

WHAT IS VOCATION?

by Stephen J. Nichols

TO THE READER: A good learning technique is to answer the following questions BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, you can refine your answers based on your reading. Then, when your group gathers, each can discuss his or her view and you can either affirm or modify what you wrote.

1. Think about the subject of “work.” What do you see “good” about it, and what is “bad?” (5-7)
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)
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)
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)
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)
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)

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)

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)

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.

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