

VOCATIONAL STEWARDSHIP
FOR THE COMMON GOOD

K I N G D O M

C A L L I N G

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Foreword by Reggie McNeal

Afterword by Steven Garber

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9
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11. Pathway 2	169
<i>Donate Your Skills</i>	
12. Pathway 3	183
<i>Launch Your Own Social Enterprise</i>	
13. Pathway 4	199
<i>Participate in Your Church's Targeted Initiative</i>	
Conclusion	223
<i>Rejoicing the City</i>	
Afterword by Steven Garber	232
Appendix A	235
<i>Key Theological Themes Undergirding Vocational Stewardship</i>	
Appendix B	242
<i>A Discussion Guide for Congregational Small Groups</i>	
Appendix C	245
<i>For Further Information</i>	
Appendix D	246
<i>Index of Profiles by Vocation</i>	
Notes	248
About the Author	272

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Foreword

Two recent personal conversations tell the story inside the story of this book. The first one took place over dinner in my home with my older daughter. "I don't need the church coming up with anything else for me to do in order to be missional," she said. "I feel missional five days a week." Working as a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) in a local hospital, she is exposed to the dark underbelly of our culture, helping people each day sort through a series of health-care options that will shape the next chapter of their lives. Lots of times none of the options are good, and people are devastated. Often she is the only person who can speak a word of hope in the situation. She is living out her faith in a place and in a way that really counts. Right where life (and death) is happening.

The second conversation took place half a continent away from me. A pastor relayed to one of our Leadership Network researchers a comment made by one of his team members after they had participated in our Missional Renaissance Leadership Community. The multiple teams involved in this leadership community include both church leaders and community leaders who figure out ways to fast-forward the church's missional engagement in their respective communities. This particular team had brought their city's mayor to a recent gathering in Dallas. On the flight back home from the experience the mayor commented to the pastor, "I have never thought of my job as mayor as a ministry—until now." I suspect no church committee assignment could compare in terms of community impact with what this guy does every single day.

My daughter and the mayor represent a growing number of people who share an awareness that kingdom assignments typically involve venues beyond local church real estate and programming. Kingdom callings take us

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Appendix B

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CONGREGATIONAL SMALL GROUPS¹

The dictionary defines *vocation* as “a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation.” The term is virtually synonymous with *calling*, as it comes from the Latin *vocare* (“to call”), the sense of being drawn into a particular field. Thus, a vocation is not simply a job; indeed, your current employment may or may not align with a deeper calling. Further, you may not be getting paid for your vocation: you may be studying in some kind of program, volunteering in your field of interest or not drawing any income. The defining aspect of a vocation is an inward sense that you were “made for this,” as increasingly confirmed by your affinity and skills, and by other people and opportunities.

Not only has God created us to worship him and live in community with others; he has shaped within us a need to work with dignity and purpose. Our work stewards and cultivates the treasures of creation as part of what theologians call our “cultural mandate.” Though a fallen world sullies the inherent dignity of work—through what the Bible calls “thorns and thistles”—God’s mandate continues. And perhaps most amazing, what we do for Christ will be enjoyed forever.

We want to consider these issues in community, to help each other sort through what it means practically to live out our callings. One format would be for community groups to make this a focus once per month, beginning with a meal together. After the meal, have a group member share responses to some or all of the questions below, raise related themes they want to address or take questions from the group. It is best to identify this person at

least a week in advance, to give them time to prepare. Be sure to end the discussion with prayer for the group member and his or her vocation.

1. **Overview.** In a few minutes, tell the group about your vocation. What do you do? Who do you work for? What does a typical day (if there is such a thing) look like? Who do you work with? What related training or education did you receive?
2. **Calling.** When and how did you begin to feel drawn to this area? To what degree have you thought about your job as a calling from God, part of a larger “cultural mandate”? It’s OK to be honest! For many people, a job is something you do to pay the bills, or something you seemingly fell into. Thus, an underlying sense of calling may seem nebulous at best. Share honestly how you look at your vocation.
3. **Image.** Part of what it means that you are made in the image of God is that you “image” God to creation, similar to how a portrait portrays a person. In a fallen world, we are but marred images, but what attributes of God (e.g., mercy, care, order, justice, creativity, beauty) does your vocation particularly reflect to others?
4. **Idolatry.** Any good thing raised to an ultimate thing becomes an idol—something that we primarily look to for our identity, security and meaning. In what ways do you see your vocation serving as an idol, either to yourself or others?
5. **Community.** Do you have Christian community within your vocation, that is, people who speak the language of your calling and can offer insight, encouragement or feedback into what you do? If so, what does that look like?
6. **Scripture.** What biblical passages have you found particularly helpful as inspiration or guidance in your field?
7. **Articles.** Are there any short articles on the intersection of faith and your vocation that you’ve found helpful? If so, feel free to summarize them or even share them in advance with the group to include in the discussion.
8. **Worldview.** A worldview helps explain the world we live in, answering such basic questions of life as Why are we here? How do I explain the problems in my life and the world? What is the solution to those problems? Where are we ultimately going, and does what I do now relate?

Everyone has spoken or unspoken answers to those questions. The Bible proclaims these:

- *Creation*: God created us in his image, giving us inherent dignity and worth, for the purpose of glorifying him, not ourselves.
- *Fall*: We are naturally alienated from God, such that everything we do is tainted by some form of selfishness: pride, ambition, greed, envy, malice, prejudice, lust, etc.
- *Redemption*: In ourselves, we are unable to overcome our sinful natures and remove our guilt and shame. Yet at the cross, Jesus' life was graciously exchanged for ours.
- *Restoration*: One day God's kingdom will come in fullness, but it has already begun in our hearts and lives. What we do now in faith for Christ will be enjoyed forever.

Your vocation likely has explicit or implicit answers to some or all of the above questions. How do they compare with a Christian worldview? Do they conflict in such a way as to bring any professional or social pressure on you?

9. **Artifacts.** In *Culture Making* Andy Crouch encourages Christians to help shape our world not simply by *condemning, critiquing, copying* or *consuming* culture but through *creating* "artifacts"—cultural goods, whether chairs, language, laws, art or even omelets. What vocational artifacts have you considered creating that in some small way help create culture?
10. **Influence.** James Davison Hunter in *To Change the World* calls most Christian attempts at cultural engagement inadequate, concluding they have mostly served to marginalize the church, with little impact on culture. Instead, he calls us to "faithful presence" in our fields, at whatever level. Though this would include living moral lives as a biblical witness to others, Hunter calls us to participate in, identify with and humbly influence the existing structures of society. What might that look like for you in your vocation? In your field, what makes you passionate/angry/excited enough to call you to be a positive influence? What dilemmas might you face? Brainstorm ways you could work with other Christians in your vocation toward a common purpose.

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Appendix C

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers can find a number of helpful follow-up resources at www.vocationalstewardship.org. This is a sampling:

RESOURCES FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS

1. Ten Ways to Encourage Vocational Stewardship at Your Church
2. Eight Steps for Starting a Pathway 2
3. An Introduction to Business as Mission (BAM)

RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS

1. Annotated bibliography of books on vocational issues
2. Additional profiles of Christians engaged in vocational stewardship along each of the four pathways
3. "Personal Manifesto/Vision for Work" worksheet from Harbor Presbyterian Church North County

Appendix D

INDEX OF PROFILES BY VOCATION

Agriculture	Jacob Schenk, p. 164; Courtney and Mark Williams, p. 38
Animal Therapy	Helen Bach, p. 124
Antiques	Martha Rollins, p. 138
Architecture	Jill Sorenson, p. 108
Art	Lisa Marten, p. 35
Astrophysics	Frank Six, p. 206
Athletics	Danny Wuerffel, p. 35
Business	Wendy Clark, p. 159; Tom Hill III, p. 151; Dave and Demi Kiersznowski, p. 154; Justin Kitch, p. 56; Milt Kuyers, p. 162; Larry Mollner, p. 181; Stanley Tam, p. 34
Chemist	Dan Blevins, p. 169
Civil Engineering	Rod Beadle, p. 180; John Rahe, p. 181
Construction	Tim Schulz, p. 127
Culinary Arts	Tim Hammack, p. 122
Dance	Jeanine Lacquement, p. 161
Dentistry	Brian Beitel, p. 212; Al Willis, p. 212
Education	Margaret Powell, p. 207
Entertainment	Carlos Oscar, p. 163
Environmental Science	Mukuria Mwangi, p. 187
Fashion Design	Bora Aksu, p. 164
Finance	Daisy Waimiri, p. 188
Government	Pia Cayetano, p. 163; Don De Graff, p. 40; Simon Mbevi, p. 187

Graphic Design	Jessie Nilo, p. 35
History	Anne C. Bailey, p. 160
Home Design/Building	Perry Bigelow, p. 59
Human Resources	Kay Edwards, p. 180
Insurance	Bruce Copeland, p. 56
Interior Design	Cynthia Leibrock, p. 110
IT	Ed Fischer, p. 175
Journalism	Russ Pulliam, p. 123; David Aikman, p. 125
Law	Deborah Leydon, p. 215; Matthew Price, p. 29; Derek Simpson, p. 209
Law Enforcement	Doug Call and Dennis Wittman, p. 32
Lobbying	Rich Nymoen, p. 31
Management	Roberta Teran, p. 218; Bonnie Wurzbacher, p. 156
Marketing	Anne Nzilani, p. 191
Mechanical Engineering	Don Schoendorfer, p. 179
Medicine	Eloise Alexander, p. 212; Simon Chiu, p. 123; Brian Costa, p. 212; Andy Macfarlan, pp. 37, 124; Barry Sorrells, p. 58
Mental Health Counseling	Mark Pruden, p. 217
Music	Craig Pitman, 126; Kanjii Mbugua, p. 193
Nursing	Susan Beeney, p. 39
Oceanography	Jorge Vazquez, p. 43
Photography	Ken Oloo, p. 196
Paralegal	Jamie Elkins, p. 217
Property Appraisal	Mickey Plott, p. 211
Real Estate Brokering	John Phillips, pp. 123, 181
Real Estate Development	Sam Yeager, p. 211
Sales	David Masys, p. 217; James Saunders, p. 177
Screenwriting	Barbara Nicolosi, p. 57
Veterinary Medicine	Val Shean, p. 41

- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷Unnamed female resident of Lincoln Village quoted in "Journey to Remember."
- ²⁸Liz Clemons, telephone interview with the author, October 14, 2010.
- ²⁹Michelle Gilliam Jordan, department head, Department of Community Development, City of Huntsville, telephone interview with the author, October 15, 2010.
- ³⁰Mickey Plott, broker, PLOTT ReGroup, telephone interview with the author, October 14, 2010.
- ³¹Sam Yeager, founder, Bristol Development Group, telephone interview with the author, October 5, 2010.
- ³²Ibid.
- ³³"Journey to Remember."
- ³⁴Dale Bowen, housing coordinator, Lincoln Village Preservation Corporation, telephone interview with the author, September 16, 2010.
- ³⁵Data reported by the school in its application for the 2010 Panasonic award.
- ³⁶Ibid.
- ³⁷Quoted in Pyron, "Lincoln's Powerful Community Partnership."
- ³⁸Ibid.
- ³⁹All quotes from Brian Tome, lead pastor, Crossroads, are from a telephone interview with the author, October 5, 2010.
- ⁴⁰All quotes from Brian Wells, former teaching pastor, Crossroads, are from a telephone interview with the author, October 24, 2009.
- ⁴¹Deborah Leydon, partner, Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, interview with the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 21, 2009.
- ⁴²All quotes from Andrew Peters, former justice director, Crossroads, are from an interview with the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 21, 2009.
- ⁴³Mark Pruden, licensed professional clinical counselor, Mark Pruden and Associates, interview with the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 1, 2010.
- ⁴⁴Jamie Elkins, field office intern, International Justice Mission, telephone interview with the author, September 16, 2010.
- ⁴⁵David Masys, corporate salesman, GE Health Care, interview with the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 1, 2010.
- ⁴⁶Don Gerred, justice director, Crossroads, interview with the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 1, 2010.
- ⁴⁷Linda Averbek, senior attorney, IRS Office of Chief Counsel, interview with the author, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 2, 2010.
- ⁴⁸Ibid.
- ⁴⁹All quotes from Roberta Teran, associate director, Global Logistics, Procter and Gamble, are from a telephone interview with the author, October 1, 2010.
- ⁵⁰Rob Seddon, South Africa Partnership Director, Crossroads, telephone interview with the author, October 12, 2010.
- ⁵¹Mike Honeycutt, "Shepherding Change in the Local Congregation," pp. 143-51.
- ⁵²Telephone interview with author, October 14, 2010.

- ⁵³Andrew Peters, former justice director, Crossroads, interview with the author, Cincinnati, October 21, 2009.
- ⁵⁴Dale Bowen, housing coordinator, Lincoln Village Preservation Corporation, telephone interview with the author, September 16, 2010.
- ⁵⁵Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2009), p. 62.
- ⁵⁶Alan Judge, real estate attorney, telephone interview with the author, October 5, 2010.

Conclusion

- ¹Greg Thompson, "By Bringing Us into His Work," sermon delivered at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Va., October 31, 2010.
- ²Scott Adams, creator of *Dilbert*, quoted in Virginia Postrel, "The *Dilbert* Doctrines: An Interview with Scott Adams," *Reason*, February 1999 <www.reason.com/archives/1999/02/01/the-dilbert-doctrines-an-inter>.
- ³Scott Seaton, "Restoring the City," sermon delivered at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, Arlington, Va., September 12, 2010 (audio file) <www.emmanuelarlington.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=128989&programId=74889>.

Appendix A

- ¹Lesslie Newbigin, *Signs Amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 47.
- ²John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), p. 14.
- ³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.2.15.

Appendix B

¹This guide was originally produced by leaders at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Arlington, Virginia, and is used and adapted with their permission.

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