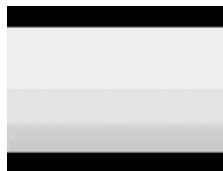


Vocation: from the Latin “*vocare*,” which means “to call”

Vocation is God calling His followers
to tasks that He assigns us

What is our purpose? What is the
meaning of our lives?



The Big, Fat Center of God’s Will

- Four broad answers to the question of purpose & meaning
 - Unreflective response
 - Inner voice
 - Popular evangelicalism’s answer
 - Biblical
- Moses’ call: 5 objections despite 6 miraculous signs
- Ephesians 2:8-10: Dual pillars of our life of faith: Justification & Vocation
- Two meanings of God’s will
 - Revealed/Moral Will & Unrevealed/Sovereign Will
 - What we can and cannot know about God’s sovereign or secret will
 - The wide freedom God imparts to use our talents and gifts to glorify Him and advance His Kingdom

Answer 1: the unreflective answer

- Proceed thru the ‘factory of life’ WITHOUT asking why or what for?
- Distract yourself with:
 - Consumerism/materialism
 - Busy-ness
 - Pursuit of personal intimacy
 - Entertainment of all forms
 - Substances to drown out aches/hurts



Problems with answer #1

- Distractions grow less distracting over time. Pleasures grow hollow. New purchases grow dusty. New friends/partners reveal flaws.
- Our distractions are never complete – troubling questions of purpose and meaning reappear regularly, nagging at the mind and soul.
- 150 years ago, observing similarly unreflective behavior, Henry David Thoreau retreated to Walden Pond and wrote: “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”



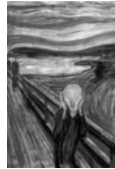
Answer 2: the ‘inner voice’

- This is the long tradition that Thoreau stands in.
- One finds purpose and meaning by being mindful of self and of nature
- Seek satisfaction in simple things: a walk in the woods, a meal shared with friends
- Withdraw from busy-ness and the cycle of consumerism
- There is some truth here – there is general revelation of God in nature, and there is good that comes from stepping out of everyday life and regarding it with distance.



Problems with answer #2

- First, the marketplace has co-opted this 'simplify' ideal and turned it into commodities to buy: magazines and books, food, home décor, candles, soap bubbles, spa treatments.
- Second, what 'inner-voice' are you hearing? For those "dead in trespasses and sins," such an inner voice will not lead ANYWHERE that is useful or beneficial.



Answer 3: popular evangelicalism's 'center of God's will'

- Discover the 'one will of God' for my life
- Seek God's perfect plan for my life
- Be in the Center of God's will
- It is important to recognize the motivation and desire here: believers wanting to walk in faithfulness to God



Problems with answer #3

- It becomes distracted by trivialities: what is God's will for my breakfast? For my shoes? What dishwasher soap would Jesus buy?
- It can then spiral into indecision and inaction. Not knowing which car Jesus would drive, a fellow buys none and keeps driving his oil-burning, brake-squealing, gas-guzzler.
- It can also lead to mystical practices and interpretation of signs: It was raining when I went to look at the Ford, so God doesn't want me to buy that one. OR: maybe that rain was God's baptism of the car, so I should buy the Ford!



More problems with answer #3

- It makes God's will into a game of Clue, and casts us as Sanctified Sherlock Holmes!
- It can impart a passive and fatalistic approach about decisions, as if we are balls in a holy pinball game
- More troubling still, this unbiblical fatalism gets baptized with Godtalk: "I felt led," "I was prompted," "the Lord showed me"
- NOT Biblical: in no passage of Scripture will you find the phrase "the center of God's will" or "God's perfect plan for your life."



Answer 4: a Biblical understanding of God's will is essential

Protestant Reformation



JUSTIFICATION VOCATION

Biblical Authority Alone
(Sola Scriptura)

OUR LIFE OF FAITH



JUSTIFICATION VOCATION

GOD'S REVEALED
TRUTH: THE BIBLE

Get past the halo we put on Moses



Where's Moses? In Midian. Where's Midian?



Moses' 5 objections, God's 6(!) miraculous signs

MOSES:

- 3:11 *who am I?*
- 3:12 *who shall I say sent me?*
- 4:1 *what if they don't believe me?*
- 4:10 *but I am slow of speech and tongue!*
- 4:13 *Please send someone else!*

YAHWEH:

- Burning but unconsumed bush
- God's voice
- Staff becomes a snake
- Snake becomes a staff
- Hand turns leprous
- Hand is restored

God makes up Moses' mind for him!

- Moses' call had nothing to do with him listening to his 'inner voice,' nor was it optional.
- Moses' call was about God's Sovereign redemptive purposes in history, and Moses as the instrument through which God would lead his people out of Egypt and reveal his law (i.e., moral will) to them.

Understanding God's Will

- Bible describes God's will in two ways:
 - His revealed (moral) will, and
 - His unrevealed (sovereign, secret) will
- Deut 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

God's Secret Will

- Acts 1:7 "[Jesus] said to them, 'it is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.'"
- God's unrevealed, secret, and sovereign will is His master plan for everything in the universe.
- It is NOT ours to know, except in hindsight and incompletely

Can't pry, can't miss God's secret will

- We cannot pry into it, but it wouldn't help if we could – as NOTHING can thwart the divine purposes of God.
- By the same token, we can take confidence that we cannot miss it either!

We do know ...

- That our faith is not an immunity pill:
 - we *will* sin & will experience the consequences of sin;
 - we *will* experience trials and tribulations of all kinds;
 - we *will* suffer, even, for the name of Christ.
- This is a hard teaching of Scripture, but it comes with some powerful assurances

We have these assurances:

- We know that Jesus will *never* leave us or forsake us.
- We know that *no one* understands unjust suffering better than Jesus, who suffered on the Cross for our sins.
- We know we need not worry about food, or clothes, or shelter, for God will provide these needs.
- 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." (Romans 8:28)

God's Revealed Will:

- Is wholly communicated in the Bible.
- It is contained in the 10 Commandments.
- It is captured in Jesus' words:
"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
- And it is beautifully encapsulated in Eph. 2:8-10

Ephesians 2: 8-10

- For it is by GRACE we have been saved through FAITH – which is not from ourselves *but is a gift of God*. NOT by works, so that we cannot boast [our justification]
- For WE are God's WORKMANSHIP, created in Christ Jesus [wholly transformed and equipped]
- To do Good Works [our vocation, God's revealed will for us]
- Which God prepared in advance for us to do [God's sovereign will]

Made Free, to Freely Serve

- God's Workmanship, made to be used for His purposes:
 - In our families
 - In our work or schooling
 - In our communities
 - In our congregation
- Vocation is not about our jobs only
- Wholly free to decide how we might serve him and delight ourselves in Him:
 - Guided by God's revealed will
 - Drawing on the wisdom the Holy Spirit imparts through the Bible

Not a bull's-eye, an entire kingdom!



The
BIG FAT
Center of God's Will

*"And whatever you do, whether
in word or deed, do it all in the
name of the Lord Jesus, giving
thanks to God the Father
through him."*

Colossians 3:17