

# The Doctrine of Vocation: A Theology of Ordinary Life

Posted on [August 3, 2010](#) by [Eric Smith](#)

<https://ericcsmith.wordpress.com/2010/08/03/the-doctrine-of-vocation-a-theology-of-ordinary-life/>

Maybe the single most encouraging teaching from Scripture in my life over the past year or so has been the doctrine of vocation, which is simply the idea that God is the Lord over every part of our lives, and that our roles as husbands and wives, parents, friends, and workers, are his divine callings. Vocation is a doctrine springing from texts like Colossians 3:24, in which Paul tells slaves that as they labor for their earthly masters, “You are serving the Lord Christ.”

I just finished a short, simple book on the doctrine of vocation by Gene Edward Veith, Jr., called *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in all of Life*. Veith draws heavily from the works of Martin Luther, as well as Lutheran scholar Gustaf Wingren, who compiled and expounded on Luther’s doctrine of vocation. Perhaps the most distinct element of Luther’s doctrine of vocation is the notion that God is *hidden* in our vocations, so that it is actually he in his providence at work in his world, though using real men and women. So, while God could drop manna from the sky at your door, he instead works through the farmer who grows the grain, the workers at the grainery, the buyers and sellers for the bread company, the bakers, the bread truck drivers, the grocery store managers, etc., to feed you. But it is God all the while, hidden in vocation.

Veith’s book serves as an excellent, readable, and highly encouraging introduction to this wonderful, life-enhancing doctrine which enables us to see God at work in all of life. I think every pastor should familiarize himself with this doctrine, because he will find himself drawing from it often as he seeks to encourage his people in their daily lives. Here are a few of my favorite quotes:

“Luther goes so far as to say that vocation is a mask of God. That is, God hides himself in the workplace, the family, the Church, and the seemingly secular society. To speak of God being hidden is a way of describing his presence, as when a child hiding in the room is there, just not seen. To realize that the mundane activities that take up most of our lives – going to work, taking the kids to soccer practice, picking up a few things at the store, going to church –

“The doctrine of vocation is a theology of the Christian life, having to do with sanctification and good works. It is also a theology of *ordinary life*. Christians do not have to be called to the mission field or the ministry or the work of evangelism to serve God, though many are; nor does the Christian life necessarily involve some kind of constant mystical experience. Rather, the Christian life is to be lived in

vocation, in the seemingly ordinary walks of life that take up nearly all of the hours of our day. The Christian life is to be lived out in our family, our work, our community, and our church. Such things seem mundane, but this is because of our blindness. Actually, God is present in them – and in us – in a mighty, hidden, way.”

Gene Edward Veith, Jr. *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 158.