

Creation Gives Purpose

Human Beings Are Created for a Purpose

Human life is NOT accidental. God created humanity:

- In **His image**.
- To exercise **dominion** over creation.
- To **care** for one another.
- To **receive His gifts**.
- To **serve** others.

Our identity comes from **being God's creatures**, NOT from what we accomplish.

Creation Before the Fall

Before sin entered the world:

- **Work** *already* existed.
- **Marriage** *already* existed.
- **Family** *already* existed.
- **Human relationships** *already* existed.

Work was never part of the curse. Rather, **work** is part of God's good design for humanity.

Sin Distorts Creation

The Fall did NOT eliminate creation. Instead, it **corrupted** it. As a result:

- **Relationships** become selfish.
- **Work** becomes difficult.
- **Families** experience conflict.
- **Human beings** turn inward upon themselves.

Redemption restores people so they may again serve according to God's created purpose.

The Importance of Vocation

God Works Through Ordinary Callings

God serves the world through ordinary people. Examples include:

- Parents, Teachers, Employers, Employees, Farmers, Government officials, Pastors, and Friends

Every **vocation** becomes a **place** where God provides His gifts to others.

The Christian life is directed toward the neighbor

The Christian asks:

- **Who** needs me?
- **What** has God entrusted to me?
- **How** can I faithfully serve?

Ethics is never primarily about self-improvement. It is about **faithful service**.

The Two Directions of Christian Life

Vertical Relationship: *Toward God*. Here Christians:

- *Receive* **forgiveness**.
- *Receive* **grace**.
- *Receive* **salvation**.
- *Receive* **righteousness** through Christ.

Everything is gift.

Horizontal Relationship: *Toward neighbor*. Here Christians:

- **Give**.
- **Serve**.
- **Sacrifice**.
- **Love**.
- **Meet** real human needs.

The Christian *receives* everything from God in order to *give* everything in love to the neighbor.

Do Not Use Your Neighbor

Dr. Biermann warns against treating neighbors merely as “opportunities to serve God.” E.g., a youth group performing community service.

Rather than saying: “**We are serving Jesus by helping you.**”

The better attitude is: “**We are here to serve you.**”

The neighbor should never become merely a tool for one’s own spiritual growth or feelings of righteousness. Instead: The **neighbor** possesses genuine dignity and deserves genuine love.

Loving the Neighbor Honors God

Ironically, the best way to honor God is not by constantly focusing on Him during acts of service. Rather, Christians honor God precisely by faithfully caring for the people He has placed before them.

When neighbors are loved, God is pleased.

The Center of Ethics Is Vocation

Christian ethics happens primarily:

- At **home**.
- At **work**.
- In **marriage**.
- In **parenting**.
- In **friendship**.
- In **citizenship**.
- In the **congregation**.

Extraordinary acts are less important than ordinary faithfulness.

God normally works through everyday responsibilities.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer from *The Cost of Discipleship*

“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”

This death occurs in 2 ways.

1. **Before God:** The **old sinner** dies. The **Christian** receives: Forgiveness, Christ's righteousness, New life.
2. **Before Neighbor:** The **Christian** also dies to self-interest: Instead of living for personal advancement, the believer now lives for others.

The Christian life follows a simple rhythm

Vertical: *Receive* from God Grace, Forgiveness, Mercy, Salvation

Horizontal: *Give* to Neighbor Love, Service, Care, Sacrifice

This movement defines Lutheran ethics.

The Purpose of Life

Dr. Biermann argues that the Christian's purpose is **NOT**:

- **Becoming** morally superior.
- **Achieving** perfection.
- **Earning** God's approval.
- **Becoming** increasingly impressive.

Instead, our purpose is: **To become faithful servants within our God-given vocations.**

Common Errors in Christian Ethics

Error 1: Rule-Centered Ethics

Focus: “Give me the list.”

Problem: **Attention** remains fixed on oneself and one’s own performance.

Error 2: Goal-Centered Ethics

Focus: “I must reach the goal.”

Problem: **Emphasis** remains on personal achievement.

Error 3: Self-Focused Virtue Ethics

Even virtue ethics can become distorted when it asks primarily:

“How am I becoming a better person?”

The **danger** is excessive self-concern.

The Better Focus

Instead of asking:

- How holy am I?
- How successful am I?
- How much progress have I made?

The Christian asks:

- What does my neighbor need?
- How can I serve faithfully today?

This shift reflects Luther’s understanding of **Christian freedom**.

Luther’s Freedom of a Christian

The Christian lives:

- **In Christ** *through faith*.
- **In the neighbor** *through love*.

Faith *receives*. **Love** *gives*.

Both are necessary.