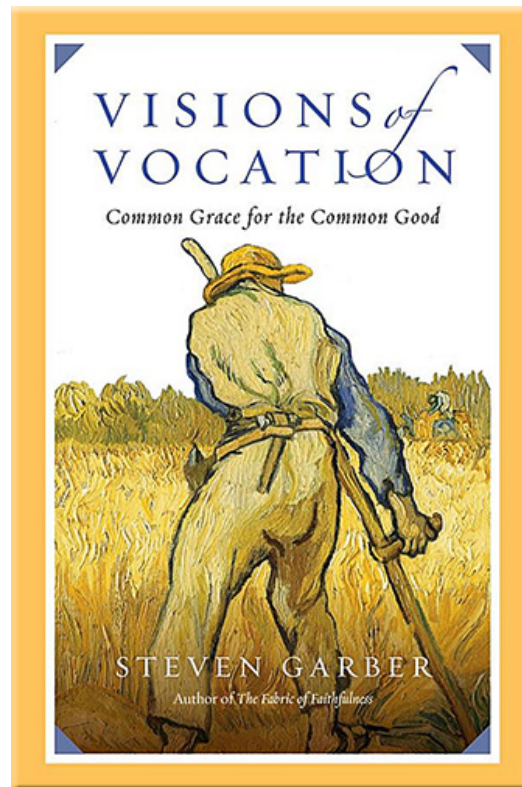


Some notes/quotes from *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* by Steven Garber



The word *vocation* is a rich one, having to address the wholeness of life, the range of relationships and responsibilities. Work, yes, but also families, and neighbors, and citizenship, locally and globally – all of this and more is seen as vocation, that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God. It is never the same word as *occupation*, just as *calling* is never the same word as career. Sometimes, by grace, the words and the realities they represent do overlap, even significantly; sometimes, in the incompleteness of life in a fallen world, there is not much overlap at all.

Vocation is when we come to know the world in all its joy and pain and still love it. Vocation is following our calling to seek the welfare of the world we live in. And in helping the world to flourish, strangely, mysteriously, we find that we flourish too.

Implicated in history, responsible for history

Vaclav Havel: “Bad books always lie. They lie most of all about the human condition.” Also: “The secret of man is the secret of his responsibilities.”

Why is it that we care? Why is it that we see ourselves implicated in the world, in the way the world is and isn’t – and in the way it ought to be? And why does it seem that some do not care?

In our own different ways, we are responsible, for love’s sake, for the way the world is and ought to be. We are called to be common grace for the common good.

Washington Institute's credo: vocation is integral, not incidental, to the *missio Dei* (God's mission). *Not* compartmentalizing faith from life, or worship from work.

***Can you know the world and still love it? Or, very poignantly, Can you know me and still love me?***

Will you have the staying power to keep at it over time – to continue to care for the people and their needs when it moves from vision to reality?

Simone Weil (1940's): "The most important task of teaching is to teach what it means to know." For her, it meant to **pay attention. To pay attention is to see what matters and what does not matter. It is to discern rightly, to choose well. To know in a way that leads us to love. It's a kind of learning that is born of a love of God for the world – and in it a calling to love as God loves because we know as God knows.** Be aware of the needs/opportunities to serve going on around you. See things as they really are.

Garber see all of life as sacramental, as the graceful twining together of heaven and earth, then we begin to understand the meaning of vocation.

It is possible to live with your eyes open to the realpolitik (a system of politics or principles based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations) of this life and to still love what you know.

We can know and still love the world, even in its wounds.

But the story of sorrow is not the whole story of life either. There is also wonder and glory, joy and meaning, in the vocations that are ours. There is good work to be done by everyone.

In the context of one's calling, how does one learn to see with the eyes of the heart, to see oneself as responsible for the way the world is and isn't?

Why don't we sometimes see others as our neighbors?

Walker Percy, writer, described his vocation as "a physician of the soul of society." "It is possible to get all A's and still flunk life." We are glories and shames at the same time.

**Knowing what you know about yourself and the world, what are you going to do?**

**Knowing what you know about yourself and the world, having read what you've read, having seen what you've seen, what are you going to do?**

Choose to be engaged by the world rather than be numbed by it – or turning away from it, or pushing it away or being resigned to "that's just the way it is." Don't join in the culture of "whatever" – throwing our arms up, not caring, cynical. In the cultural air we breathe: There is no access to certainty, particularly to moral absolutes, to the world of "basic right and wrong in the universe."

Garber kept asking people on a mission or pursuing a vision, "Why do you care about this?"

How does one learn to see with the eyes of the heart, to see oneself as responsible for the way the world is and isn't? Not a cheap question, and there are no cheap answers.

**A mind without a heart is nothing.**

How do we learn to become people who have minds and souls at the same time? How do we avoid fragmenting ourselves so that we read stories of suffering but are insensitive to their meaning? To hear but not care? To see but not respond?

# **We are image bearers of God – made in His image, called to image Him in the world.**

Louise Cowan: Central calling – to know and understand and love God, each other and the creation – a spectrum of relationships full of complexity, mystery, and wonder.

Our North Star, what we're shooting for – to become more like God, to have the character of God Himself. To be holy, holy, holy. Live rightly, act justly, walk humbly. To care for the world as He does, to know and understand and love as He does.

In Hebrew scripture, where covenants are found: relationship, revelation, responsibility.

**I know you, I know all about you, and I choose to love you. I will be in relationship to you.**

God reveals more of what He's like and then what He expects.

To be obligated requires that one know the reality of one's situation, of one's moment in time, in relation to God, to others, to the world. To be obligated means that one understands one's responsibility, one's accountability, and then acts upon it.

Havel: **If we lose God in the modern world, we lose access to 4 great ideas: meaning, purpose, responsibility, accountability.**

**Knowing and doing are at the core of every examined life.** If you knew, then why didn't you do?

## **What should we do w/ what we know?**

***To have knowledge of means to have responsibility for means to have care for.***

Hebrew word "yada" means "to know." A multi-faceted word: know, knew, knowing, knowledge, have sex with, learns, care for, concern, concerned about.

Why do we care? Because we see ourselves in relationship, "obligated by the very fact of our existence." And knowing what we know, we are responsible, for love's sake, for the people and places that are ours – if we have eyes that see.

Glorious ruins that we are.

It is only when you ask, "What do you love?" that begin to know another. We see out of our hearts? Yes, because we live out of our loves.

Some vocations mentioned – and I'm not doing this justice, because I'm boiling it down to what they ended up doing, not mentioning other parts of their character and/or being:

- Parent, mother, father
- Home builder for small community
- A builder of infrastructures in legal systems or banking systems – especially to those who are poor.
- An educator who is focused on character development
- Physicians who served underserved areas
- A web designer/storyteller
- A person involved with renewing education
- A student who began to see what he wanted to learn about and what he wanted to do w/ that learning
- A pastor focused on vocation
- An accountant with legal background and a heart for public justice
- A psychologist

“People who keep at their calling for a lifetime are always people who suffer. The world is too hard and life is too broken for it to be otherwise.” But their lives for others are a window into the meaning of common grace for the common good.

**“We make our way through the occupations of life, hoping and hoping that as we do our vocation becomes clearer to us, that over time we will come to know more and more about who we are and what matters to us, and who God is and what matters to him.”** p. 161

None of us are islands. We are *we*, human beings together.

Our lives, then, are always a tale of two realities: of men and women on the one hand, and of the world on the other: human beings in the worlds of education and the arts, in international development and human rights, in agriculture and craftsmanship, in health care and law, in business and banking, in politics and church, in marriage and families, in cities and societies.

We are called to form habits of the heart that keep our loves alive, where duty becomes delight, where what we know becomes what we love – even in this terribly complex world, full of wonder and wounds as it is.

**So, what is it that you care most about? What are your deepest commitments?**

From a prayer:

**Teach us to see our vocations and occupations as woven into your work in the world. Give us eyes to see that our work is holy to you, O Lord.**