

## Faith-Based Vocation

Genesis 14:1-16, CBC, Sunday AM, August 31, 2025

Vocation—vocare (verb “to call”), vocatio—a call, summons to particular state or course of action; your occupation—what is to occupy you? how much individual—personality, gifts, experiences, background, dreams? how much universal? **if receive regular paycheck**, content? Diligent? Enjoy? See as providing for self/others? home/household, but also for those who work alongside or whose lives involved w service you provide? **Do you have a household?** How do you help them see their calling, or is it less than yours because you bring home paycheck? Is this the extent of your calling? **If married and both you and spouse receive income from job**, does that job become primary identity, pulling you away from other aspects of vocation? What are those other callings and how do they fit? Is there a greater calling? If at home, feel stuck there? see cleaning/maintaining house, getting meals as work to be dispensed w—others should be helping/doing? **Children/others in household?** there for you, you for them, how do you shape/train/unify in ways that guide toward their vocation, helping see bigger picture of calling in character/small tasks—**What difference does faith in God, no farther, regeneration—responding to the call of God for salvation have on calling?** Does living His calling in every area elevates all tasks to serving Him and shows others glory of God in household, better neighbor, friend, citizen, as God works through you to spread His name to the world? sound too ideal? **what if feel restless, little worth in what occupies you, or frustrated w self, other people, circumstances taking life from you?** Couple of quotes from my reading (much more in this vein to which I’d refer you, but let’s start here) “John Calvin taught that calling is as simple as knowing what God wants us to do in the place that he has appointed us to life: The Lord bids each one of us in all life’s actions to look to his calling. By ‘calling’ he means that God ‘has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life.’ Each of us is like a guard stationed to a particular post so that we might ‘not heedlessly wander about throughout life.’” “The reformers agreed that ‘a person’s calling was the whole network of relationships and opportunities and duties which formed his life.’” William Boekestein, *Finding My Vocation*, pp. 8-9 **helpful? Satisfying?** article that can’t get out of my head **Are we here to follow our dreams?** *The corrupt imagination*, Emily Finley, World, June 2025 “Despite all the frowns from friends and family, the romantic dreamer was right all along. His brilliant idea changes the world without any real effort on his part. His dream has given him the power. This type of romantic thinking is a recipe for revolutionary thinking and mental illness as adolescents realize that life is not at all like these tales.” “The Romantic movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries ushered in a worldview that glorified spontaneity, emotion, and a desire to escape the ordinary.” “Stories like *What Do You Do With an Idea?* Teach children to expect much more than happy domestic life and meaningful work. To value marriage, motherhood, fatherhood, and life in the local community is to settle for something lesser. Their imaginations cannot grasp how the beauty of ‘ordinary’ living could be worthy . . .” **gives examples of childhood books that do this** like *The Wind in the Willows*, Laura Ingalls Wildern’s *Farmer Boy*, EB White’s *Charlotte’s Web*, etc. “It’s not unrealistic to hope that this kind of imagination could be the new norm. It describes the general cast of mind of our ancestors, who were accustomed to hardship, to periods of joy and periods of sorrow, and to life’s limits.” **Does this mean that life AND God TAKES romance/life/excitement/purpose—just must accept this?** “The insightful twentieth-century British writer Dorothy Sayers puts it this way: The outcome of our ‘work will be decided by our religious outlook: as we are so we make.’ There is a difference between how believers and unbelievers approach their varied responsibilities. Without trust in God we use opportunities to make a name for ourselves (see Gen. 11:4). Or we expect work to give us the kind of satisfaction that we can only find in Christ. We may see our jobs simply as ways to get money. But faith in God and obedience to his word can transform any valid work into worship. Instead of inflexibly insisting on following your passions into ideal work—I need to be an executive chef or an artist or a Navy Seal—as a Christian you must prioritize faith, hope, love, and patience even in roles that might be miles away from childhood dreams and current aspirations. In these situations we cheerfully live out responsibilities before God.” William Boekestein, *Finding My Vocation*, pp. 11-12 not cover topic fully, but learn something of it as look at example of life of faith, **Vocation starts from where you are, requires preparation and ability to use the tools provided, and leads to worshipping the One who calls and equips.** cover first 16 verses today and just touch where last verses heading, come back to finish chapter with deeper look next time

**I. Faithfulness to your calling starts where you are but takes place inside a wider context. vv. 1-13**

**A. The Players vv. 1-3**

1 And it came about in the days of **Amraphel king of Shinar** modern Iraq, **Arioch king of Ellasar**, **Chedorlaomer king of Elam** part of modern Iran, listed as son of Shem Gen. 10:22, **Sailhamer—Babylonian king** mentioned first to tie to Babel, rest of time, **Elam king first, and Tidal king of Goiim**, guess these other two from Turkey **2 that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).** **3 All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).** **Waltke need to modernize Bela (Zoar) suggests account based on precise historical source; current archaeological evidence points to five sites at Bab edh-Dra, tongue of land that juts into Dead Sea on eastern side, Lisan peninsula almost divides Dead Sea in two (does today); Baldwin/Waltke--if look across the Dead Sea from Masada today, will see area invaded; this former valley on south end of Dead Sea is now about 20 ft. below surface; northern end approx. 1,300 ft. deep, South of Lisan peninsula, Dead Sea never more than three feet deep;** Roman times, possible to ford the strait—Masada guarded the crossing—plain at foot of mountain ridge beyond unproductive marl of Lisan is prolonged oasis producing fruits, grain and cotton, supporting sheep, goats, and cattle—inaccessibility of the plain and its intense heat normally a deterrent to invaders—**Salt Sea—average 32 percent**

saline content—ten times more than the 3 percent average of the oceans, 9 kings, said that “king” 28x in chapter—none of these names found in extrabiblical sources, but fit time period, Middle Bronze Age somewhere between 2000-1750 BC, Ebla Tablets discovered in 1974 from much earlier speak of Sodom/Gomorrah; Bush, each of little cities on plain which lay within a few miles of each other said to have had distinct king; kings not associated w royalty the way we think of them, more like petty chieftains, Arab sheikhs, heads of tribes, ruled over single town and surrounding district; Waltke—names suggest wide area from Black Sea to Persian Gulf, whole Mesopotamian Valley; adaptation of foreign record, names brought up to date at time finalized; **why fighting?**

## **B. The Conflict vv. 4-9**

4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came followed eastern road south from Damascus, King’s Highway Num. 20:17 probably same route Abram took from Ur and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim Baldwin/Waltke/Bush/Matthews—capital of Bashan in hills east of Sea of Galilee, Rephaites, remember Og, king of Bashan dispossessed by Israelites when city of Ashteroth given to half-tribe of Manasseh east of Jordan and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, probably plain of Kiriathaim, well-known city in Moabite tableland, Moab and Ammon, sons of Lot had dispossessed the Zuzims and Emims; referred to as giants of Canaan in Deut. 2:10-11 6 and the Horites in their Mount Seir hill country southeast of Dead Sea along Arabah think Edom descendants of Esau, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. of eastern Sinai Peninsula, on Gulf of Aqaba, associated w rejected son Ishmael Gen. 21:20-21 7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) group of springs 46 miles south of Beersheba, place where Israelites refused to enter Canaan, condemned to wander 40 years, and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, seminomadic tribe living primarily in the Negev Num. 13:29, Amalek (prob. Not born yet), son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau Gen. 36:11-12, so despicable that eventually blotting them out was the only appropriate response toward this warlike people, who provoked unwarranted attacks against God’s people and took advantage of the weak Deut. 25:17-18 and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar. II Chron. 20:2 calls this Engedi—western shore of Dead Sea, oasis in wilderness of Judah, David’s refuge when fleeing King Saul I Sam. 23—one of 6 nations God promised to give to Abram’s descendants Gen. 15:11, 21, Ex. 3:8, 17, Sihon defeated by Moses’ armies Num. 21:21-31 8 And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.

## **C. The Result vv. 10-13**

10 Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; Waltke, Baldwin, dark, bituminous substance used as cement and mortar 11:3, strongly impregnated with sulphureous matter—(would light up when event like chapter 19 happens), oozed out of the ground; Ross-- bitumin repeated twice to stress that region full of pits obstructing flight and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. Waltke, forces of nature under invisible hand of Providence also conspire against wicked men of Sodom to bring them down in defeat But those who survived fled to the hill country. 11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. Just like that, battle over, but wait, there’s one more piece of news 12 They also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom. 13 Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, Just like that, our main characters made news—**first battle** in Bible, **first time** Hebrew mentioned (could be from Eber, mostly used by outsiders to describe), Kidner, **first time** biblical events expressly coordinated w external history p. 118; zeroed in on Abram (Lot periphery), God’s story centers there— some same cf. 13:18 know NOTHING more of Abram’s life to this point, but 13:12 **did Abram know this?** While Lot moved, Abram lived— fulfilled calling; but here, break in normally scheduled events of your life to bring you this breaking news; out there hits here—**what HAD Abram planned for day?** Interrupted—**what did he do? Should he do? What should you do?** **Applic. God’s calling to you is not out there, include everything you think of, want to be a part of I Thess. 4:11** (genealogies mentioned, but zero in on Abram), but Abram did NOT live calling in vacuum—God has ways of making you aware of pieces that matter you don’t/didn’t think mattered, **can you think of any?** just ask any baker, carpenter, school teacher, car mechanic, camp director in Ukraine; happens today when Lot/family/goods snatched from whatever doing; refugee comes into camp tells Abram; **what is it in your life?** don’t block, don’t freak —if get away from “idiot,” can’t speak own language, **meaning, even when think broad/reasonable, choosing pieces that make sense, spreading selves out along spectrum we value;** you do not determine all pieces of your calling; while not ours to fix, deal with all problems, God’s calling includes seeing more players than just those we see, acknowledge; why? b/c **Is. 49:6, Jn. 4:35, Eph. 6:12** Like Abram, Live faithfully where you are, but be ready when God’s larger context hits your world;

## **II. Vocation includes not only your duty, but preparation needed to complete that duty vv. 13-16**

### **A. Determining Duty v. 14**

14 When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, what went through mind? Don't know—frustration? Rekindled thoughts of what led to split—roots that made Lot choose fertile land toward Sodom—valued immediate need to protect assets over other considerations (life for uncle, wickedness)—for Abram known as worshipper whose actions were in line w promises given (came back to land after Egypt, willing to give up choicest of land b/c God would provide), must have been concerned not only went, but now lived IN Sodom; sobering warning for us

Duguid—Yet Lot's story also provides a challenge to those of us who live too comfortably alongside those who are of an entirely different spirit from us. Many of us, like Lot, have happily settled down in this world and assimilated ourselves to our environment. We need to remember that it isn't easy to live in a pigsty without ending up smelling like a pig. While God can easily rescue the godly from the judgment that is to come on the wicked, it is not nearly as easy as we think to remain godly while living in the close company of the wicked. his choice to take the seemingly best land pulled him away from his best and truest friend and towards those notoriously wicked, now, Bush, he and his wealth which separated him from Abram plundered by merciless heathens; contra Ps. 1:1-4; Probably thought of these things, not just now, but before—but also love, ache, loyalty—what should he do? (classic if you see someone mugged in New York City, what will you do—knifed, etc.) not just about love, position, safety—what IS your place? 1. Who besides you has responsibility for this need? If not you, then whom? If you always step in without helping those w role feel weight, they won't; here Abram's tie came by God through promises—God promised him land, should feel responsibility for it being pillaged; through him, nations to be blessed; but as saw in ch. 13, kinsman/brother 14:14, 16 2. Who affected if you help this one family/others close don't always come first—sacrifice to serve anyone, but must feel weight of responsibility for those entrusted by God—HOW fulfill what HE has put on plate; our "help" reveals who we truly believe are our priority; find that spouse/children/church members not as high as think—often looking for affirmation and fulfillment more than faithfully caring for souls God has entrusted; 3. What is best course of action? Conflict? peace as goal Rom. 12:18, Heb. 12:14, but whose? Yours, theirs? Seen Abram as man of peace, willing to give up all for peace w brother; NEED to start here b/c otherwise gravitate toward right makes might, "making something of it" "setting things straight" danger of Jm. 4 source of quarrels—lusts (next time see one of reasons gave back to king of Sodom so see not in it for the stuff); God's peace requires contending for the faith, but relational, correction's goal reconciliation II Tim. 2:25-26, even I Cor. 5:5; incident "introduced here mainly for the purpose of illustrating a new and interesting feature of his character, and of displaying new aspects of that kind Providence which watches with such constant vigilance over the welfare of his servants." Bush P. 223 with this foundation for response, 14 When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. no pacifism present as willing under God to combat to stop aggressor and bring justice; b/r go farther, must think about what just happened

### B. Complete that Duty vv. 14-16

he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. Baldwin says that already covered 180 kilometers (112 miles) before assembled army; careful strategy 15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, Bush, often swoop in, sometimes just before dawn when most asleep—perhaps drop tent poles; don't read of any killed on either side; and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. Perhaps another 100 kilometers (62 miles) to make sure didn't come back What?!? Bush, few sheikhs of present time who can bring more than 300 horsemen into action—probably 4 kings didn't have more than 300 each Like Gideon w 300 in Judges 7, David w 400 chasing Amelekites who had taken two wives among prisoners I Sam. 30 16 He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people. Baldwin, that a landless stranger should liberate the inhabitants of the land was big deal; God's mercy to Lot II Pet. 2:7-9

### C. Preparation to Complete that Duty vv. 13-14

didn't just happen; we value big wins/fights, but vocation points to the One who called and includes much more than seeking something satisfying/successful from your viewpoint. amazing that Lot w wealth, first pick of resources valued from land/cities, needed help from one whose life characterized by faith in God's promises lived in barren land; What did Abram do in between God's giving command to go and waiting for promises? where did we leave him? Hebron—doing what? Worship, what else? Livestock, Herdsmen, wife, servants--Much work (organization, forethought, carrying it out) what do you want to do/be? What preparation? vocation under God simpler than think "A calling, said Perkins, is like a compass that shows us the direction in which we approach God even in our ordinary labors. And so, while carefully choosing a calling is not insignificant, simply 'working right trumps finding the right work.' At work—as in your other vocations—you have the opportunity to answer the question, What should this world be like? If you are working well and relying on God to establish the work of your hands for you (Ps. 127:1; 90:17), there is no telling what you might accomplish. In every calling Christians are meant to show to the world the work God is currently doing and preview the coming of God's glory. 'The first place believers should look to conduct their foretaste-bringing mission is right at the current job they hold.' Ask Scripture, how should I work? And then do what it says with all your heart." William Boekestein, *Finding My Vocation*, P. 85 faithful preparing and maintaining God-given responsibilities and resources; Here, he led out his trained men, only time in OT—outside, meant armed retainers by Canaanite chieftains—personal follower of lord providing

military or personal assistance, **born in his house, three hundred and eighteen**, didn't just happen, care for, manage—train, but foster loyalty, work through **Pr. 20:5**, Damascus—birthplace of Abram's steward Eliezer 15:2; but not merely household, v. 13 ends, **Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram**. Ross, to settle here was to need to make treaty with others (4 kings, 5 kings, Abram built allies), Waltke later law forbid Israel to make treaties w Amorites b/c would steal away covenant children from Israel's faith—but not mentioned as problem here; don't just get this overnight or when in crisis; Baldwin, Hebrew seems to have derogatory tone—meant something like “the migrant” implying that did not really belong—BUT won confidence of neighbors Mamre, Eshcol and Aner; Kidner, sworn to mutual loyalty; years of work leads to this even when not on same page; went with him into battle; V. 7 Amorite glad to defend brother; v. 24 shows pledge honored; **Work in the everyday life toward God's intention**; Christian not merely to bask in gospel—grace that saves is grace that mobilizes to accomplish Father's will (Eph. 2:10), first must remember that **I Cor. 4:1-2**, **Abram meant to be light to nations, to have land, must care for it—in you all families of world blessed—then must BE a BLESSING, not just waiting to be blessed, healed**; Get out there and do work **The main trouble with the Christian Church today is that she is too much like a clinic, too much like a hospital; that is why the great world is going to hell outside!... Look at the great campaign, look at it objectively, look at it from God's standpoint. Forget yourself and your temporary troubles and ills for the moment; fight in the army. It is not a clinic you need; you must realize that we are in a barracks, and that we are involved in a mighty campaign. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** His mission, not yours; do you know His mission **for your heart transformation, in home, then together with His people and toward the world; responsible for ALL of it, not part you focused on**; **If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved to be steady... [It] is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point [of attack].** Quoted by Francis A. Schaeffer in *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, **Abram had tight team, heard Pastor Jahn** talk about his bball team defeating better ones b/c played like team); **Are you a team player, or lone ranger? I Thess. 4:9-12** what does this take to do this? content w work, but intentional in relationships with love, not just polite—build relationships that will stand with you—household, do your neighbors know you—do these in here know you more than face/personality or what you selfishly identify with or annoyed by? Eph. 4, I Cor. 12 own the souls in particular expression of body of Christ God has placed you, takes time--faithful, steward; **not for faint of heart!** Duguid, rescuing Lot would give him powerful enemies and he had small force to fight against them; we often ask, 1 does this person deserve my help 2 can I help with little risk/inconvenience to myself? Ie. if want to “help the poor,” look for deserving poor and clean ministry to the poor—Abram did not think in these terms—Abram would not fight to assert his right to own the land though God had given it to him—but would use the sword to intervene on behalf of his oppressed subjects, even though they did not recognize his sovereignty over them. follow Good Shepherd as care for souls entrusted you **Jn. 10:11-13**

**Conclusion:** what have we seen? fact of all the descriptions and people involved shows how large Abram getting—this BIG success; his name IS becoming great—what will he do with it? **Vocation starts from where you are, requires preparation and ability to use the tools provided, and leads to worshipping the One who calls and equips.** if could, wouldn't stop here, because you can have good management skills, trained team, faithful allies, good strategy, and not guarantee win; God not mentioned until end—the one promised acknowledges another who comes in name of Lord **vv. 18-20 victory from Lord! ALL Lord**—stop finding own calling and worship One who calls, it will lead to faithfulness of **Phil. 4:11-13** and worship b/c He WILL accomplish His will through His own

**Genesis 21:20-21** God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. 21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

**Psalms 1:1-4** How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

**Proverbs 20:5** A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, But a man of understanding draws it out.

**Isaiah 49:6** He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

**John 4:35** “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.

**John 10:11-13** “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 “He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 “He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.

**Romans 12:18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

**1 Corinthians 4:1-2** Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

**1 Corinthians 5:5** I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

**Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

**Philippians 4:11-13** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

**1 Thessalonians 4:9-12** Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

**2 Timothy 2:25-26** with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

**Hebrews 12:14** Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

**2 Peter 2:7-9** and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,