art Project:** Draw two vocational “flow diagrams,” one for Ephesians 4:11–12 and one for Titus 1:1,4–5, 2:1–8, indicating how God’s blessings flow from Him through one believer to another person.

EPHESIANS 4:11–12

TITUS 1:1,4–5, 2:1–8



**Session 4: “Your Christian Calling in Society”**

Christians have distinctive callings beyond the home and beyond the congregation as they serve as channels of God’s blessings to people in their community. This may include participation in civil government through voting, campaigning, lobbying, or office-holding. Other vocations include the Fourth Petition blessing of “good neighbors” and volunteering in community organizations. In such callings, Christians become the salt and the light of the world. As you live now in a neo-pagan and polytheistic culture that retains but a thin residue of Christianity in public life, your vocation in society provides important opportunities for evangelistic outreach as well as a bulwark for your family and your congregation against a self-destructing civilization. Rejoice, for God is at work through you!

***Civil Institutions May Be God Pleasing***

- “Lawful civil regulations are good works of God.” (*Augsburg Confession*, XVI).
- Lutherans affirm “the dignity of secular affairs” (*Augsburg Confession*, XXVI).
- For example, David was both a soldier and a man of God (*Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, III).

***Officers of the Church and Officers of Civil Government Have Distinct Vocations***

<b>Kingdom of the Left (Civil Government)</b>	<b>Kingdom of the Right (Church)</b>
Protect the Innocent, Punish Wrongdoers	Preach the Gospel, Administer the Sacraments, Forgive and Retain Sins (Power of the Keys)
Founded on Natural Law and Human Reason	Founded on Holy Scripture

- Problems result when one kingdom usurps the authority of the other:
  - King Saul offered a sacrifice in place of Samuel the Prophet, so God took the kingdom from him (1 Samuel 13:7b–14).
  - King Uzziah entered the Temple, so God struck him with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16–21).
  - Popes during the Middle Ages meddled with appointments to civil offices.
  - The first instance in Western Europe of the same person serving officially as the head of both church and state was King Henry VIII, and the results were destructive to both the church and the state.
- At the other extreme, Thomas Jefferson called for a “wall of separation” between church and state.
- Lutherans occasionally have sought constructive cooperation, while also maintaining a strict distinction:
  - Saxon princes protected Lutheran theologians from the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.
  - Luther encouraged local magistrates to establish schools, in part for moral and religious instruction.
  - However, pastors who have authority over civil marriages do so not as officers of the church, by divine right, but rather as officers of the state, by human right (*Augsburg Confession*, art. XXVIII).

***The Blessing of a Good Government (and the Curse of a Bad One)***

- “For he [the governor] is God’s minister to you for good.” (Romans 13:4).
- King Ahaz “of Israel” (morally speaking, although politically “of Judah”) “encouraged moral decline [exempting the guilty from punishment, promoting lawlessness]” and “had been continually unfaithful [acted treacherously]” (2 Chronicles 28:19). Note that did the opposite of what God calls civil government to perform (cf. Romans 13:3–4).

Notes:

### **Questions to Ponder**

- Is America (or has it ever been) a Christian nation? Is that the same as being a “nation of Christians”?
- What is America today: Secular, Post-Christian, Neo-Pagan, Polytheistic? (If so, then the NT epistles are more timely than ever, considering the political context for which they first were written!)
- Is the persecution of Christians on the rise—in the world? even here in America?
  - Should Christians be surprised by persecution? (Matthew 10:17, 23:34)
  - How should Christians respond to persecution? (Matthew 5:10–12; Acts 4:29, 5:42, 14:21–22)
  - How high should our hopes be?
    - On the one hand, our kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36; Philippians 3:20).
    - On the other hand: Who was the biggest persecutor of the early church? And, didn’t God transform him into the greatest missionary? And didn’t he author the bulk of the NT?
- Does the *Obergefell* ruling call for civil disobedience or, rather, constitutional interposition (e.g., the Kentucky justice of the peace)? (“Interposition” is the constitutional principle that a lower magistrate may place oneself between the people and a higher magistrate in order to protect the people from tyranny. Luther cautiously approved of this principle; Calvin’s followers were even bolder in this regard.)
- Interactions among the Three Estates:
  - How are religious liberty (Civil Government) and parental rights (Family) related?
  - How are religious liberty (Civil Government) and evangelism (Church) related?
  - In recent American history, which declined first—religious liberty or the family? religious liberty or evangelism?
  - In the history of the early church, which advanced first—evangelism or religious liberty?

Notes:

### **URGENT!—Pass This On ...**

- You have now completed your study of “*Vocatio: God Blesses Others through Your Calling*,” which serves as background training for guiding other people through “*Discovering Your Vocations in the Family, Church, and Society*,” a Bible study available for free at [www.hausvater.org/bible-studies](http://www.hausvater.org/bible-studies).
- Consider your vocation:
  - Are you a pastor who can teach “*Discovering Your Vocations*” to your congregation?
  - Are you a layperson who can assist your pastor by teaching it in a men’s or women’s Bible study?
  - Are you a parent who can teach it in the home, guiding your teenagers into their adult vocations?

**Quotations concerning Vocation (numbered for easy reference in group discussions)**

1. Vocation is “a matter of what *God* does in and through us” (Veith, 9).
2. “Instead of seeing vocation as a matter of what we should *do*—what we must *do* as a Christian worker or a Christian citizen or a Christian parent—Luther emphasizes what *God does* in and through our vocations” (Veith, 23).
3. “Vocation is a matter of Gospel, a manifestation of *God’s* action, not our own. In this sense, vocation is not another burden placed upon us, something else to fail at, but a realm in which we can experience *God’s* love and grace, both in the blessings we receive from others and in the way *God* is working through us despite our failures” (Veith, 23–24).
4. “In vocations, we are not doing good works for *God*—we are doing good works for our neighbor” (Veith, 39).
5. Vocation is the “theology of *ordinary life*” (Veith, 157).
6. “We do not *choose* our vocations. We are *called* to them. ... *Our calling comes from outside ourselves.*” (Veith, 50, 55)
7. We are called to love our neighbors in concrete situations (remember the Good Samaritan?), not as some “abstract humanity of the theorists” (Veith, 59).
8. “*God* himself will milk the cows through him whose vocation that is” (Wingren, 9).
9. “So the emperor, when he turns to *God*, is not emperor but a single [*einzelne*] person like any other human being before *God*. But if he turns to his subjects, he is emperor as many times as he has subjects” (Luther, quoted in Wingren 12).
10. “Thus love comes from *God*, flowing down to human beings on earth through all vocations, through both spiritual and earthly governments. ... [A person] receives the good gifts of *God’s* love through both prince and preacher” (Wingren, 27–28).
11. “As soon as I think of my neighbor, all vocations no longer stand on a common plane, but a certain vocation comes to the fore as mine. One important fact in *God’s* providence is that I have the neighbor I have” (Wingren, 65).
12. It as if every tool in the craftsman’s workshop now bears a label saying, “My dear, use me toward your neighbor as you would want him to act toward you with that which is his” (Luther, quoted in Wingren, 72).
13. To confuse law for gospel in the spiritual realm, leads to Popery; to confuse gospel for law in the temporal realm, leads to the peasant revolt (paraphrasing Wingren, 115).
14. “His [Luther’s] viewpoint is not that works flow forth from faith, but that works pour in on man from the outside, through the very movement of life. Faith demands that every moment an action be accepted in faith and borne in faith” (Wingren, 118).
15. “Vocation means that all those who are closest at hand, family and fellow-workers, are given by *God*: it is one’s neighbor whom one is to love. Therein vocation points toward a world which is not the same for all people” (Wingren, 172).
16. “All works count for nothing in heaven; their sphere is on earth. ... Man’s cooperation with *God* is not directed towards *God*, but outward, toward his neighbor” (Wingren, 177, 180).
17. “Desperation arises in our vocation, and stimulates prayer. But *God’s* answer to prayer also comes in our vocation; and the divine intervention which answers prayer is closely related to what has often been referred to as the transformation of the work of our vocation” (Wingren, 192).
18. “Since *God* is at work in the world about us, it is *God* who gives us the moment together with the relationships with others in our situation which the moment brings; and with these relationships he gives us our definite tasks. To use the moment and the time which *God* gives is to enter into one’s vocation” (Wingren, 226).
19. “Next to Word and Sacrament, the recognition of the divine vocation of every Christian in his or her worldly occupation is the third great insight of the Lutheran Reformation” (Jürgen Moltmann, quoted in Bennethum, 41).
20. “Luther’s use of vocation and universal priesthood differ primarily in terms of what each invites the faithful recipient of *God’s* grace to do. That all Christians are priests means that they all (not just those who hold formal offices in the church) have the privilege and the responsibility to declare to their

neighbors the good news of God’s redeeming grace. That all Christians have a vocation means that they are to render service to their neighbors simply through the performance of their useful daily tasks” (Bennethum, 48).

21. Luther encouraged people to remain in their current stations, even though he also promoted general education and was himself an example of upward mobility from his father’s station in life. “Luther wanted to be clear that leaving one’s present station is not necessary in order to please God. ... He was not saying, ‘you must stay where you are,’ so much as ‘you may stay where you are’ and still serve God.’ In other words, one does not need to escape the routine of daily living in order to be pious” (Bennethum, 52).
22. “Luther taught that all Christians are called to serve God in their occupations and that they respond to this call by loving their neighbors. These latter writers [John Calvin and the Puritans after him], on the other hand, declared that God calls people to their occupations and that they respond to this call by performing their work with diligence and devotion. Thus, duty and hard work were elevated as God-pleasing virtues in and of themselves. Industrious workers were told to expect success and prosperity as marks of God’s favor. Martin Luther, by contrast, had warned his readers that faithful Christian living brings with it the cross” (Bennethum, 55).
23. “I am convinced that an essential task for the church is to develop more resources targeted for the average adult believer that affirm Martin Luther’s teaching on vocation. The more church members are equipped to listen for the good news that God is active in the mundane world of work and that God calls people to become aware of how their own work serves God, the more the gap between Sunday and Monday can be erased” (Bennethum, 65).

## For Further Study

- Resources at the Hausvater Project, [www.hausvater.org](http://www.hausvater.org):
  - MacPherson, “The Doctrine of Vocation: Sacramental Blessing, Not Sacrificial Duty”
  - MacPherson, “‘Balancing Work and Family’ vs. ‘Redeeming the Time’”
  - MacPherson, “Thank God, There’s Always Enough Time in the Day”
  - MacPherson, “Where Are You in Titus Chapter Two?”
  - MacPherson, *Studying Luther’s Large Catechism: A Workbook for Christian Discipleship*
  - Conner, “The Love a Wife Desires, the Respect a Husband Needs”
  - Huntington, “Talk of Them When You Sit in Your House”
  - Shulz, “Family Worship: Biblical Suggestions for Your Home”
  - Much more: Bible studies, hymns, sermons, etc.
- Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (a popular overview by an LCMS lay theologian, who presently teaches literature at Patrick Henry College; see also, his *Family Vocations*)
- Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (a scholarly treatment by a Swedish Lutheran known for emphasizing First Article theology: how God the Creator remains active in preserving His creation)
- D. Michael Bennethum, *Listen! God Is Calling!: Luther Speaks of Vocation* (a popular guide by an ELCA pastor, who shares helpful insights although at times presenting the law, and thus the gospel, weakly)

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