

Leader's Guide for



**Be Transformed (Episode Two)**

Study materials prepared by  
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# Table of Contents

Introduction to Going on Vocation: Be Transformed.....	3
Participants in the Video.....	4
Segment One: <i>Your callings and the common good</i> .....	5
Segment Two: <i>Your calling will bear fruit</i> .....	8
Segment Three: <i>Discipleship amid thorns and thistles</i> .....	10
Segment Four: <i>A call to work for restoration</i> .....	12
Appendix A: Selections from <i>Christian History</i> magazine #110 <i>Callings</i> .....	14
Further Resources .....	18

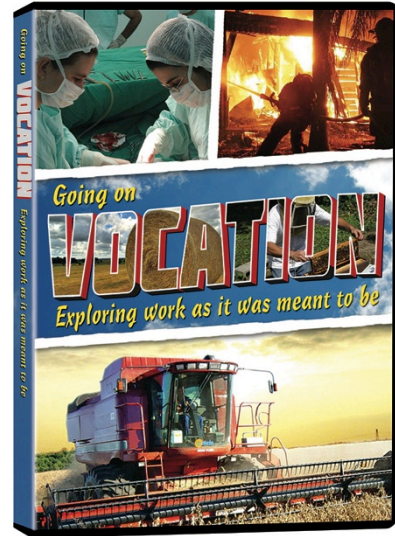
## Introduction to Going on Vocation: Be Transformed

From our first series of video sessions we have learned that our primary calling is to follow Christ. We have also learned that this can work itself out in any number of secondary callings, not just the ordained ministry or “church work.”

But what are those secondary callings *for*? Through them, in God’s redemptive plan for the world, we can become a transforming influence in the world. Sometimes it may be in small ways, doing our job with excellence and being kind to our co-workers. Sometimes we may find ourselves in service to larger causes such as working to combat poverty, need, and injustice. We will need to be strengthened along the way by fellowship with other believers and the practice of spiritual disciplines. And we will find ourselves changed in the process.

As we *go on vocation* in this second video, you’ll hear how ordinary people have found God in workplaces ranging from a farm to a chocolate shop to a corner diner. You’ll also hear from experts on Scripture and theology who have struggled with these issues, too, and now share their wisdom.

This study guide is provided to help you make the most of the four video sessions. Scripture, quotes from our brothers and sisters in the past, and open-ended discussion questions will help participants apply the truths presented. Leaders should read through each session and watch the video segment before class.



## Participants in the Video

**Dan and Christina Abel:** Chocolatiers.

**Chris Armstrong:** Director of Opus: The Art of Work at Wheaton College.

**Vincent Bacote:** Associate professor of theology and the Director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics at Wheaton College.

**Darrell Bock:** Professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.

**Sharon Cranfill:** Beauty salon owner in Connersville, Indiana.

**Greg Forster:** Program director at the Kern Family Foundation.

**P. J. Hill:** Retired professor of economics at Wheaton College.

**David Miller:** Director of the Princeton University Faith & Work Initiative.

**Kimberly Neace:** Nurse practitioner in Connersville, Indiana.

**Nick Ramsing:** Project manager and senior consultant at Mennonite Economic Development Associates.

**Charlie Self:** Professor of church history at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

**Dana Ullom-Vucelich:** Chief Human Resources Ethics Officer at Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services.

**Gene Edward Veith:** Provost and professor of literature at Patrick Henry College and author of *God at Work*.

**Jim Wish:** Farmer.

**Jason, John, and Joel Wish:** Farmers and Jim's sons.

## Segment One: *Your callings and the common good*

### OPENING EXERCISE

Return to the exercise that began the first video and list as many words as you can think of which describe your current occupation, whether paid or unpaid. What positive and negative feelings does it produce in you? How does your occupation serve you, your family, and your neighbor? Have the answers to those questions changed at all as a result of the first video study?

Now once again list as many words as you can think of which describe your ideal occupation, whether paid or unpaid. What would it be? What positive feelings and thoughts would *it* produce? What negative ones? How would it serve you, your family, and your neighbor? Have your ideal and real occupations come any closer as a result of the first study? If so, how?

### WATCH OPENING MONTAGE AND SEGMENT ONE (15 MINUTES)

As you watch, note the ways various presenters provide for the common good.

### SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:37–40)

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:6–10)

### WISDOM FROM THE AGES

“All our work in the field, in the garden, in the city, in the home, in struggle, in government—to what does it all amount before God except child's play, by means of which God is pleased to give his gifts in the field, at home, and everywhere? These are the masks of our Lord God, behind which he wants to be hidden and to do all things.” —Martin Luther, *Exposition of Psalm 147* (1532)

“If you are a manual laborer, you find that the Bible has been put into your workshop, into your hand, into your heart. It teaches and preaches how you should treat your neighbor. Just look at your tools—at your needle or thimble, your beer barrel, your goods, your scales or yardsticks or measure—and you will read this statement inscribed on them. . . . Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you.” —Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* (1532)

“[Money] . . . is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked: It gives to the traveler and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of [a] husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!” —John Wesley, “Sermon on the Use of Money” (1760)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do the Wishes (farming family) provide for each other and produce good things for the marketplace?
2. How do the Abels (chocolatiers) do this?
3. Where do you see your vocation providing for your family? Where do you see it producing good things for others, including the marketplace?
4. Why is the *love* of money the root of all kinds of evil? What do this segment’s Scriptures and passages from Luther and Wesley say about the proper use of money? (See more about Wesley’s thoughts on money in Appendix A.)
5. How would you describe your own view of money? How can you use money as a tool for good?
6. Martin Luther speaks of our work as a mask behind which God wants to be hidden. What does Luther mean by this? Does this change the way you view your job, and why?
7. How would the common good be different if you and your vocation were not part of it? (Think of George Bailey in *It’s a Wonderful Life!*)
8. What is your reaction to David Miller’s story about placing laptops and tools on the altar during communion?
9. What would you put on the altar to symbolize your vocation?

## CLOSING EXERCISE

(These can provide a good basis for prayer requests shared among the group.)

Consider God as being “hidden behind the mask” of your work. How might that change the way you look at your job this week?

Begin each workday this week with prayer over your “tools,” whatever they may be. Commit your work to God’s purposes.

## PRAYER

Christ, as a light  
illumine and guide me.  
Christ, as a shield  
overshadow me.  
Christ under me;  
Christ over me;  
Christ beside me  
on my left and my right.  
This day be within and without me,  
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.  
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;  
in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.  
This day be within and without me,  
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.  
Christ as a light;  
Christ as a shield;  
Christ beside me  
on my left and my right. Amen.  
(Northumbria Community)

## Segment Two: *Your calling will bear fruit*

### OPENING EXERCISE

What aspects of your current workplace(s) are helpful and uplifting—things that make it easy for you to see your work as an avenue of service to God and others?

What about your current workplace(s) is problematic or distressing—things that make it hard for you to see your work as an avenue of service to God and others?

### WATCH SEGMENT TWO (11 MINUTES)

As you watch look for specific examples of people living out the kingdom of God in their workplace.

### SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION

“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’ He told them still another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.’” (Matthew 13:31–33)

### WISDOM FROM THE AGES

The brothers should serve one another. Consequently, no one will be excused from kitchen service unless he is sick or engaged in some important business of the monastery, for such service increases reward and fosters love. Let those who are not strong have help so that they may serve without distress, and let everyone receive help as the size of the community or local conditions warrant. If the community is rather large, the cellarer should be excused from kitchen service, and, as we have said, those should also be excused who are engaged in important business. Let all the rest serve one another in love. —St. Benedict, *Rule* (c. 530)

Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go,  
my daily labor to pursue;  
thee, only thee, resolved to know  
in all I think or speak or do. —Charles Wesley



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the two parables found in Matthew 13:31–33. What do these examples have to do with vocation?
2. A Gallup poll shows that about 70% of American workers are not actively engaged in their work. What are some of their reasons? On a scale of 1–10, with 10 being fully engaged, how would you describe your own work engagement?
3. What kinds of things prevent workplaces from looking like the kingdom of God?
4. How are Dan and Christina Abel trying to be leaven of the kingdom in their daily work?
5. Greg Forster shared the story of Josiah Wedgwood, founder of Wedgwood China. What distinguished Wedgwood’s factories from others of his day? Who benefitted from the standards he enforced?
6. St. Benedict wrote his *Rule* as a basic code of conduct for the monks at a monastery in Monte Cassino, Italy about 1500 years ago, and it has been used by Benedictine monks ever since. What do you glean from Benedict’s instructions? How were the monks to serve one another? (See more about monasticism and medieval calls to serve God in the monastery and out of it in Appendix A.)
7. What kinds of things prevent your workplace in particular from looking like the kingdom of God?
8. How could you be leaven of the kingdom?

## CLOSING EXERCISE

List three ways you might try to “leaven” your workplace for Christ in the coming week. (Focus on ways other than explicit verbal witnessing.)

## PRAYER

Dear Lord, I give you my hands to do Your work; I give You my feet to go Your way; I give You my eyes to see as You see; I give You my tongue to speak Your words; I give You my mind that You may think in me; I give You my spirit that You may pray in me. Above all, I give You my heart that You may love in me – love the Father and love all humankind. I give You my whole self, Lord, that You may grow in me, so that it is You who lives, works and prays in me. Amen. ([PowertoChange.com](http://PowertoChange.com))

## Segment Three: *Discipleship amid thorns and thistles*

### OPENING EXERCISE

List three current spiritual practices/disciplines in your life (prayer, worship, Bible study, Communion, accountability partner, etc.).

1. Which of these are individual? Which of them are corporate (practiced with a group of other believers)?
2. Have you ever used any of the disciplines you mentioned to deal with problems at work, goals for work, or other issues related to work and vocation? (For example: praying for a co-worker, discussing tough issues with a Christian friend, meeting with your pastors to talk about job options, etc.). If so, how? If not, why not?
3. How satisfied are you with your current life of discipleship?

### WATCH SEGMENT THREE (10 MINUTES)

As you watch, take note of the spiritual practices and disciplines that are described.

### SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION

“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My heart and my flesh may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” (Psalm 73:24–26)

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.” (Ephesians 6:7–8)

### WISDOM FROM THE AGES

Oh that we could take that simple view of things, as to feel that the one thing which lies before us is to please God! What gain is it to please the world, to please the great, nay, even to please those whom we love, compared with this? What gain is it to be applauded, admired, courted, followed, compared with this one aim, of not being disobedient to a heavenly vision? —Cardinal John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (c. 1830)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What problems with work are described in this segment? What are some of the “thorns and thistles”? What are some of the “thorns and thistles” that you have faced in your work experience?
2. How have they prevented you from serving wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord? (See more about how the early church discussed these kinds of issues in Appendix A.)
3. Which parts of your own “thorns and thistles” can you control? Which parts can you not control?
4. What spiritual practices and disciplines are described in this segment, particularly by David Miller and Charlie Self comments toward the end of the segment? What others can you come up with as a group?
5. Building on the opening exercise, have spiritual practices and disciplines formed part of your efforts to deal with these problems? If so, how?

## CLOSING EXERCISE

List some spiritual disciplines that are not a part of your routine or that are totally new to you.

Choose one of these disciplines to use as a regular part of your life in the coming week, particularly as related to work and vocation.

## PRAYER

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path we may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

## Segment Four: *A call to work for restoration*

### OPENING EXERCISE

Throughout this series, how has your concept of “being called” changed?

Our first calling is to faith in Christ, and all our secondary callings flow from that foundation. Some experience callings to provide for others (like farmers or restaurant owners) and some to help constrain others from evil (like policemen and government officials). Some experience an unmistakable call to the redemption of others (like social workers, counselors, and nurses). Which kind(s) of call(s) have you experienced? How?

### WATCH SEGMENT FOUR (13 MINUTES)

As you watch, take note of the obstacles the interviewees have overcome in order to follow their callings.

### SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. . . . What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . .

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:26–28, 31–35, 37–39)

### WISDOM FROM THE AGES

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (St. Benedict, reflecting on Matt. 25:35)

Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received. —St. Benedict, *Rule* (c. 530)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Sharon Cranfill and Kimberly Neace hear God calling them to work for restoration in the world with the gifts and in the occupations they already possessed? (See more about how some medieval Christians responded to the same kind of call in Appendix A.)
2. Both women have been through some very difficult times. How are their pasts connected to the calls upon their lives?
3. How did their unique calls stretch them to work in new ways?
4. How do their efforts (a) provide for others, (b) constrain others from evil, and (c) redeem others? Building on the opening exercise, has God put a unique call on your life? Where are you in the process of hearing and answering that call?

## CLOSING EXERCISE

Discuss how this study has affected your understanding of vocation and the practical implications for you personally.

Where are the mysteries still in your own life and sense of calling? How can you explore these in the weeks and months to come, whether in thinking about other kinds of work besides that which you are doing now, or creative stewardship of a work/career path that is already well established?

## PRAYER

Disturb us, Lord, when  
We are too well pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.  
Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wider seas  
Where storms will show your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.  
We ask You to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

(attr. to Sir Francis Drake)

## Appendix A: Selections from *Christian History* magazine #110 *Callings*

### “About God’s business”

*John Wesley and money*

**By Chris Armstrong**

Wesley himself lived his entire life on the same salary he had received as a fellow of Lincoln College, £28 a year, and devoted the profits from his books over and above that to advancing the Methodist movement and assisting its members. In his eighties he preached a sermon in which he observed with great regret that Methodists had almost universally failed to “give all you can.” He claimed his fears had come to pass: the love of money had reared up and stolen away much of the energy and focus of many Methodists.

Behind this independent activism and social mobility lay Methodism’s emphasis on the role of each person in his or her own salvation. We hear economic as well as political results of this theology in early nineteenth-century Methodist theologian Richard Watson, who argued: “A religious man must not become a factious man and must avoid all association with low and violent men, the rabble of a State and their designing leaders.” Instead, “true Christianity, when applied by a faithful Christian labourer,” was to turn darkness “into light, confusion to order, shamelessness to character, squalidness to decency, prodigality to frugality, providence to foresight, and sloth to industry.” . . .

Although he was deeply concerned about the love of money becoming an idol, damaging people’s relationships with God and others, Wesley was not averse to promoting economic work in the secular world as a means to promote human thriving. He taught his people that when well handled by Christians, money could become food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, rest for the traveler, support for the widow and the orphan, defense for the oppressed, health for the sick, even life for the dying.

—*Christian History* issue 110, pp. 32–36

## **“Duty and delight”**

*A medieval monk struggles with power*

**By Edwin Woodruff Tait**

Sixth-century bishop of Rome Gregory I exemplified the tension between the “active” and “contemplative” Christian life. A Roman aristocrat, Gregory, like many of his generation, renounced wealth and position to become a monk. But power pursued him into his new, unworldly life, where he was given increasingly important assignments and eventually elected pope. Throughout his career Gregory struggled with the conflict between his exalted office and his personal ascetic calling—a struggle that caused him to describe the pope’s role in terms of Jesus’ command to serve the least, as “servant of the servants of God.”

Why did Gregory struggle so? Because medieval Christians believed the surest way of journeying to the heavenly homeland successfully was by belonging to a monastic community committed to poverty, chastity, and obedience, and by the observance of the “evangelical counsels,” namely the teachings of Jesus in all their rigor. To be a monk or a nun was to hear the voice of Jesus saying, “Sell everything you have, leave your family, and come, follow me.” This was a particularly intense version of the call addressed to all Christians in baptism. But as the Christian Roman Empire crumbled in Western Europe and barbarian warlords set up new kingdoms in its shattered shell, monasticism seemed at times the only authentic way to live out one’s baptismal calling. . . .

Neither clergy nor laity could avoid economic activity either. Donations from laypeople made monasteries great landowners, and their cultural and educational activities gave them massive influence. Monasteries were central to the economic revival of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and, according to some scholars, instrumental in the early growth of capitalism. The Cistercian reform movement of the twelfth century, even while trying to avoid wealth and political entanglements, opened previously uninhabited areas to economic development. Yet these economic activities troubled many spiritually serious people—they seemed to contradict the very purpose of monasticism.

—*Christian History* issue 110, pp. 14–19

## **“Called first to Christ”**

*Prayer and service*

**By Beth Felker Jones**

If the early church knew what it meant to be “in” the world, it was also familiar with the tension involved in discerning what it meant to be in that world but not “of” it. In the third century, some Christians dealt with that tension by retreating from the city to the desert. Desert hermits—at a physical distance from the worldly pressures of the city—dedicated their lives to prayer and to the practice of asceticism, following physical disciplines such as fasting and solitude as a means of training the soul.

Monastic communities also grew up as places where Christians could dedicate their whole lives to prayer. In the best of the Christian tradition, neither the desert nor the monastery was conceived as a rejection of the world—and more worldly occupations. Instead, Christians who saw their special vocation as prayer also saw those prayers as going up for the world.

—*Christian History* issue 110, pp. 8–12



## **“Duty and delight”** *Seeking to do good in the world*

**By Edwin Woodruff Tait**

Monasticism was celebrated in the Middle Ages, to be sure, and so were rulers who were seen to be godly and generous kings. But in twelfth-century northern Italy an almost entirely new phenomenon arose: saints who were not clergy, monarchs, nuns, or monks. Some were of humble origins, others were prosperous, and one was a knight. Some were merchants; others engaged in manual trades. One, Teobaldo of Alba, began as a shoemaker and chose to become a porter as an act of asceticism—a less prestigious, more demanding position. Some spent lengthy periods of time as hermits—20 years in a forest, in the case of Gualfrado of Verona (d. 1127). All lived lives of ascetic self-denial; most did not marry. . . . These lay saints often used the proceeds of their labors to provide for the poor and to build conveniences for travelers and pilgrims. They sometimes involved themselves heavily in civic politics. In his later years, Palmiero tried to stem violence in his native city of Piacenza (for which he was imprisoned), criticized his local bishop for not doing more, and organized a procession of beggars who marched through the streets shouting, “Help me, help me, cruel harsh Christians, for I am dying of hunger while you live in abundance.”

In the thirteenth century the role played by lay saints was taken over in many ways by the “mendicant” (begging) monastic movements, particularly Franciscans. Francis of Assisi in fact resembled his twelfth-century urban Italian predecessors who had sought to live lives of self-denial and devotion to the poor.

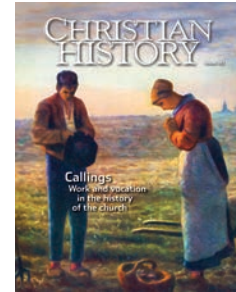
The other mendicant order, the Dominicans, did not have as charismatic a founder or as popular a touch. But they were immensely effective preachers and, along with Franciscans, soon came to dominate university theological education. The greatest Dominican theologian, Thomas Aquinas, used Aristotle to articulate Christian virtue as conducive to happiness in this world as well as in the world to come and Christian social ethics as a means of caring for the common good of earthly society.

For Aquinas contemplation of divine things flowed out in active ministry to the world. While Aquinas himself belonged to a religious order, his writings mapped out ways lay Christians could live according to divine law in the world, seeking both earthly happiness and eternal salvation.

—*Christian History* issue 110, pp. 14–19.

## Further Resources

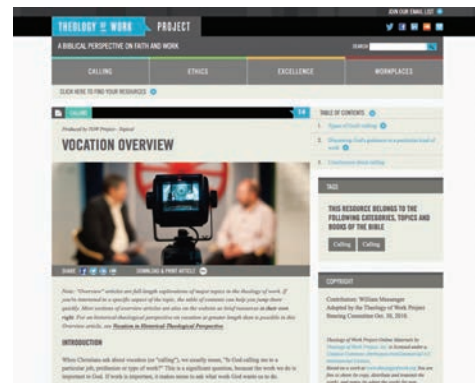
*Christian History* magazine issue 110, *Callings: Work and vocation in the history of the church*



“Vocation Overview” and “Vocation in Historical and Theological Perspective,” Theology of Work Project website,

<http://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/vocation-overview-article> and <http://www.theologyofwork.org/auxiliary-pages/vocation-depth-article/>.

Great list of resources at the end of the overview article: <http://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/vocation-overview-article#conclusions-about-calling>



William Placher, *Callings* and Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass, *Leading Lives that Matter* (two anthologies of short excerpts about vocation: the first from great Christians of the past and the second from great writers and artists, many also Christians)

“Books on Vocation and Calling, Books on Work and Jobs,” a list of resources, by Byron Borger of Hearts and Minds Bookstore,

[http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/reviews/books\\_on\\_vocation\\_calling\\_book/](http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/reviews/books_on_vocation_calling_book/)

Patheos Faith and Work Channel, <http://www.patheos.com/Faith-and-Work.html>

*Going on Vocation* website, [www.GoingOnVocation.com](http://www.GoingOnVocation.com)

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