



12. Vocation

Zacchaeus just wanted to see Jesus. He had heard about his miracles, and his claim to be the Son of God. But all he really wanted was to see what Jesus looked like. Zacchaeus was under no illusions. If Jesus really was the Son of God, there's no way he would want to associate himself with a tax collector - especially one who had shamelessly cheated his countrymen out of thousands and thousands of dollars.

Zacchaeus just wanted to see Jesus, so he climbed a sycamore tree for a better view as Jesus walked through town. But then something amazing happened. Jesus stopped walking, turned, and looked at the tax collector up in the tree, and the whole town turned and looked with him. Everybody heard Jesus say, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

It was the last thing Zacchaeus could have expected. He rushed home and prepared dinner for his honored guest. Over dinner, Jesus spoke lovingly and openly to Zacchaeus and his family. Jesus' message was clear: he had come as the Savior to forgive the sins of the world, and to give eternal life to every last person who believes. . . even a person so universally despised as a corrupt tax collector.

Overcome with joy at God's love for him, Zacchaeus stood up and made an announcement. From this moment on, he would leave his corrupt ways behind him. Half of his ill-gotten fortune would be given to the poor. The other half would be used to pay back anyone that he had cheated, four times over.

God's love had changed Zacchaeus's heart, and now it was changing his life. Although he was giving his entire fortune away, Zacchaeus felt happier now than he had in a long time. His Savior had given him the gift of eternal life in heaven. He couldn't wait to spend the rest of his earthly life saying, "Thank you."

(adapted from Luke 19:1-10)

What God did for Zacchaeus, he also does for us. God places his love into our hearts and it drastically changes our lives. This final lesson focuses on the many opportunities we have to serve God with our life here on earth through a variety of **vocations**, or "callings."

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR A CHRISTIAN?

Romans 3:23-24 *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

1 Corinthians 1:2 *To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people...*

One important distinction to make in God's gracious gifts is what we call the distinction between justification and sanctification. **Justification is God's verdict that he has acquitted us of sin.** In God's eyes we are righteous, since Jesus has given us his righteousness. **Sanctification is Christ's call for a Christian to live a holy life.** Living for Jesus sets Christians apart from the unbelieving world. Justification is done. Nothing more needs to be done. Sanctification is ongoing. There is always room to grow, and there is only one way to grow: being connected to God's word and sacraments.

Read Ephesians 4:22-24.

When it comes to our lives of sanctification, we notice very quickly that there is a battle that wages within us, a striving between what the bible calls the **old self**, that is, our old sinful nature, and our **new self**, the new creation or identity we have in Jesus built on faith and the Holy Spirit living within us. In heaven, the sinful nature will be done away with and only the new creation will remain.

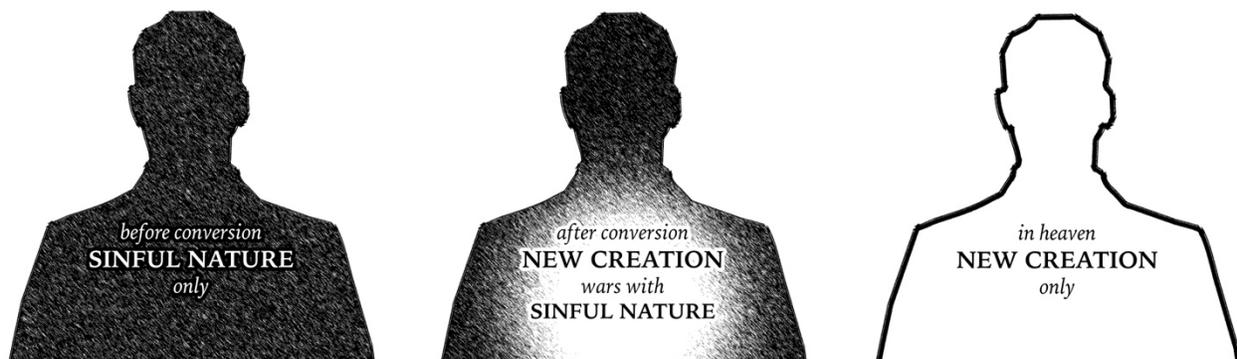
Isaiah 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*

Proverbs 20:9 *Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?"*

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

Romans 6:11-12,14 *Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires... For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

Is it possible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to do good works? Even though God uses Christians to bless the world through their actions and fruit of the Spirit, every attempt to do a perfectly good work by the Christian is tainted with sin. Yet, God considers the Christian covered in the blood of Christ, and sees it only as righteousness. In this sense, even though the Christian will carry the sinful nature with its effect into every aspect and action of life, the Christian has been set free from sin and its penalty of eternal death.



WHAT IS MARRIED LIFE LIKE FOR A CHRISTIAN?

Read Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-24.

The **essence** of marriage is shown in God's creation of the first marriage. We note several key ingredients to marriage as God intended it.

- **One man and one woman.** From the beginning God has intended that marriage be both monogamous and heterosexual.
- **Lifelong.** The two will become one flesh - welded together by a public, lifelong commitment to be faithful to one another until death separates them.
- **The only setting God intends for sex.** "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." The act of sex demonstrates physically what has been promised spiritually: two people becoming one. Any other uses of sex go against God's will for our lives (c.f. **Hebrews 13:4** *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*)

God's blueprint for marriage is clear. How well do our society's practices match up to this blueprint? Give examples.

Just like all his commands, God's commands about marriage are not intended to hold us back or hurt us, but rather, to bless us. Consider the following blessings of marriage:

- **suitable companionship.** Man and woman were created to need each other, and to meet all of each other's needs. In the perfection of Eden, they did this perfectly!
- **sexual happiness.** Sex is a gift of God to be enjoyed in the context of the committed love of marriage. Sex is giving as much as it is receiving. (See also 1 Corinthians 7:3-4)
- **children.** Children are a blessing, an asset to families and society, and also a responsibility given by God. (See also Malachi 2:15, Psalm 127, Psalm 128)

What does God tell us about divorce? God hates divorce. (Malachi 2:16) However, God will allow a Christian to divorce if a spouse has destroyed the **essence** of marriage, but not just because the marriage is falling short of its **purpose**. The essence of marriage is destroyed if one partner has committed adultery (Matthew 19:3-9), or one partner has abandoned the marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

WHAT IS FAMILY LIFE LIKE FOR A CHRISTIAN?

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:4.

Does God have special directions for family members? The bible is very descriptive in our unique roles in the marriage and family. Note verse 25. **Husbands** are to sacrifice all for their wives, just as Christ did for the church. And note verse 22. **Wives** are to submit to their husbands and allow them to lead, just as the church submits to her loving Savior. And so, together, husband and wife can actually model and share the gospel by how they treat each other. **Children** are expected to obey their parents, and **parents** are expected to love their children, and to especially love them enough to teach them God's Word.

God has given you many different roles in your life and connected you to many different people. We call these places God has called you your **vocation**. Consider which of the following apply to you: employee, employer, citizen, friend, co-worker, manager, artist, craftsman, counselor, scientist, student, teacher, neighbor, church member, church leader... The list is endless. You can (and the new creation within you wants to) serve God in all of these roles. Search God's Word for how he wants you to serve in these roles. To start this lifelong process, read through the passages below and ask how they apply to your life as a Christian seeking to share Jesus with this world.

HOW CAN I SERVE GOD IN THE CHURCH?

Hebrews 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.*

Malachi 3:10 *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

1 Timothy 2:12 *I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man.*

Just as a marriage works best when it is founded on Christ, a family works best when it is founded on Christ. Based on the verse above, give 2 reasons why *regular church attendance* is so important for a family.

1.

2.

Discuss other ways (besides church attendance) that a family can build their foundation on God's Word.

HOW CAN I SERVE GOD IN SOCIETY?

1 Timothy 2:1-2 *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

2 Thessalonians 3:11 *We hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their living.*

Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.*

Acts 20:35 *We must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

HOW CAN I SERVE GOD THROUGH MY LIFESTYLE?

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Matthew 5:16 *Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

Romans 10:14-15 *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

TAKING IT DEEPER

Agree or disagree. Do you agree with the statement below? Why or why not? What would you say based on God's word?

- Anyone can get married to anyone else, as long as they love each other. (See Romans 1:21-32 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
- The most important element in marriage is love for each other.
- Anyone can serve God as a pastor. (See 1 Timothy 2:8-13)
- Anyone can serve God in the world in any profession.
- The most important vocation of a Christian is sharing the gospel.

HANDOUTS

"What Does the Bible say about Homosexuality?"

"The Roles of Men and Women in the Church"

"How Much Should I Give to the Church?"

TABLE OF DUTIES

PASTORS AND PREACHERS

A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence...not a novice...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict those who contradict. (1 Timothy 3:2-4,6; Titus 1-9)

WHAT THE HEARERS OWE TO THEIR PASTORS

Obey those who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do it with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17) Eat and drink such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. (Luke 10:7)

The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:14.) Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (Galatians 6: 6-7) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you then want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who does evil. (Romans 13:1-4)

CITIZENS

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Matthew 22:21.

Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:5-7)

I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. (Titus 3:1)

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. (1 Peter 2:13-14)

HUSBANDS

Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. (Colossians 3:19)

WIVES

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord...as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are as long as you do good and are not afraid with any terror. (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:6)

PARENTS

Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

CHILDREN

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3)

EMPLOYEES

Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5-8)

EMPLOYERS

Masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (Ephesians 6:9)

THE YOUNG

You younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. (1 Peter 5:5-6)

ALL CHRISTIANS

You shall love your neighbor as yourself....I exhort...that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. (Romans 13:9; 1 Timothy 2:1)