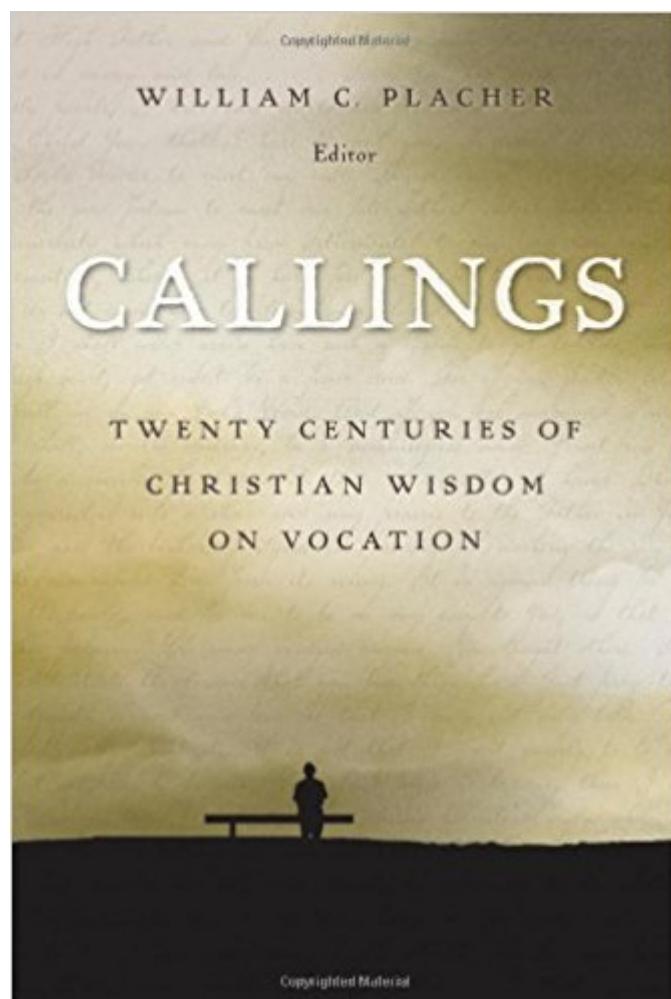


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Callings: Twenty Centuries Of Christian Wisdom On Vocation



Synopsis

What am I going to do with my life? is a question that young people commonly face, while many not-so-young people continue to wonder about finding direction and purpose in their lives. Whether such purpose has to do with what job to take, whether to get married, or how to incorporate religious faith into the texture of their lives, Christians down the centuries have believed that God has plans for them. This unprecedented anthology gathers select passages on work and vocation from the greatest writers in Christian history. William Placher has written insightful introductions to accompany the selections — an introduction to each of the four main historical sections and a brief introduction to each reading. While the vocational questions faced by Christians have changed through the centuries, this book demonstrates how the distilled wisdom of these saints, preachers, theologians, and teachers remains relevant to Christians today. This rich resource is to be followed by a companion volume, edited by Mark R. Schwehn and Dorothy C. Bass, featuring texts drawn mainly from fiction, memoir, poetry, and other forms of literature. A study guide is available from Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV) on their website: www.ptev.org

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Customer Reviews

William Placher is a well-known theologian, a good writer and a great teacher, recognised as such by the American Academy of Religion a few years ago. We used the book he edited, 'Essentials of Christian Theology,' last year for the systematic theology class in which I was teaching. This book reminds me of that text somewhat, in that it seems a wonderful resource both for private study and corporate learning. Placher states that this book is intended as a companion book by Mark Schwehn

and Dorothy Bass (another of my favourite authors); both texts 'share [the] conviction that encountering ideas from the past can illuminate our reflection in the present.' Placher arranges this text in a chronological order, going back to the earliest Christian writings, and proceeds to modern times in four broad sections:^{*} Callings to a Christian Life: Vocations in the Early Church, 100-500^{*} Called to Religious Life: Vocations in the Middle Ages, 500-1500^{*} Every Work a Calling: Vocations after the Reformation, 1500-1800^{*} Christian Callings in a Post-Christian World, 1800-Present Prior to these four sections, however, Placher provides some key biblical texts on calling, which include well-known stories such as the call of Abraham, Moses, Deborah, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, the disciples, Philip with the eunuch, and Paul. These provide source material for many later reflections on vocation and calling throughout Christian history. The names represented in each section are almost all well-known figures from the history of Christianity. Placher provides a brief introduction for each section to set theological and historical context.

For the past three years, I have taught a class on the theological and practical aspects of understanding one's calling in ministry and in life. In my preparations, I have spent significant time wading through ancient and modern treatments of the topic of vocation or calling from a Christian perspective. I can say without hesitation that William Placher's *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* is one of the best treatments of the subject of vocation from a solid and balanced theological perspective. Placher, Professor of Humanities at Wabash College, has done an outstanding job in compiling a theological reader of representative historical selections on the understanding of vocation in the first two millennium of Christianity. *Callings* is a part of a larger initiative with the Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV), a network of undergraduate college across the United States examining how to assist students in their understanding of vocation in their lives. A second volume by Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass called *Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* (Eerdmans, 2006) is also a part of this initiative. Of course when the Bible speaks of calling, the overwhelming basis is the calling to salvation in Jesus Christ and the calling to sanctification in that faith. It is when the question of "Now what" is posed that the variety of life enters the picture. It is the idea of vocation, of God calling us to something bigger than ourselves, which gives meaning and purpose to life. A thread found in both Placher's introductions and in his selection of the readings is the wide variety of Christian tradition on the topic of vocation.

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