

WHAT IS VOCATION?

by Stephen J. Nichols

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Think about the subject of “work.” What do you see “good” about it, and what is “bad?” (5-7)
As a warmup, ask the group to answer this as they did before reading the booklet.
2. We refer to “ministers” as being called by God to their work. What do you believe God has “called” you to do? (5-7)
Let the group interact on what they see as the difference between a sacred calling and a secular calling. Begin to help them see that this is a false dichotomy.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. In what way can you put together the idea of your “work” as a way to glorify God? (7-10)
*Continuing from what you did with #2 (there is no difference between secular and sacred), help the group move from the idea that only some things, like worship, glorify God, to believing *everything* we do should be done in a way that brings glory to God. This is the meaning of the First Commandment – nothing should be more important in our lives than God.*
4. Read Genesis 1:26. Let your imagination run freely. What types of work would Adam and Eve have had to do in the upkeep of the Garden of Eden? How would they have glorified God in doing this? (10-14)
Let the group share what they imagine Eden would have been like, and how working the garden would have brought glory to God.
5. Now read Genesis 3:1-19, especially 16-19. What changed in how we would experience work in a now fallen world? As Christians, how can we continue to glorify God in our work when it is so much harder with nature working against us? (10-14)
This will bring the discussion closer to our world today. Keep them focused on the purpose of work and the purpose for which God created us – to glorify and serve Him.
6. Rest. God created us with the need to rest. How do you understand the Sabbath commandment, and how well do you honestly keep it, and why? (14-16)
*When He commands us to rest, we take this like we do so many things we are told to do – we resist. We need to learn to see God has given us rest as a *gift*. This gift should not be taken for granted; it should be taken and enjoyed. This, again, is another way we glorify God.*

7. Both work *and* rest can be taken to extremes. How might you apply John Piper’s statement: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied (or content) in Him” in your work and in times of rest? (16-19)
If we could only learn to truly find our contentment in Him and not in things, all of life would be much more enjoyable. Ask the class to think about ways this could change how they live.

8. Athletes and celebrities make more in a year than most of us make in a lifetime. Solomon says: “*Whoever works his land will have satisfaction of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have the satisfaction of poverty.*” (Proverbs 28:19) What might have to change in your life in order to live a life satisfied (content) with what God has given you? (19-26)
Try to get some ideas on this from the group. Then ask them to write down, privately, what they personally need to work on.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

Dr. Nichols says: “The standard for evaluating your work and your worth is to see your work as a calling in the service of God, for His glory.” (page 31) In the previous questions, you have been asked what areas of your life and work need to change in order for you to glorify God, and be satisfied in what He has given you. Now, before you forget, make a plan for how you will begin to live out this new view of your vocation – which is your calling.

For Further Study

Bringing Heaven Down to Earth: Connecting this Life to the Next, Nathan L.K. Bierma. P&R, 2011.
Finding a Job You Can Love, Ralph Mattson and Arthur Miller, Jr. P&R, 1999.

Find this and more at www.pcabookstore.com.