

The Christian Life Begins with God's Gifts

The Christian life always begins with what **God** *does*. **God** *gives*:

- **Forgiveness.**
- **Righteousness.**
- **Faith.**
- **Salvation.**
- **New life.**

Everything Christians do *flows from* what they have *first received*.

The order is always: **Receive** → **Then Give**

Dying to Self

The Christian life is marked by **continual self-denial**. The believer:

- **Dies** to selfish ambition.
- **Dies** to self-justification.
- **Dies** to self-centered living.

Instead, the Christian **lives for others**.

Living for the Neighbor

The neighbor—not the self—is the focus of **Christian ethics**. Christians ask:

- **Who** has God placed before me?
- **What** responsibilities has He entrusted to me?
- **How** can I faithfully love and serve?

Vocation Shapes Daily Life

God has placed every Christian into specific **callings**. Examples include:

- **Husband or wife**
- **Father or mother**
- **Child**
- **Employee**
- **Employer**
- **Citizen**
- **Church member**
- **Friend**

These **vocations** are the **ordinary places** where Christians live out their faith.

The 4 Mandates of Creation

1. Family

Christians are called to:

- **Love** spouses faithfully.
- **Raise** children.
- **Honor** parents.
- **Care** for one another.

The **family** is the foundational human community established by God.

2. Work (Labor)

God *gives* work as a **blessing**. Work exists:

- To **provide** for others.
- To **serve** society.
- To **exercise** faithful stewardship.

Work is NOT merely a means of earning income. It is one of God's primary ways of caring for His creation through human beings.

3. Government

Christians have responsibilities as citizens. These include:

- **Obe**ying lawful authority.
- **Paying** taxes.
- **Praying** for leaders.
- **Participating responsibly** in public life.

In a democratic republic, **voting** is part of Christian vocation: **for the good of their neighbors, NOT merely for personal advantage**.

4. Church

The Church is where Christians:

- **Receive** God's gifts.
- **Worship** together.
- **Hear** God's Word.
- **Receive** the Sacraments.
- **Encourage** one another.

The Church also **teaches** God's truth to the world. **Participation** in congregational life is an essential aspect of Christian vocation.

The 4 Mandates Work Together

Provide a **practical framework** for understanding:

- **Where** God has placed us.
- **What** responsibilities we have.
- **How** we serve others.

Rather than asking abstract ethical questions, Christians ask:

“What does faithfulness look like within the relationships God has *given* me?”

Luther’s Large Catechism

Dr. Biermann strongly recommends reading **Luther’s Large Catechism**, especially the explanation of the **Ten Commandments**.

He describes it as one of the best resources for understanding:

- **Christian ethics**.
- **God’s design** for human life.
- **Practical application** of God’s will.

Rather than merely repeating the commandments, Luther explains *how* each commandment reveals God’s good purpose for His creation.

Creational (Natural) Law

God has built His will into creation itself. This law reflects:

- **God’s** wisdom.
- **God’s** design.
- **God’s** purposes for humanity.

Summarized by The Great Commandment

- **Love God** with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- **Love your neighbor** as yourself.

The Golden Rule: Treat others as you would have them treat you.

Ethical Applications

Because God has a created order, certain actions contradict His purposes. Examples include: Abortion, Euthanasia, Violations of justice, Neglect of parental responsibilities ...

Christian ethics reflects *God’s* created design *rather than* changing cultural preferences.

The Law as Guide

It answers practical questions such as:

- How should parents care for children?
- What responsibilities belong to citizens?
- How should Christians treat their neighbors?
- What does faithful living look like?

The Law guides rather than earns salvation.

The Lutheran Way of Living

The Lutheran way of living is simply **the Christian life rightly understood**. It consists of:

- **Receiving** God's gifts through faith.
- **Dying to** self.
- **Living for** the neighbor.
- **Faithfully fulfilling** one's vocations.
- **Trusting Christ** rather than oneself.

Summary

The Christian life follows a consistent pattern:

Receive from God

- Grace
- Forgiveness
- Faith
- Righteousness

Live in Creation

- Family
- Work
- Government
- Church

Serve the Neighbor

- Joyfully
- Faithfully
- Humbly
- Without seeking self-justification