

Prayer:

Father, please renew our minds and conform our lives to the standard of Your holy Word.

Logistics:

Sundays @ 9:45 AM (until ~10:40 AM). Teachers: Brian Cochrum (RE) and Tim Gwin (TE)

Overview of the Course:

Vocation: What Am I Called to Do and to Be?

1. The Caller and the Called: What is the Context of Calling?
2. The Meaning of Means: What is the Concept of Calling?
3. The Scope of the Summons: What is the Content of Calling?
4. Calling Lived Out – In Our Work
5. Calling Lived Out – In Our Families
6. Calling Lived Out – In Our Church
7. Calling Lived Out – In Our Society
8. Wrong Way: How NOT to Discern God's Will
9. Proper Path: How to Discern God's Will
10. Productivity: Stewarding Our Most Limited Resource (Time)

Goal of the Course:

WSC Q1: *What is the chief end of man?*

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

WLC Q1: *What is the chief end of man?*

Man's chief **and highest** end is to glorify God, and **fully** to enjoy Him forever.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So **glorify God in your body**.

1 Pet. 2:11-12 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and **glorify God** on the day of visitation.

Ecc. 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and **find enjoyment in his toil**. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

Ecc. 3:12-13 I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to **be joyful** and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and **take pleasure in all his toil**—this is God's gift to man.

The goal of this course is for students **to discover**, or *rediscover*, as the case may be, **the wisdom and love of God in His various callings upon our lives** so that we may run the race set before us well and, by His grace at work in us, we might accomplish more of that which He has purposed us to do and to be: namely, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever as a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, proclaiming the virtues of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

Goal of Lesson 1:

The goal of this lesson is for students to understand the **context** of calling. Together we will explore what are some of the requirements, elements, and implications.

*In the next lesson, we'll move on from the context and discuss the **concept** of calling. We will analyze what it has meant throughout the history of the church, what it means today, and what we ought to believe about it as we seek to be faithful to God in our callings.*

Focus Questions:

Why are you here? For any of you who knew at least the title of the class and are here out of interest in the topic, what did you come here hoping to discuss or to learn more about?

Note: please share (in the midst of class or otherwise) questions you have as we progress. I may not have time in that lesson to cover them fully, but as we are together over these 10 weeks, I'd like to devote time to addressing actual issues or concerns that you're facing and not just the background theory and general applications.

In general, how intentional do you think most people are about how they live their lives? Does it vary across area? Rank choices: school, degree, location, job, spouse, friends, car, house, diet, wardrobe, child's education, etc.

Do we live up the standard of God? (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:23-24)

Lesson 1: The Caller and the Called**Setting the Terms:**

The term **vocation** has been around for centuries, but its meaning and use have fluctuated over that time.

Historically, it expressed the notion of a summons based on the Latin word **vocare**, meaning "to call."

More recently, it has been downgraded to mean not much more than an occupation (e.g., vocational training).

During this class, we'll use the terms vocation and calling synonymously, and though we'll go into much greater detail in defining those terms in Lesson 2, for now you can think of them as **a kind of summons to do or be a certain thing or to join a certain group or classification.**

You might also think of it in terms of a "station in life" or a "role" or "office" which one might hold for life or a season.

Thus, the title of this course: "**Vocation: What Am I Called to Do and to Be?**"

Introduction:

In this first class, I want us to get our bearings around the **context** of vocation (or calling).

To that end, this lesson includes:

- 3 Necessary Requirements,
- 3 Included Elements,
- 1 Major Pushback Question,
- 2 Important Answers, and
- A takeaway perspective that is foundational for faithfulness in the called Christian life.

We're going to try to approach this like good Presbyterians (or like biblical Christians) and do as Paul instructs when he tells the Corinthians that "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

So, we want to slow down and give some intentional reflection on this topic. We're going to use the mind of Christ which God has given us to think rationally and explore the logical ends of our principles and conclusions.

And, as in all things, we're going to seek to ground everything we believe on the solid foundation of the scriptures.

3 Necessary Requirements:

1. **A calling requires at least two parties:** the caller and the called.
 - Versus the rugged individualism of the west.
 - i. Autonomous self-determination is contrary to God's order and rule of creation.
 - ii. Case study: "Army of One" marketing campaign.
 - iii. "I am my own man" vs "you are not your own, you were bought with a price..." (1 Cor. 6)
 - iv. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth...surely you know!" (Job 38)
 - In a Christian context (the truest, ultimate sense), the two parties are God and man.
 - i. Creator vs creation / creature
 - In another sense, the two parties could be any variety of people:
2. **A calling requires hierarchy among those parties:** the called submits to the caller.
 - This speaks to the STRUCTURE of the relationship.
 - i. Implications of the 5th Commandment
 1. WLC: Superiors / Inferiors / Equals (Q 123 – 133)
 - ii. Implications of Biblical Covenants
 1. Meredith Kline, Suzerain / Vassal Covenants (e.g., Deuteronomy, Gen 15 - Abram)
3. **A calling requires authorization:** the caller must have authority over the called either by merit (earned right) or worth (intrinsic right).
 - This speaks to the WARRANT of the relationship.
 - i. Implications of Ester before King Ahasuerus
 1. It was against the law to approach without being called (Esther 4)
 - Note: in God, the authority is self-existent and self-attested.
 - i. In earthly hierarchies (parent-child, master-servant), the authority is established by God
 - ii. Paul plainly states in Romans 13:1: "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."

3 Included Elements:

1. **A calling includes expectations:** the called is expected to respond to the caller.
 - Police Officer: "Stop or I'll shoot!"
 - Parent: "Brian Lee Cochrum! You get in here this instant!" (All 3 names = scary)
 - Boss: "Have a seat. We need to talk."
 - In Scripture we see it, too...
 - i. *Genesis 3:9*: "But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"
 - ii. *Matthew 8:5-10*: When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.
2. **A calling includes dignity:** inclusion in the work of a superior through the calling of an inferior necessarily translates a dignity upon the called.
 - Especially in the case of the Creator God calling a creature into His service, but even in earthly hierarchies here under the sun, the work performed by the called adds to, rather than detracts from, the mission of the caller.
 - i. If the called didn't do the work, the work would still need to be done (the mission would be incomplete without it).
 - ii. Thus, contribution is not demeaning to the inferior, but validating and value-bearing as it allows a lesser to engage with and support (and in some cases even better or improve a superior ... or the work of that superior – since no one can improve God who is perfect).
 - iii. I'm a slave to Christ and any fulfilment of my calling from Him adds to His kingdom.
 - Jesus commands us to "seek first the kingdom" (Matt. 6:33) after directing us to pray to that end: "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).
 - i. And do you notice what He commands us to pray for first in what follows?
 - ii. How does He expect us to be equipped for the task of seeking the kingdom?
 - iii. He tells us to pray to God the Father that He might "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). *But how does He do that?*
 - How does God, whose very name is Provider (Jehovah Jireh), provide for us our daily bread?

- i. For a short time in history He did that directly through manna from heaven, **but how does He normally provide daily bread for His people?**

1. He does so through means.
2. He does so through farmers who grow and harvest grain. He does so through bakers who knead and cook dough. He does so through grocers who store and sell sliced loafs of it. He does so through means.

ii. **WCF 5 – Of Providence**

1. **God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least**, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.
3. **God, in His ordinary providence, maketh use of means**, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure.

- We will talk in more detail about this as we go along, but this is a truth brought out by Martin Luther and others during the Reformation. Luther called these “the masks of God.”

- i. God is the great Provider and He has made man in His image to reflect His nature and character. He dignifies man by allowing us to participate in the provision of God to others.

- ii. God made the very first man from the dust of the ground. He could have done that to all the rest, but instead, God graciously designed woman in such a way as to bring life about through her.

1. Sin certainly tainted that experience and now it’s painful and laborious (thus the term “labor pains”), but despite the temporary physical struggle, think how glorious it is that God allows mankind to take part in the very creation of life itself.
2. He didn’t have to do that. He dignifies us by allowing us to serve Him in His mission through our various callings.

3. **A calling includes moral culpability**: in valid callings, those authorized by God, the response is morally required by the called.

- It is not the case that the called *might* respond, but that he or she *should* respond – *ought to* respond.
- Not responding to an authorized calling is a moral failure – it’s a sin.
- WSC Q14: *What is sin?*
Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.
- The failure may be caused by a “want of conformity unto” the calling
 - i. the result of laziness, intentional ignorance, poor stewardship, etc.

- Or the failure may be caused by outright rebellion
 - i. “transgression” of the calling

1 Major Pushback Question:

1. Can man *really* be blamed for not fulfilling his calling?
 - What if he doesn’t know what his calling is?
 - What if he is just doesn’t fully understand it to fully obey it?
 - i. It’s ignorance. Can he really be in trouble for not knowing better?
 - How can God hold man accountable to do something if we honestly don’t realize we need to do it?

2 Important Answers:

1. **A calling from God includes clarity of message:** God is the omniscient and omnipotent Caller. He does not err. His speech is perfect and powerful: it is the mechanism whereby creation takes place.
 - **Genesis 1:1-4a:** “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.”
 - **John 1:1-4:** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”
 - The source of our calling is not some earthly master or even some popular guru, but the very Creator Himself. The Creator calls us by His Word.
 - **Isaiah 55:11:** “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”
 - But the Word isn’t just some concept, the Word of God is a Person. He has a face. He has a voice. He has a name and He knows ours. Jesus is the Word of God and Jesus calls us to follow Him.
 - i. In fact, the calling upon believers which we call “great” (The Great Commission), is a calling from Jesus and on the basis of His perfect authority – complete authority here and in heaven.
 - **Matthew 28:18-20:** “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.””
 - Not only does God speak to us, not only does He call us, in such a way as to clearly and effectively accomplish His desired end (i.e., He gets the message across), but He also walks with us as we hear and respond. He doesn’t send us off on some task, but rather calls us and equips us to take part in His work as His beloved children.

2. **When errors exist, the blame resides with us:** this may be due to our dullness of hearing (we misunderstand) or it may be from our active disobedience (our “not listening” to His Word).
- God’s calling is not audible, but it is linguistic. It does come to us in words, but those words are stored up in the scriptures. They’re sourced in Christ (Colossians 2:3) and written down for us to study and understand.
 - If we struggle to understand them, we must ask for wisdom. He gives it graciously to those who seek it.
 - **James 1:5:** “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”
 - He speaks to us via scripture and we understand by the illumination of it through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

A takeaway perspective that is foundational for faithfulness in the called Christian life.

In this world there is more going on than meets the eye. And it’s generally not easy to see.

- Only those with the spiritual eyes to see actually see it (Luke 8:10; Rom. 11:8).
- That’s why we’re called to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

God calls us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12). That means we need to think on Him...with effort...with intentionality...with work. We have to be the living sacrifices He calls us to be (Rom. 12).

That means we must put off the old and our on the new, by the renewal of our minds (Eph 4). We must take off the goggles of the world and rather put on the mind of Christ, seeing things as they actually are and not as they appear to the unspiritual man.

We learn of God, in part, by His created order (Rom 1). He has made Himself apparent enough in creation so that all men are without excuse, but there is so much more about Him to learn and to know (and to follow after in faith).

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Cor 1). Pursue God in His Word.

- **2 Tim. 3:16-17:** “All of scripture is breathed out by God and good for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Find God in His Word, renew your mind and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and then look out to the world, with those good news goggles – the good news of the Kingdom of God – and see what needs to be done.

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and trust Him to provide all of your needs (Matt 6:33).

- This is how you find and obey your calling. This is how you live the life of faith. This is how you please God.
- It’s all of faith. It’s all of grace. It’s all a gift.

And on the basis of Christ’s work for us and Christ at work within us, we work out our faith and “our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13) and we love Him through obedience to His callings in our lives.

- **John 14:15:** “If you love me, obey my commandments.”