

Stewardship of your Neighbor

What does it mean to be a good steward of your neighbor? We can look to what Jesus commands us to do: Love your neighbor as yourself [Matthew 22:39]. But how exactly do we love our neighbor as ourselves? We can through the **doctrine of vocation**.

Vocation is quite simply a calling from God that requires our unique gifts. It's also considered our station(s) in life. Many people think of this as a job; it goes far beyond this. They exist in four different estates:

1. Family

Perhaps you've been given the vocation of husband or wife in the office of marriage. And maybe through marriage you've been given the vocation of father or mother through the blessing of children. We can also include brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, etc. in this estate as well. We also have unique callings in the workplace which also would be included here. What people do for a living to provide for their families is part of the "household" (or *economy*).

2. State

We are also called by God to be citizens. We are all part of a particular community in a country which includes a distinct culture. Through this vocation, we are called to be active members in our societies.

3. Church

Christians are called by the Gospel into the life of faith. We are baptized children of God and part of the communion of saints which we confess in our Creed every Sunday.

4. Christian Love

We are called to be a neighbor to everyone in our everyday interactions. This includes helping a stranger in need, being a friend, and loving/serving in whatever way we can with whomever God has placed in our lives.

Luther calls us in our vocations the "masks of God." God works through us, loving and caring for our neighbors, through these callings. This is being a good steward of your neighbor.

Reflect on your own life. Which vocations has God given you in these four estates? How can you better care for your neighbor in your vocations? Praise be to God for taking care of us through other people as well!