

THE BUSINESS OF CALLING (Part 2)**By Rudolfs Dainis Smits**

This year Christian history celebrates 500 years since the Reformation in Europe began. The Reformation changed the Church, impacting Western civilisation and its teachings on calling. This view of work revitalised the marketplace. It is worth considering how the Reformation revolutionised the way we can approach work.

Martin Luther, a professor of moral theology and one of the Reformation's principal leaders, challenged established religious authority on many matters of faith, vocation and work. He taught that every man and woman is called by God, regardless of vocation or position. Because of that, we are to work faithfully, with diligence and dignity. These principles might seem self-evident in today's society, but they were not so evident then. ***Our work, profession, business or mission – whatever our hands find to do – when guided by personal passion and a love to serve, will prosper society and honour God.***

A provocative quote attributed to Luther explains: *"The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk whom prays – not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because **God loves clean floors**. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because **God is interested in good craftsmanship**."* We have been called to do good works, as Ephesians 2:10 tells us: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Luther taught vocation is the means and a platform by which we serve society and God. Through work, business or ministry we provide products, services and leadership, and bring a multitude of benefits to individuals and society. Through the combined talent, ability and skill of various individuals, our work, professions and businesses provide goods and services for others and secure our own livelihoods. It is not by pursuing personal gain or profit, but excellence in service that truly benefits and impacts community. Any honourable calling or worthy goal can be traced along a path of just and faithful decision-making and service. Fulfilling our vocations with discipline, skill and excellence leads to growth necessary to sustain a business, bless society and glorify God.

Understanding our personal vocation will bring personal fulfillment, joy and prosper society. *"The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to **good works**. These things are excellent and profitable for people"* (Titus 3:8).

Understanding vocation helps us to see work done in excellence draws us to God's truth and service. *"Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service."* – Os Guinness, author, sociologist, co-founder Trinity Forum.

Understanding calling does not prescribe success or ensure status, but strengthens us to overcome difficulties and trials. Calling may bring you directly into trials and failure, because obedience to God is not necessarily a matter of success. Martin Luther risked imprisonment when he posted his 95-point thesis on the door of the Wittenberg Castle. He was ready to suffer death by teaching and defending biblical doctrine that opposed established church authority. His passion for understanding and teaching what the Bible taught, a clear conscience and obedience to God, allowed him to remain faithful to God's work in him. *"...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13). Luther's dedication liberated the church and revolutionised understanding of vocation and established today's work ethic essential to any business.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Vocation requires faithfulness, diligence, and skillfully executed work to serve our clients and honour God. Do you agree that these principles promote good work and serve society? What are examples of when you have seen these principles at work and made positive impact?
2. The late Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, was a revolutionary, creative innovator who did not give up on his ideas. He stated, "The only way to great work is to love what you do." Do you love what you do, or are you just watching the clock tick until the workday is over? What motivates you to use your talents, abilities and skills to perform at your best? In what ways should work define who you are (or who you are not)? How should work reflect what you believe (or do not)?
3. "The ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones that do" – Steve Jobs. Martin Luther overcame great opposition to bring change that impacted all of Europe. Why does understanding personal vocation help us overcome obstacles and trials, and why is this so important for society, business and trade?
4. Vocation fosters excellence and gives dignity to what we do. Titus 2:7 says, "*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity.*" With whom does quality work begin, and what is the best way to facilitate good work?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Matthew 5:16
Colossians 3:23-24, 1
Timothy 6:18
Titus 3:14
Hebrews 10:24
James 2:14, 3:13