

The Doctrine of Vocation – Lesson 4

Vocation in the Christian Home

When I have this righteousness within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom, and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises. . . . If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty. . . . In short, whoever knows for sure that Christ is his righteousness not only cheerfully and gladly works in his calling but also submits himself . . . to everything else in this present life—even, if need be, to burden and danger. For he knows that God wants this and that this obedience pleases Him. . . . The Spirit is whatever is done in us through the Spirit; the flesh is whatever is done in us in accordance with the flesh and apart from the Spirit. Therefore all the duties of Christians—such as loving one’s wife, rearing one’s children, governing one’s family, honoring one’s parents, obeying the magistrate, etc., . . .—are fruits of the Spirit.
Martin Luther, AE 26:11–12, 217



A child’s first teachers are his or her parents. However, many parents today feel ill-equipped to teach their children about the Christian faith. Sadly, it appears that even some Christian churches are incapable of aiding parents in this task.

34. How has the transmission of the Christian faith within families fared over the past fifty years? the past twenty? ten? Is there a relationship between these changes and the overall decline in religious beliefs and values in our culture?

God-Given Roles within the Home

35. Read Genesis 1:27–28 and 2:18–25. A new vocation arises within the Christian home when God joins a man and a woman together in marriage. What are the purposes for marriage, according to these passages?
36. Read Ephesians 5:21–33. What additional duties do husbands and wives have according to Paul? How do his directives help to produce a smooth and harmonious home? What difficulties do married couples encounter when attempting to adhere to Paul’s instructions?
37. How does human marriage between a husband and a wife illustrate Christ’s relationship with His bride, the Church? What significance does this place upon one’s vocation within marriage?
38. Read Ephesians 6:1–4. Vocation within the home expands when children are brought into the marriage. What new duties do husbands and wives have when they become parents?
39. What is God’s calling for children, and what is their role within the home? Why should fathers in particular not anger their children?
40. Read Psalm 127. What special status does God give children within the family? What does the psalmist say is a necessary foundation for raising faithful children? Why is this true?

Treasuring Catechesis

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Parents have a God-given duty to instruct their children in the faith. That is why many of the Six Chief Parts in Luther’s Small Catechism begins with the phrase “As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.”

41. Discuss the benefits of using Luther’s Small Catechism at home to teach the Christian faith to children. How might parents also be blessed in doing this?
42. What is the relationship between the education parents give their children in the home and the education children receive in Sunday School, confirmation class, or a Lutheran Day School?

Distinction between Office and Person

“To the position of fatherhood and motherhood God has given special distinction above all positions that are beneath it: He does not simply command us to love our parents, but to honor them. Regarding our brothers, sisters, and neighbors in general, He commands nothing more than that we love them [Matthew 22:39; 1 John 3:14]. In this way He separates and distinguishes father and mother from all other persons upon earth and places them at His side.” (Large Catechism I 105)

43. Which do you consider to be more important: that children like their parents or that children honor their parents? Are both possible?
44. A father’s authority over his household does not give him license to lord it over his wife and children. How can parents lovingly serve their children while maintaining the authority that God commands?

Spiritual Exercises

- If you do not do so already, have regular devotions with your spouse or family. (If you are single or an empty nester, consider inviting a relative, friend, co-worker, or neighbor to join you.) The Lord Will Answer: A Daily Prayer Catechism (CPH, 2004) is a good resource that takes you through each section of Luther’s Small Catechism with short devotions for each day of the year.
- Pray the following hymns this week, noting how each extols the blessings God gives through spouse, family, children, and vocation:
 - S. “Oh, Blest the House” (LSB 862; ELH 190; CW; 506; LW 467; LBW 512; TLH 625) M.
 - “Our Father, by Whose Name” (LSB 863; ELH 187; CW 501; LW 465; LBW 357)
 - T. “Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain” (LSB 865; ELH 551; CW 514; LW 477; TLH 288)
 - W. “Lord Jesus Christ, the Children’s Friend” (LSB 866; CW 513; LW 470)
 - T. “Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds” (LSB 867; ELH 180; CW 512; LW 472; TLH 629)
 - F. “How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord” (LSB 853)
 - S. “Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way” (LSB 857)
- Learn Ephesians 5:1–2 by heart.

Point to Remember

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Psalm 127:1

To prepare for “Christianity in the Workplace,” read Ephesians 6:5–9.