

The Doctrine of Vocation – Lesson 5

Christianity in the Workplace

Therefore, if we recognize the great and precious things which are given us, as Paul says [Rom. 5:5], our hearts will be filled by the Holy Spirit with the love which makes us free, joyful, almighty workers and conquerors over all tribulations, servants of our neighbors, and yet lords of all. For those who do not recognize the gifts bestowed upon them through Christ, however, Christ has been born in vain; they go their way with their works and shall never come to taste or feel those things. Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we were in need before God and lacked his mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.

Martin Luther, AE 31:367–68



Christians are engaged in the culture, involved in the fabric of society. That means Christians go to the movies, eat at local restaurants, and cheer on their favorite team at the ballpark. Christians also hold a vast assortment of occupations. Maybe your hair dresser is a Christian, or perhaps the pizza delivery person, or even the mayor. Think about your own place of employment. Many workplaces have Christians and non-Christians working side by side doing the same or similar jobs.

45. Do you think there are certain occupations Christians should never hold? Name some of them. Name any occupations you think non-Christians should not hold.

Relationships in the Workplace

46. Read Ephesians 6:5–8. Christians in the workplace may find themselves in positions of authority or in positions under authority. What directives does Paul give for those working under the authority of another?
47. Is it ever easy to wholeheartedly serve one's master or boss? Why or why not? What circumstances make it even more difficult?
48. Read Ephesians 6:9. How should those in authority act toward those working under them? In what way does the "master" have an even greater duty than the "servant"?
49. Paul notes that "there is no partiality" with God (see also Luke 1:51–53; Acts 10:34–35, 44–48; Galatians 3:26–29). For what purpose, then, do distinctions within earthly relationships serve?
50. Read Matthew 20:1–16. How is the kingdom of heaven like the master of the house hiring workers for his vineyard? How does this parable, though it teaches a heavenly truth, represent poor business practice according to the world's standards?
51. Should a Christian employer adopt this sort of practice in running his or her business? What would happen if this model were put forward in the world?

Working in a Secular Environment

Living our Christian lives in the workplace begins with receiving Christ's gifts in the Divine Service. The Christian life is about *being* before it is about *doing*. We need the refreshment and encouragement that the Holy Spirit provides us through the Gospel and the Sacraments to strengthen us for the daily grind. In loving response to Christ's gifts, we serve God by serving our neighbors—including those we interact with at work.

52. What challenges might Christians face working in a predominantly non-Christian environment? How can these be overcome?

53. List some of the reasons why you go to church. Which is (are) the most important? How does Sunday worship refresh you for another work week?

Worship beyond the Sanctuary

Peter writes, "Always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Peter 3:15–16). Though applicable to many situations in life, Peter's words hold great significance for the workplace.

54. How does the workplace provide Christians with a unique, although sometimes very challenging, opportunity for evangelism?

55. What are some effective ways for a Christian to live the Christian life in the workplace?

Spiritual Exercises

- Take brief times out of your workday to pray for your co-workers, for your supervisor(s), or for those under your supervision. Pray that you would be faithful in your duties, rendering service to your neighbors in the workplace as you would to the Lord.
- As you rest from your labors this week, meditate upon Psalm 92 and rejoice in the labors of God's hands for His people. May this encouraging Word rejuvenate you as you enter into His harvest field each day.
- Review the Second Article of the Creed and its explanation in Luther's Small Catechism. Marvel at the work of Christ on our behalf. Trust not in your own work for salvation but only in the merits of our Lord.

Point to Remember

For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. Ps 92:4
To prepare for "Freedom of the Christian," read Galatians 5:1–18.