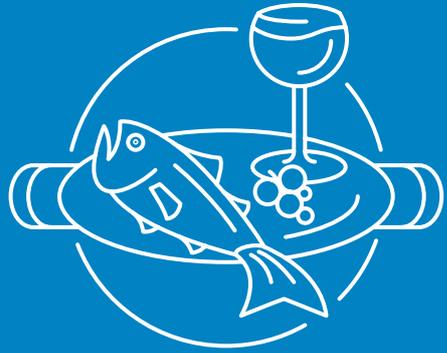


# Careers and Callings



Week Five

## inTro



Read This Week's Passage:  
Nehemiah 1:11–2:9

### SOLI DEO GLORIA

In the previous study, we determined that identity drives mission. The Bible tells us that humanity was initially created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). Furthermore, He created us for His glory (Eccles. 12:13). At the most basic level, then, our mission in life must be to bring glory to God. The twenty-four elders surrounding the throne in heaven put it this way: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11). The King James Version states that humanity was created for God’s “pleasure,” and we must ask ourselves, “How would our lives please God?”

The series of parables Christ told of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son illuminates one thing that certainly brings joy to God’s heart—the salvation of the lost (Luke 15:6, 7, 10, 11, 32). Broadly speaking, our mission as Christians must contribute to the salvation of souls (cf. Matt. 28:18–20). Within that broad mission, each of us may find our specific calling: anything that detracts from that mission is proscribed, but everything else is permissible.

Having committed ourselves to the mission of soul saving, we may then ask God to reveal to us the role He would have us play in that mission (our specific calling). To determine our calling, we may consult three elements: our skills, burdens, and divine providence. It is at the confluence of these three factors that we find our calling.

Incidental to your calling is your vocation. While in most cases it will not be identical to your calling, a fulfilling career will contribute to your ability to fulfil your calling. This week, we consider the relationship between calling and vocation.



**inScribe**

Write out Nehemiah 1:11-2:9 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Nehemiah 2:1-5. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?



Memorize your favorite verse in Nehemiah 1:11–2:9. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What textual evidence is there for Nehemiah's vocational skills used to rebuild the wall?

How can your skills benefit the gospel and provide you a means of living?



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**WHO I AM AND WHAT I DO**

Nehemiah served as cupbearer to the most powerful monarch in his day. He was the last line of defense against any attempts at the life of the king through poisoning. It was a remarkable trust. While the king held the lives of all his subjects in his hand, the cupbearer held the life of the king in his cup. Nehemiah was one of a few that the most powerful man in the world trusted with his life. It is a testimony to his character.

At times, Nehemiah may have been called to taste the king's wine or food as a guarantee that it was not poisoned. Failure to arrest a plot against the life of the king before it reached the pot or the cup could cost the cupbearer his own life. To ensure his longevity on the job, Nehemiah would have had to monitor the logistics of what food was permitted into the king's kitchen, oversee maintenance of a strict health code, and manage the kitchen staff, among other things.

We deduce that his job required him to plan ahead for logistical necessities, practice discretion and diplomacy, and manage human resources effectively. This same set of skills came into play when God called him to the mission of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Whether he was working at his secular vocation or accomplishing a specific mission for God, Nehemiah's character and skills contributed to his success. His vocation and his calling were not synonymous, but he remained consistent in his character.

Can we get so caught up in trying to figure out what we're to do in life that we neglect developing who we ought to be? Shifting our focus from picking a career to developing transferable skills and a godly character will prove beneficial in any vocation and calling.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING VOCATION

### Circumstances

Had Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem earlier, at the time of Cyrus's edict, he clearly would not have been in Persia to serve as cupbearer to the king. His geographical location thus made his vocation a possibility. There are circumstantial limitations on what vocations are available to us.

Where possible, one way to change the available options is to change your circumstances. Don't like the majors offered at your local university? Apply to a different school. You may have to wait a little longer before enrolling, but it may be worth it. Feel restricted in your professional growth? Find a job with a different organization or advance your training to open new possibilities.

### Providence

You may find, however, that the doors and windows to your situation are all closed. God, in His providence, may be leading you in a different direction than you had envisioned. In fact, you may even find that your burden in ministry and your calling are not the same. Paul had a burden to preach in Rome, but God called him to preach everywhere except Rome until the end of his life (see Rom. 1:10–13). Yet, while he could not work in the city he had a burden to reach, God used his ministry elsewhere to prepare the way for him to share in Rome later.

### Burden

Although we have already stated that your burden and calling may not always be identical, it is still beneficial to examine your heart for where the Lord has placed a burden for ministry. For instance, as a young mother, you may have a burden to teach children about Jesus; as a black male, you may have a burden to mentor young black men who do not have role models; as an intellectual, you may have a burden to bring the gospel to the academic elite.

Your burden may lead you into a particular line of work. A burden for early childhood development may lead you to pursue a degree in education or child psychology, for example. The deciding factor may be where your talents lie.

### Talents

Just as a burden for some line of work may lead you to seek the skills to minister to that need, your innate talents may lend you opportunities where your skills are needed. The key is to volunteer your talents so that they may be recognized by those in a position to give you further opportunities. In short, take initiative.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Can you think of any other factors that may determine your vocation? How comfortable are you with the direction your life is taking in this area?



Read more at  
[www.inverseible.org/will5-4](http://www.inverseible.org/will5-4)



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Daniel 1:19–21; 2:24–28, 47–49;  
5:11, 12; 6:1–28  
1 Corinthians 10:31  
Ecclesiastes 9:10, 11



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Nehemiah 2?

Review your memorized verse from Nehemiah 1:11–2:9.

## THE GRIND

For the greater part of thirty years, Jesus lived and worked in Nazareth. Isaiah 53:2 testifies that there was nothing flashy about Jesus. Later, when He went back to minister in His hometown, they could not get over the fact He was Mary's boy (Mark 6:1-3). Apparently He woke up to His daily grind every day for 30 years!

By the age of twelve, He had gained an awareness of His special mission in life (Luke 2:49). Yet, at that time He returned to Nazareth with His parents to a life of apparent insignificance (Luke 2:51). He woke up to do His chores every morning, ate what everyone else was eating, and slept in no special bed. When the time came, He took up His father Joseph's trade—the work that lay nearest to Him.

As remarkable as His three and a half years of ministry were, the fact that Jesus was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15) must resonate with the reality of the mundane thirty years of His life prior to His public ministry. If laziness is a sin, then we can be sure that Jesus was diligent—not a day did He lie tossing and turning in bed because He was just feeling lazy (cf. Prov. 26:14). If gluttony is a sin, then Jesus never overate (cf. Prov. 23:21). What is more, you could never find Jesus overindulging while others were in need (cf. Ezek. 16:49).

In the little things, Jesus was faithful through His entire life (Luke 16:10). When no one was watching, He gave His best effort as a carpenter. In the obscurity of a small town and the anonymity of a lowly birth, He always did “those things that please” God (John 8:29). When the lights went out, Jesus' character of faithfulness to God shone bright irrespective of the specific task He was engaged in.

Ellen White puts it this way:

“Jesus, in His thirty years of seclusion at Nazareth, toiled and rested, ate and slept, from week to week and from year to year, the same as His humble contemporaries. He called no attention to Himself as a marked personage; yet He was the world's Redeemer, the adored of angels, doing, all the time, His Father's work, living out a lesson that should remain for humanity to copy to the end of time.

“This essential lesson of contented industry in the necessary duties of life, however humble, is yet to be learned by the greater portion of Christ's followers. If there is no human eye to criticize our work, nor voice to praise or blame, it should be done just as well as if the Infinite One Himself were personally to inspect it. We should be as faithful in the minor details of our business as we would in the larger affairs of life.” (*Child Guidance*, 359).



inVite

Meditate on Nehemiah 2 again,  
and look for where Jesus is.



What similarities do you see in how Jesus labored during the first thirty years of His life and Nehemiah's example?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



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[www.inverseible.org/will5-6](http://www.inverseible.org/will5-6)

Careers and Callings



Review the memory verse.  
How does it apply to your  
life this week?

After this week's study of the  
chapter, what are personal  
applications you are convicted  
of in your life?

What are practical applications  
you must make?



Read more inSight from the  
Spirit of Prophecy at  
[www.inverseible.org/will5-7](http://www.inverseible.org/will5-7)

## WHATEVER YOUR VOCATION

“To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot and place, saying, ‘Here I am; send me.’ Upon the minister of the word, the missionary nurse, the Christian physician, the individual Christian, whether he be merchant or farmer, professional man or mechanic,—the responsibility rests upon all. It is our work to reveal to men the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to this end” (*The Ministry of Healing*, 148).

“It requires more grace, more stern discipline of character, to work for God in the capacity of mechanic, merchant, lawyer, or farmer, carrying the precepts of Christianity into the ordinary business of life, than to labor as an acknowledged missionary in the open field. It requires a strong spiritual nerve to bring religion into the workshop and the business office, sanctifying the details of everyday life, and ordering every transaction according to the standard of God’s word” (*Messages to Young People*, 215, 216).

“Let the businessman do his business in a way that will glorify his Master because of his fidelity. Let him carry his religion into everything that is done and reveal to men the Spirit of Christ. Let the mechanic be a diligent and faithful representative of Him who toiled in the lowly walks of life in the cities of Judea. Let everyone who names the name of Christ so work that man by seeing his good works may be led to glorify his Creator and Redeemer” (*Christian Service*, 27).

“Dear youth, what is the aim and purpose of your life? Are you ambitious for education that you may have a name and position in the world? Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations. You may every one of you make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard” (*Messages to Young People*, 36).

“Let us remember that while the work we have to do may not be our choice, it is to be accepted as God’s choice for us. Whether pleasing or unpleasing, we are to do the duty that lies nearest. ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.’ Ecclesiastes 9:10.

“Our plans are not always God’s plans. He may see that it is best for us and for His cause to refuse our very best intentions, as He did in the case of David. But of one thing we may be assured, He will bless and use in the advancement of His cause those who sincerely devote themselves and all they have to His glory. If He sees it best not to grant their desires He will counterbalance the refusal by giving them tokens of His love and entrusting to them another service.

“In His loving care and interest for us, often He who understands us better than we understand ourselves refuses to permit us selfishly to seek the gratification of our own ambition. He does not permit us to pass by the homely but sacred duties that lie next us. Often these duties afford the very training essential to prepare us for a higher work. Often our plans fail that God’s plans for us may succeed” (*The Ministry of Healing*, 472, 473).



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



What is your burden in ministry?  
Do your burden and your calling currently align?

Make a list of skills and talents that you currently possess and those that you desire. Now make a parallel list of current opportunities to apply those skills and talents. Are you engaging yourself to the fullest?

What is the greatest challenge to being faithful to God in your daily grind?

How can you develop a godly character in your day-to-day life?

List desirable character traits of a good worker that transcend their vocation?

How do you balance the need for financial stability with your burden for ministry?