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### Pastoral Care for National Guard and Reserve: Using Bible Study to Equip National Guard and Reserve to Navigate through the Blessings and Burdens of Civilian-Military Vocations

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PASTORAL CARE FOR NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE:  
USING BIBLE STUDY TO EQUIP NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE TO NAVIGATE  
THROUGH THE BLESSINGS AND BURDENS OF CIVILIAN-MILITARY VOCATIONS

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A Major Applied Project  
Presented to the Faculty of  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

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By  
David Stanley Schleusener  
2022 September

Approved by:

Dr. Joel Biermann

MAP Advisor

Dr. Timothy Dost

Reader

Dr. Rick Marrs

Reader

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To my wife, whose loving support has given me encouragement not only for this project, but for all that I aspire to be and do in my vocations as husband, father to our daughters, pastor, chaplain and so many others. I am blessed by God to have you as my partner in life. I am grateful for sharing this journey together. To my dearest Beth Anne, I dedicate this Major Applied Project.

Ewig sein,  
Ewig mein,  
Ewig unser.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Thank you, to Dr. Timothy Dost, and Dr. Rick Marrs, who served as readers for my Major Applied Project. Special thanks to Dr. Mark Rockenbach who helped me navigate the shallows and shoals of the Navy IRB process and suggested the end of course survey. I am grateful to Dr. Joel Biermann, my advisor, for his valuable feedback and encouragement. Dr. Biermann and I have enjoyed sporadic fellowship and study over the years, through CSL summer workshops and MAF LCMS chaplain conferences. I am grateful for the personal connection, and the way Christ blessed many through Dr. Biermann's service.

I am honored to serve as a chaplain for The National Guard and Reserves. They inspire me with their dedication, heroic service, and amused me with their humorous approach to the follies of life and bureaucratic bungling. We shared in struggles and blessings together.

Most of all, I am grateful to our gracious Lord who gives us all we need at the proper time, as He opens His hands, and satisfies us with every good thing. The Lord is good and His love endures forever.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CHC	Chaplain Corps
ESV	The Holy Bible, English Standard Version
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LC	Large Catechism
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American ed. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986.
LXX	The Septuagint, Greek translation of Hebrew Old Testament
MAP	Major Applied Project
NGR	National Guard and Reserve
NHCP	Navy Hospital, Camp Pendleton, CA
NLDF	Navy Leadership Development Framework
PKC	Pre-study Knowledge Check
PSR	Post-study Survey Response
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

## CHRONOLOGY

Submitted MAP Proposal Draft to Advisor	February 12, 2021
Submitted MAP Proposal Draft to IRB Chair	February 17, 2021
Submitted MAP Proposal to Dissertation Secretary	February 22, 2021
Submitted MAP Proposal to CSL IRB	March 23, 2021
Interview with MAP Committee	March 31, 2021
CSL IRB Approved Subject to Military IRB	April 5, 2021
Submitted Application to Navy IRB	April 6, 2021
Completed Navy Required CITI Courses	April 10, 2021
Started IRB Process with NHCP	April 13, 2021
Protocol NHCP.2021.0035 Submitted	April 27, 2021
Received Initial Legal Review NHCP IRB	May 19, 2021
Responded to Legal Review NHCP IRB	May 20, 2021
Changed MAP Terminology	May 20, 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removed Citizen Warrior; legal review located term as title of a hate group.</li><li>• Replaced Citizen Warrior with National Guard and Reserves (NGR).</li></ul>	
NHCP Research Program ADMIN Response	May 20, 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initial Opinion: MAP does not need to receive NHCP IRB approval since researcher and research participants are Navy Reserve component and not Navy active duty component.</li><li>• IRB Administrator for NHCP IRB in conference with IRB Chair and HIPAA/Legal/Privacy Official through afternoon, in attempt to determine whether NHCP IRB can waive oversight and the general approvability of submitted study.</li></ul>	
Submitted Drafts of Chapters One and Two	May 26, 2021
NHCP IRB Committee Did Not Approve MAP	June 2, 2021
Changed MAP to Course Evaluation Survey	June 6, 2021

Submitted Draft of Chapter Three	July 7, 2021
Reported for Mobilization	November 12, 2021
Reported for duty in Djibouti	January 8, 2022
Taught Bible study series, first time	February 3–March 3, 2022
Taught Bible study series, second time	March 17–April 14, 2022
Taught Bible study series, third time	April 21–May 19, 2022
Taught Bible study series, fourth time	June 2–July 28, 2022
Submitted Draft of Chapter Four	July 6, 2022
Taught Bible study series, fifth time	August 11–September 29, 2022
Submitted Draft of Chapters Five and Six	August 12, 2022
Submitted penultimate MAP	September 2, 2022

## ABSTRACT

Schleusener, David, S. "Pastoral Care for National Guard and Reserve: Using Bible Study to Equip National Guard and Reserve to Navigate through the Blessings and Burdens of Civilian–Military Vocations" Doctor of Ministry. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2022. 267 pp.

The researcher is a U.S. Navy Reserves chaplain and student at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri, in the Doctor of Ministry program. The researcher focused on the unique challenges, burdens, and significant stress our nation's reserve components face due to dual responsibilities in civilian and military sectors. National Guard and Reserve (NGR) is the term adopted for those serving in one of seven reserve components in the U.S. military. Routine hardships that NGR experience, if not removed, mitigated, or given purpose can cause significant suffering, that may lead to destructive results for NGR.

This Major Applied Project (MAP) reviewed research evidence to demonstrate NGR face unique challenges due to NGR responsibilities and to learn how NGR approach these unique challenges. The researcher used this review to develop a Bible study to equip NGR to better understand vocational duties and challenges and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance is needed, so they can faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges. The researcher applied the Bible study as a pastoral care tool to help NGR handle vocational burdens and blessings through a better understanding of vocations. The researcher used a pre-study knowledge check (PKC) before the study, and a post-study survey response (PSR) after the study to gauge the effectiveness of the Bible study.

The data analysis of the PKC and PSR suggests three things at minimum. First participants found the Bible study practical to the problems encountered as NGR. Second, it improved their cognitive understanding of vocation. Third, it fostered a sense of hope for facing vocational challenges. The data analysis further suggests a strong connection between the Bible study and hope. As the study improved the understanding of vocation, this theological understanding provided NGR the ability to address vocational sufferings with hope. The MAP suggested future research that could better determine the direct impact the Bible study had.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROJECT INTRODUCTION

General David H. Berger, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, offered his charge to leaders: “Leaders must ensure Marines are well-led and cared for physically, emotionally, and spiritually both in and out of combat.”<sup>1</sup>

Warfighting readiness assumes warfighter readiness. Therefore, the DON has a compelling interest in the integration of the warfighter’s mind, body, and soul. Not every service member finds spiritual strength in the practice of religion, but every service member needs spiritual strength to fight and win. The CHC is uniquely positioned to provide the Sea Services a common language and communication strategy that speaks to the issues of spiritual readiness with meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in life connected to strength of soul. Every chaplain and RP needs to help their people recognize and understand their own spiritual needs in order to steel themselves for the fight to come.<sup>2</sup> ~ Brent Scott, Rear Admiral, United States Navy, Chief of Chaplains

I have undertaken this Major Applied Project (MAP) as a leader in the Department of the Navy (DON) Chaplain Corps (CHC) and a pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). As the introductory citations from General Berger and Rear Admiral Scott emphasize, I am duty-bound to care for the whole wellbeing of warfighters and their families. My emphasis is spiritual. The Commanding General of I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), where I served in 2021, listed the I MEF Chaplain in his weekly meeting agenda along with the Force Surgeon, Dentist, and others under the heading of “Critical Warfighter Disciplines.” Chaplains earned a place among critical warfighter disciplines because they focus on the human terrain of war, and care for the whole human welfare of our sailors and marines. As a Navy Chaplain, it is my duty to care for the spiritual strength of the warfighters who serve. This MAP helped refine my focus on the care for those who serve in the DoD reserve component.

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<sup>1</sup> *Commandant’s Planning Guidance*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Brent Scott, Rear Admiral United States Navy, Chaplain Corps, “Department of the Navy Strategic Plan for Religious Ministry,” Ver. 2.0. (United States Navy, Chief of Chaplains, February, 2020), 20, <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/docs/DOC-730727>.

Those who serve in the dual role of civilian and warrior, as members of The National Guard and Reserve (NGR), have unique vocational characteristics and face specific vocational burdens as they alternate between their civilian lives and military lives. Even before considering deployment hardships, every month NGR members typically work at least one twelve-day stretch, without a break. Time away from civilian employment, for the minimum of two weeks of Annual Training, may bring a pay reduction for some, especially those who are enlisted members in the military with higher paying civilian jobs; military compensation does not always equal the civilian pay from time at their civilian job.<sup>3</sup> Yet, no one is forced to be in the reserves. Our Nation has had an all-volunteer military force since the days of the Vietnam War. The draft ended July 1, 1973.<sup>4</sup>

Why do people serve in the reserve force? Many who volunteer to serve in the reserve component do so for honorable reasons. They want to serve a cause greater than self. They have a patriotic desire to defend our nation and be part of a global force for good. Others see service in the reserve component as an avenue to serve their Country while also improving personal career options and finances. It is a way to pay for college or have college funds for children. It brings additional money to pay the bills. Others serve in the reserve component because it was their second choice; they wanted to serve in the active component, but it was not an option for them, so it was the reserve component or nothing. Still others entered the reserves because they had a desire to serve in the military but were not sure if full-time active duty service was for them, and service in NGR was an opportunity to test the waters of military service.

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Marie Pyzyk, "Building Bridges Over Troubled Waters: A Phenomenological Study of Post-9/11 National Guard and Reserve Military Veterans Transitioning to the Civilian Workplace" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017), 4, <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1529/>.

<sup>4</sup> David Vergun, "First Peacetime Draft Enacted Just Before World War II," Features: Know Your Military, US Department of Defense, April 7, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Features/Story/Article/2140942/first-peacetime-draft-enacted-just-before-world-war-ii/>.

All who serve our country in the NGR, no matter the personal motives that brought them in, must be ready to give their life if the mission demands. Even training conducted in peace time is dangerous, as deaths from training mishaps painfully remind us. In peace time and armed conflict, military service demands honor, courage, and commitment. Military service is a life-and-death commitment, not to be taken lightly, as emphasized by the oath which officers and enlisted members take upon entering military service. The officer's oath is cited below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.<sup>5</sup>

The oath emphasizes the sacred duty and responsibility service members bear to uphold military and civil laws, as they serve our Nation with honor, courage, and commitment.

Currently our political and military leaders are preparing for a great power competition with China and Russia. If drawn into an all-out land and naval battle with Russia or China, our nation will need courage and stamina not seen since World War II, when over 12 million men and women served in America's armed forces. During World War II, the U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains put it this way, "Battles are won by military power but wars are won by spiritual power."<sup>6</sup> Lyle Dorsett used that statement from Chaplain William Arnold to introduce a major thesis of *Serving God and Country: United States Military Chaplains in World War II*.

A major thesis of this book is that military chaplains were absolutely essential to America's victory. Indeed, without the role played by clergy in keeping the soldiers', sailors', and marines' courage up and morale high, the enormous sacrifices required to sustain and win a war simultaneously fought on three continents and numerous

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<sup>5</sup> Oath of office, 5 U.S. Code § 3331, Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/5/3331>.

<sup>6</sup> Lyle Dorsett, *Serving God and Country: United States Military Chaplains in World War II* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 6. Dorsett quotes Chaplain William Arnold, Major General, U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains. The statistic of "over 12 million" is from the same source and same page.

Pacific islands would not have been possible. Likewise these members of the armed forces, all too often ignored by historians of the great conflict, were indispensable to keep morale and production up on the home front, among people who continually feared for the physical and spiritual well-being of loved ones so far from home.<sup>7</sup>

I agree, as Dorsett emphasized, that chaplains are still essential to America's victory. We are called to help those who serve in the military, to guard their humanity while executing a deadly mission that can dehumanize the best of those who serve. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).<sup>8</sup> It is too easy to lose one's soul in martial missions. Chaplains provide a defense against that loss. It is in that spirit of keeping "courage up and morale high" that I have taken on the MAP which I outline in this paper.

My MAP focused on the Christian men and women who volunteered to serve in the NGR. In the event of an all-out war resulting from great power competition, reserve forces will be crucial for our Nation's military strategy for victory if our world is embroiled in war on the scale of World War II. Barring such a cataclysm, the reserve force will routinely serve in smaller scale as they have for years. Keeping our reserve forces physically, mentally, and spiritually fit matters. That means their character matters too. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, as he reflected on the service of our military in the Pacific during World War II, emphasized the character and courage of our fighting men—character and courage fostered by the faithful labors of chaplains. Dorsett quoted Nimitz while providing some context for the tribute to chaplains who served our Armed Forces in the Pacific theater. Those who focused only on the material might of America missed the "intangibles" central to the character of our fighting men.

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<sup>7</sup> Dorsett, *Serving God and Country*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated into any other language.

[The historians] Garand and Stobridge were correct. The Japanese admiral stubbornly refused to see beyond the material might of America and acknowledge the ‘intangibles’—the esprit de corps and morale. But the historians’ analysis should be complemented by the credit Admiral Chester W. Nimitz gave the military men of the cloth: ‘By their patient, sympathetic labors with the men, day in and day out and through many a night, every chaplain I know contributed immeasurably to the moral courage of our fighting men.’<sup>9</sup>

I agree that “intangibles” contribute powerfully to victory, but it is not just America’s enemies that refuse to look past our material might. Materialism infects us all. In fact, if there is something to note about modern martial arts, it is the focus on the empirical, and obsession with statistics and counting the tangible—those things we can touch, itemize, sort in a spreadsheet, and pivot into tables—that seems to rule the day. My MAP promoted growth in the “intangibles.” I promoted “intangibles,” which are no less real, with a sure and certain faith-based conviction (Heb. 11:6) to promote the moral courage of our fighters through Christian pastoral care that our NGR require to execute their duties faithfully and punctually for the good of the nation they serve and to the glory of God.

### **Research Problem**

I have researched the unique vocational<sup>10</sup> hardships that challenge the spiritual stamina and endurance of NGR. “Citizen Warrior” is the terminology Crabtree et al. used for the NGR to emphasize that those who serve in the reserve component face unique challenges because they not only serve in the military, but they “alternate between their military lives and responsibilities and their civilian lives and responsibilities.”<sup>11</sup> I originally adopted “Citizen Warriors” for use in

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<sup>9</sup> Dorsett, *Serving God and Country*, 115.

<sup>10</sup> I use the term *vocation* to emphasize the Christian doctrine that God calls the priesthood of believers (all true Christians) to declare God’s praises through a life of sacrificial praise (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:9–10) that is lived out to the glory of God and love for neighbor. Vocation is derived from the Latin verb *voco, vocare*, “to call,” thus a person’s calling is his or her vocation. The priesthood of believers is equated with all true Christians, in contrast to how *Christian* may be defined by sociological, religious studies, and other fields.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Crabtree, Elizabeth Bennett, and Mary Schaffer, “Unique Challenges Faced by the National Guard

my project, but a legal review of my MAP title flagged the term “Citizen Warrior” as being questionable, because it is terminology that has been adopted by hate groups. After receiving this legal opinion from the lawyers involved in the months-long Navy IRB process, I returned to the more commonly used National Guard and Reserve (NGR), to capture the group whose unique vocational challenges I seek to address with focused pastoral care.

As NGR seek to carry out their vocations with trust in God and love for others, they struggle against human and spiritual forces that cause suffering. Within this suffering it is vital for NGR to understand and trust that God uses suffering to develop character. This understanding and trust are central to their ability to overcome or endure suffering within their dual roles in the military and civilian sectors. If all of this sounds a little too serious and self-important, the following humorous take should serve to underline the key point about the unique challenges NGR face. The levity is real, showing that my humor is still intact; but so is the situation described all too real:

The reserves are a very interesting organization. Reservists are everywhere, but most choose to keep a low profile in the civilian world. There is an old adage among drilling reservists that when your spouse, your civilian employer, and your Reserve bosses are about all equally angry at you, you’ve struck the right balance. Sad to say, there is much truth to this.<sup>12</sup>

The research conducted for this project aimed, in part, to determine if the officer’s opinion, expressed above, reflects a general truth common in a wider experience among NGR.

A few definitions are in order at this point. Within my research, I used the title National Guard and Reserve (NGR) to describe those who are members of the reserve component<sup>13</sup> of the

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and Reserve,” in *Military Psychologists’ Desk Reference*, ed. Bret Moore, Jeffrey Barnett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy Aines, “With Afghanistan Withdrawal Set, a Reservist’s War Comes to an End,” *Military Times*, April 21, 2021, <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2021/04/21/with-afghanistan-withdrawal-set-a-reservists-war-comes-to-an-end/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Reserve Component* is used to refer collectively for: 1) The Army National Guard of the United States, 2)

U.S. military as opposed to those who serve in the active duty component of military. I have also used reserve interchangeably with NGR in this study. Title 10 U.S. Code § 10102 defines the purpose of the reserve.

The purpose of each reserve component is to provide trained units and qualified persons available for active duty in the armed forces, in time of war or national emergency, and at such other times as the national security may require, to fill the needs of the armed forces whenever more units and persons are needed than are in the regular components.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the dual nature of their responsibilities within the reserve, significant stress builds from hardships common to the NGR routine. These routine hardships or stressors, if not removed, mitigated, or given greater meaning from a larger spiritual narrative, can cause significant suffering. This suffering, if not alleviated or set within the context of a purposeful narrative, may lead to further destructive results within the social, spiritual and physical experiences of NGR. This would be counter to the warfighter readiness which our nation needs. It is also destructive to the overall welfare of our neighbors. Chaplains protect and defend those who serve in the military by providing spiritual support. This MAP is part of that attempt to protect and defend.

I serve as a Navy chaplain in the reserve and active component military world. Like my fellow NGR, I balance competing schedules of civilian and military careers. I also experience challenges tied to transitioning back and forth from reserve to active duty back to reserve, etc. I want to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of my fellow NGR as they identify vocational burdens and develop strategies to overcome or cope with the routine and extreme daily life stressors which they face.<sup>15</sup>

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The Army Reserve, 3) The Navy Reserve, 4) The Marine Corps Reserve, 5) The Air National Guard of the United States, 6) The Air Force Reserve, 7) The Coast Guard Reserve.

<sup>14</sup> Purpose of reserve components, 10 U.S. Code § 10102, Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/10102>.

<sup>15</sup> Language suggested by Lauren Marie Innamorato, “Coping Processes of Military Reservists and Veterans with Daily and Previous Stressors,” (PhD diss., Northcentral University, 2020), iii,

The population I serve as a chaplain in my ministry setting could be any NGR open to receiving religious support from me as a chaplain. These NGR have included LCMS members, but most of the Christians I have served in a military context have come from a wide range of denominations. Prior to COVID-19 conditions, I met in person with reserve members for weekend drills and training at our shared reserve training center. Due to COVID-19, most training has been conducted virtually whenever possible, except for essential training and administrative matters that must be done in person, and for those NGR who are preparing for a brief or lengthy term of active component service.<sup>16</sup> As I began to conduct my research, COVID-19 still impacted the meetings and trainings that could happen in person, although restrictions started to lift as I began the written portion of my MAP.

I have drawn on some of my own experiences to further define the nature of the problem faced by NGR. Based on my own experiences, this problem is worth the time and effort that I have already invested, especially since the reserve forces remains integral to our Nation's defense and the need for the truth and comfort of God's Word is acute among this group.

### **Research Question**

I have approached this problem guided by this research question: What Bible study materials can I create to equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges, and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance is needed, so that they faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges? When I speak

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<https://search.proquest.com/openview/43d71624987763043e16c794a2785d29/1?pqorigsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&dis=y>.

<sup>16</sup> This has been in effect since March of 2020, and as of October 2021, when the author was still on reserve component status, this was still in effect. As Health Protection conditions required, most training was done by telework, unless physical presence required at training locations, for medical, dental, mobilization preparations, etc.

of vocational challenges, I am especially focusing on the chronic afflictions and suffering that would be encountered in routine service, versus the more acute afflictions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).<sup>17</sup>

### **Research Purpose**

During my research I have attended to the research problem and approached the research question as an *insider*, a term used by Herr and Anderson in *The Action Research Dissertation*.<sup>18</sup> The goal of action research is “to generate local knowledge that is fed back into the setting.”<sup>19</sup> This is a basic definition of action research from Herr and Anderson: “Action research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community but never *to* or *on* them.”<sup>20</sup> Since I planned for my research to be done in *cooperation with* NGR, and not a study *on them*, it fit within the purpose of action research. In addition, if the final product is beneficial to the NGR with whom I serve, it will be due to finding solutions based on the powerful training from the Bible as well as practical wisdom gained from God’s people who faithfully serve as NGR.

As I address these challenges, I will consider how Bible study and vocational equipping could help NGR faithfully understand, accept, and adjust to the challenges they face. Action research can help toward that end as “a form of self-reflective problem solving, which enables practitioners to better understand and solve pressing problems in social settings” (p. 6, of

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<sup>17</sup> Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) command and deserve broad investments of time and expertise for research and clinical practice. This MAP is not focused on the very real problem of PTSD. This MAP was designed with the purpose of giving pastoral care and the support, which may overlap with the type of spiritual care that can benefit those with PTS and PTSD.

<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014). *Insider* is a term of art used by Herr and Anderson.

<sup>19</sup> Herr and Anderson. *Action Research*, xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Herr and Anderson. *Action Research*, 3.

McKernan (1988).”<sup>21</sup> As a Navy reserve chaplain, I have experienced some challenges as military service and civilian responsibilities clash. These challenges include over-packed schedules, competing demands from civilian and military work, missed family events, and administrative burdens and hassles frequent in the Department of Defense structures. I did not assume that I knew the full catalogue of all the unique challenges other NGR face, so I conducted my research with the hope of building my understanding by learning about the broader challenges other NGR have encountered. That is what I set out to learn through my research, to further help me in crafting a worthwhile Bible study to equip NGR for their vocational duties.

I began my research with the assumption that I would find some challenges which I have personally never endured. From my initial review of existing literature, I gained greater respect for the burdens that single parents face, and the challenges that female NGR encounter as they try to balance civilian and military duties. I designed my research with the intent to learn more about these and other difficulties by partnering with my fellow NGR who could help me learn, through their participation in my research, as together we continued to find productive and faithful ways to discharge our duties in the civilian and military realms.

When I started my research, I had an optimistic assumption that some challenges can be removed, and that my research would help me discover skills, techniques, and tactics others have developed to address and remove vocational challenges. It was my intent to use this MAP to share the anticipated discoveries that demonstrate methods that helped some to remove vocational challenges, or at least mitigate negative impacts. My MAP shared such discoveries, as appropriate, especially in the Bible study material produced as part of this research.

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<sup>21</sup> Herr and Anderson. *Action Research*, 4.

As I started my research, I also assumed that some challenges and suffering cannot be removed or improved, but remain as painful toil, sweat of the brow, or thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17–19) commonly experienced in the execution of vocational duties. When the hardships cannot be removed, then the ability to manage the challenges may be improved with tactics, techniques, and procedures which I set out to discover during the research process.

I conducted my literature review to be able to better understand the values, opinions, religious beliefs, and understandings that inform and influence the perspective, approach, and response of the NGR especially as they relate to the duties, benefits, and challenges they experience in the reserve component. As I carried out the literature review, as part of my research, I hoped to find specific Citizen Warrior needs highlighted. In addition to finding literature that highlighted the needs and struggles of NGR, I also hoped that the literature review would reveal sources of formal assistance, support, and formal mental health, and health care resources identified by other researchers. I conducted my research to find material I considered useful for addressing the spiritual needs NGR have as they tackle vocational challenges.

I assumed that my literature review would identify gaps in resources currently available for Bible study material that directly addresses the vocational challenges NGR face. These gaps, as noted, are identified as opportunities to develop spiritual resources. This will be discussed in Chapter Three. My MAP leveraged the literature review to help develop a Bible study to inform NGR about the general nature of Christian Vocation, while addressing the specific challenges unique to NGR. I expected the research would help identify challenges unique to NGR.

I planned to conduct interviews to assess the knowledge of Christian vocation, the attitude toward vocation, and the skills participants demonstrated within Christian vocation. I intended to use interviews and literature research to understand how the NGR value sacrifice within the

context of Christian life. Those plans changed due to the approval process the Navy required to approve a researcher interviewing research participants. This will be outlined in Chapter Four.

I conducted my research to validate, correct, or expand my understanding about the number and nature of the physical as well as mental and spiritual burdens our NGR face.<sup>22</sup> I also conducted my research to find existing Bible study resources focused on the vocational challenges NGR face. As I began my research, I anticipated that the Bible study resources, specifically focused on NGR challenges, would be scarce if not absent. With that assumption, I also planned my research to help me design and test Bible study resources that can help equip NGR to faithfully bear their vocational burdens.

My goal for this MAP was to provide chaplain/pastoral care for our NGR by providing a Bible study to help address Christian Vocation, the role of service, the need for sacrifice and the place of suffering in the life of a Christian.<sup>23</sup>

My research for this MAP was designed to aid in better understanding the perspective of NGR as they approach and respond to the benefits and challenges of serving in the reserve component. I intended to use this improved understanding to create a Bible study that would equip the NGR with godly guidance so that NGR can better execute their vocational duties, and develop character, as they faithfully overcome or endure vocational challenges.

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<sup>22</sup> I approached this study with my own experiences that form a basis for my understanding of the burdens NGR face. I know some of the motivating factors used to bear the burdens. I am aware that NGR serve with multiple motives which are other-focused and self-focused. Some are driven by a strong desire to serve for a cause greater than self, others are more motivated by material benefits this service provides. Some make sacrifices because they are passionate about their vocations. Others tolerate sacrifices if they are outweighed by benefits such as pay, health care coverage, retirement funds, and Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits with college tuition benefits that are transferrable to family members. My research also expanded my understanding and filled in more detail regarding the motives our NGR have that help them bear with hardship, and other vocational challenges.

<sup>23</sup> I developed this Bible study material to include student handouts, submitted with this MAP. In the future, I may develop a leader's guide that can be used by chaplains or lay leaders in the military.

These are the outcomes I expected to achieve through this research:

1. Improve my understanding of the vocational challenges of NGR, by research and interviews which identify those challenges and evaluate the difficulty of those challenges.
2. Help NGR recognize distinct teachings from Christian Vocation which may apply to their specific challenges.
3. Help NGR apply distinct teachings from Christian Vocation to their specific situation.
4. Create a Bible Study resource for other chaplains in the LCMS, and the church at large, that will be applicable for ministry with NGR.
5. Help NGR identify areas where growth in character will help improve spiritual stamina and endurance for specific vocational suffering.

I will now provide some personal historical context, so the reader may gain some insight as to why I have focused on pastoral care for National Guard and Reserve, especially using Bible study to equip National Guard and Reserve to navigate through the blessings and burdens of civilian-military vocations.

### **Personal Historical Context**

I am a Lutheran pastor serving in the LCMS, with over 20 years of serving God's people in parish ministry. I am also a Navy Reserve chaplain, serving NGR in military ministry. While serving as associate pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cary, NC, I joined the Navy Reserve to be a reserve chaplain in 2009. The reserve duty led to six years on active duty. My first year of active duty was for a mobilization to be a chaplain for Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, Africa. In 2017, when I volunteered for three years of service in Japan, I received a peaceful release from my call at Resurrection Lutheran Church. The LCMS Office of International

Missions called me to serve for three years in Japan.<sup>24</sup> Midway through my tour of duty in Japan, I began to have conversations with District Presidents, in preparation for returning to parish ministry or other specialized forms of ministry.

At the end of April 2020, with only three months left on my active duty orders, I had been interviewed for one call, and placed on the list of other calling congregations, but had not received a call back into parish ministry. It is my personal observation that my return to parish ministry was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. From my perspective it seemed that COVID-19 conditions delayed the LCMS call processes.

At the end of April, with no call back to parish ministry, the Navy requested a chaplain for one year at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and I accepted the orders. Since my wife could not join me on this tour,<sup>25</sup> we obtained a mortgage for a condominium in San Diego, near our daughter. The day after we closed on the condo, the Navy told me that my orders were cancelled, the task force which I would have supported as chaplain was being shut down. I returned to the US unemployed. This is part of my vocational struggles as a member of the NGR.

During my time of unemployment, I had two short-term assignments with the Navy. While I was on the call list of several congregations before my return to the States, and after we returned in July 2020, I still waited for a call back to parish ministry. On the day of the U.S. national election in 2020, the Navy offered me a short-time position (10 months), which I accepted. I served in this active duty assignment at Camp Pendleton, with I Marine

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<sup>24</sup> It is standard to the agreements that LCMS Reserve chaplains have with their congregations, to be granted a leave of absence for up to a year, or a little over year for active duty service. Any absence beyond one year, and certainly three years, requires a pastor to ask for a peaceful release from his call. This is all spelled out in the general agreements created by the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. Each congregation in the LCMS adapts those agreements, for their specific context, and then formally adopts them to be prepared for the short-term (e.g. two weeks of annual training) absences as well as longer absences (such as active duty recall, and mobilization).

<sup>25</sup> Married military service members are commonly sent overseas for one-year, unaccompanied tours.

Expeditionary Force (I MEF) in the Force Chaplain's Office through September 30, 2021, while waiting for a call to return to parish ministry. I am grateful for the employment I had with the I MEF Force Chaplain's Office, but simple things like getting paid were not easy to achieve. I started work on December 16, 2020. My first paycheck came February 15, 2021.<sup>26</sup>

In the middle of March, I applied for a mobilization position for Command Chaplain at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti (CLDJ). The Navy selected me for the position on March 26, 2021. I am grateful for the opportunity to return to Djibouti, but it does complicate the timing for receiving a call back into parish ministry.<sup>27</sup> I shared the preceding personal history to emphasize that some of the challenges, angst, trials, and suffering that I seek to address in this study come from my own personal experience. Each NGR has his or her own stories to tell that express similar and far more difficult challenges endured through service in the reserve component.

The purpose of the reserve force, for most of our nation's history, was to serve as a strategic reserve. This meant that the reserve component, in time of war or national emergency, would fill Stateside positions left empty when the active component forces deployed overseas. Under the strategic reserve concept, reserve forces would also reinforce active component forces when they deployed overseas. After 9/11, and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, New York City, the reserve force became less a strategic reserve and was used more as an operational reserve as the DoD mobilized large reserve units and thousands of individual

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<sup>26</sup> After serving on active duty for one month to support the USS BOXER, it took 34 days after the duty ended before I was paid. When Reserve force members transfer to active duty, pay errors and delay are common, another "hardship" NGR repeatedly endure. The Navy was scheduled to launch a new pay system in January of 2022 to end these problems. That did not happen. There is not a new pay system. NGR who transfer back and forth from the Reserves to active duty, will still experience months of delay in pay.

<sup>27</sup> While training for this mobilization, a recruiter for Navy chaplains contacted me and asked if I would consider going on active duty permanently. The Chaplain Accession, Retention and Eligibility Advisory Group (CARE AG) reviewed my application packet on August 17, 2022. I was selected for active duty. I may be commissioned into active duty service as soon as November 2022.

augmentees. In a 2016 speech, Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter stated the operational importance that the DoD's reserve force contributed.

[Since] 9/11, more than 770,000 of our Guard and Reserve personnel deployed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, sometimes—many times—more than once. As their service in both those countries demonstrates, the Guard and Reserves are a critical component of our total force—a vital operational reserve that brings to bear the experience and skills of our citizen-warriors, wherever and whenever they're needed to confront the challenges of a complex world.<sup>28</sup>

This shift to an Operational reserve, and operational deployment of NGR, impacted the unique challenges NGR encountered. NGR served as an operational reserve since 9/11. There is ambiguity about the definition of *operational reserve* versus *strategic reserve*. Due to this ambiguity, an information Memo from the Reserve Forces Policy Board recommended a definition in a memo from January 14, 2013. The 2013 memo's definition follows:

Operational Reserve—Routine, recurring utilization of the Reserve Components as a fully integrated part of the operational force that is planned and programmed by the Services. As such, the “Operational Reserve” is that Reserve Component structure which is made ready and available to operate across the continuum of military missions, performing strategic and operational roles, in peacetime, in wartime, and in support of civil authorities. The Services organize, man, train, equip, resource, and use their Reserve Components to support mission requirements following the same standards as their active components. Each Service's force generation plan prepares both units and individuals to participate in missions, across the range of military operations, in a cyclical manner that provides predictability for Service Members, their Families, their Employers, and for the Services and Combatant Commands.<sup>29</sup>

This 2013 memo is cited since it was proposed to clarify terminology. This definition helps document how the reserve component<sup>30</sup> has functioned since 9/11. At this moment, a shift is

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<sup>28</sup> Ash Carter, “Remarks Presenting the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award of the Guard and Reserve,” Newsroom: Speeches, US Department of Defense, August 26, 2016, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Speeches/Speech/Article/929065/remarks-presenting-the-secretary-of-defense-employer-support-freedom-award-of-t/>.

<sup>29</sup> Maj Gen Arnold L. Punaro, USMCR, retired, “Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board on the ‘Operational Reserve’ and inclusion of the Reserve Components in Key Department of Defense (DoD) Processes,” Secretary of Defense, Reserve Policy Board, (Falls Church, VA, Jan. 14, 2013), 1–2.

<sup>30</sup> Note regarding capitalizing Reserve Component. Where the term is capitalized in citations, it is kept. As a rule, the main body of my MAP does not capitalize reserve Component, or reserve, or active duty, unless it is clearly

taking place in The Naval Reserve, as it returns to serving as strategic reserve force. Vice Admiral Mustin referred to that return in the following selection. Note the operative term *strategic* as it is used and contrasted with the implied *operational*. Also note the shift away from *counterinsurgency* and *counterterrorism* with a shift toward focus on *great power competition*.

The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* directed the transition of our military's focus from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism to great power competition. Accordingly, the Navy is designing and growing an integrated future force committed to deterring, competing with, and, if necessary, defeating our rivals. . . . For the past two decades the reserve force has emphasized operational support. Given the emerging security environment, however, we recognize the need to restore the force's focus on strategic depth, particularly in maritime domain capabilities. Further, we recognize the need to deliver mission capabilities, surge capacity, and scalable combat power in times of conflict.<sup>31</sup>

If past patterns predict future performance, this return to the strategic use of the reserve should result in reduced deployments and mobilization for the reserve component, barring any major conflict with Russia or China as part of the renewed great power competition.

The change from operational force to strategic reserve force will shift the training and manning of The Naval Reserve. Jobs will go away. Units that do not directly contribute to this strategic mission will dissolve. The end goal is a more efficient and lethal reserve force. The short-term reality will be confusion, frustration, more training, added work, and stress. All of this is part of the human terrain where chaplains serve. Warriors focus on the geographic terrain, and master the martial arts needed to defeat the enemy on the land, at and from the sea, in the air, and from outer space. The human terrain remains an area of concern if military objectives are to be met. It is that human terrain that remains the focus of pastoral care from chaplains.

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used in place of a proper noun. Military documents often capitalize Reserve Component, but most research journals and articles do not.

<sup>31</sup> John Mustin, Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy, "Navy Reserve Fighting Instructions: Deliver Warfighting Readiness." *U.S. Naval Institute* 147, no. 5 (May 2021): 1,419, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/may/navy-reserve-fighting-instructions-deliver-warfighting-readiness>.

As I end this historical context section, I need to emphasize that my contribution is a small part of a much larger story within the LCMS that could be told by a long line of chaplains who have served on behalf of the LCMS. The first chaplain called by an LCMS entity to serve our military was during the Civil War. At the age of 42, Chaplain Friedrich W. Richmann was called to serve the soldiers in the Ohio Regiment. In a sense, he, and those whom he served were called to war from our Nation's reserve. His tour of duty must have been grueling. Called up to service in March 1862, and released from his pastoral duties in April 1862, he served the Ohio Regiment until August of that same year, when he returned to his congregation worn out by "the hardship of war and sickness."<sup>32</sup> Chaplain Richmann is recognized as the first LCMS military chaplain. As it happened, he served in a *de facto* reserve component. He was the first of many more LCMS pastors who answered the call to serve our military in generations to come.

A collection of letters and anecdotes from chaplains has been published by the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces under the title *They Shall Not March Alone: Glimpses into the Life and History of the Chaplaincy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. I have reviewed these pages for perspective, insights, and encouragement derived from those who have served as chaplains in the LCMS. Their contributions helped with the Bible study that I prepared for our NGR to equip them for vocational challenges they face. I did not offer any direct quotes from this material, but the spirit of these chaplains encouraged the content and spirit of what I taught.

I have also consulted *Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis*, which provides the historical record for the work of the LCMS Chaplain, Henry Gerecke, who was one of the U.S. Army chaplains assigned to serve the German prisoners who

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<sup>32</sup> M. S. Ernstmeier, ed., *They Shall Not March Alone: Glimpses into the Life and History of the Chaplaincy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1990), 16.

awaited trial and sentencing for war crimes at Nuremberg.<sup>33</sup> Chaplain Gerecke served as a caretaker of souls under the most difficult circumstances. Gerecke's reflection on his ministry at Nuremberg, as well as the testimony from those whom he served, offers practical insight for pastoral care. Gerecke proclaimed repentance, announced the grace of Christ Jesus, equipped those in his charge to receive the Lord's Supper, and prepared them to face death (if that was the sentence for crimes of war). His pastoral care theology shines brightly in the extremely dark conditions in which he served.

While many read this book about Gerecke's service for its historical, legal, and international law record, it is the pastoral care, which Chaplain Gerecke gave, that has the most value for this MAP. Gerecke served with a godly zeal for the lost. Records from Chaplain Gerecke, along with letters and memorials from those souls who received his care, have given insights into pastoral care that are valuable for this MAP and broader application in any pastoral care. "For Gerecke, the decision to accept the assignment wasn't easy. He wondered how a preacher from St. Louis could make any impression on the disciples of Adolf Hitler. Would his considerable faith in the core principles of Christianity sustain him as he ministered to monsters?"<sup>34</sup> Townsend makes clear the challenge Gerecke faced:

Hans Fritzsche, on trial as Hitler's radio propaganda chief and a member of Gerecke's Nuremberg flock, wrote later that when Gerecke first arrived at the prison in November 1945, just days before the trials began, the chaplain "made scarcely any impression on us. Some of us may even have smiled at his simple, unequivocal faith and unpretentious sermons." It was the victorious Allies who were judging the crimes of the Nazi leaders at Nuremberg, but it would be a pastor of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who would try and convince those criminals that it was really God's judgment that they should fear.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tim Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis* (New York: Harper Collins, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg*, 11.

The Nuremberg trials have had monumental impact on international law. God's eternal judgment had far-reaching impact on Fritzsche, and others at Nuremberg. God reached them with the Word through the ministry of Gerecke. Fritzsche penned his praise for Gerecke's approach to pastoral care offered at Nuremberg:

His only duty was the care of souls. In a personal prayer which he once made aloud in our queer little congregation he asked God to preserve him from all pride, and from any prejudice against those whose spiritual care had been committed to his charge. It was in this spirit of humility that he approached his task; a battle for the souls of men standing beneath the shadow of the gallows.<sup>36</sup>

The context of my ministry is far from that which Gerecke found at Nuremberg, but the battle is still being waged against the same enemy forces (Eph. 6:10–12). Gerecke was appointed and accepted for service in the Army chaplain corps when he was a few months shy of fifty; the cut-off for service was fifty. When I joined The Naval Reserve Chaplain Corps, the age limit for entrance was forty. Gerecke and his wife Alma had two sons in the war, when he joined in 1943. The American war effort was desperate for chaplains. He had been away from his family for over eighteen months when he was offered the assignment to serve as chaplain to the agents of the Third Reich in Nuremberg.<sup>37</sup>

For Gerecke, the decision to accept the assignment wasn't easy. He wondered how a preacher from St. Louis could make any impression on the disciples of Adolf Hitler. Would his considerable faith in the core principles of Christianity sustain him as he ministered to monsters? During his months stationed in Munich after the war, Gerecke had taken several trips to Dachau. He'd seen the raw aftermath of the Holocaust. He'd touched the inside of the camp's walls, and his hands had come away smeared with blood.<sup>38</sup>

If there is a reason for quoting so extensively from Townsend's account of Gerecke's service, it is for my own personal need to keep whatever hardships I have within a larger context. While I

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<sup>36</sup> Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg*, 11.

do not counsel those who struggle with personal hardships to “buck up” because someone had it much worse than them, historical context from the lives of those who have gone before us is helpful. I struggle to imagine what it was like for Gerecke. He served in one of the most destructive wars that had ever been waged. He witnessed up close the evidence for their atrocities. Then he volunteered to serve criminals who were responsible for the atrocities of systematic human extermination in places like Dachau, Auschwitz, and Buchenwald. At one point during his service at Nuremberg, Gerecke had been doing “a little mild griping” about not seeing his wife for two and a half years. When his flock, the prisoners at Nuremberg, feared that Mrs. Gerecke would influence her husband to come home, these men wrote a letter to Alma pleading for her to permit him to stay. “So I stayed on at Nuremberg ... Mrs. Gerecke told me to—air mail, special delivery.”<sup>39</sup> I have not endured sacrifices or hardships of ministry that are even worth mentioning, compared to what Chaplain and Mrs. Gerecke endured.

Yet I dare offer this one comparison. If there is anything that makes my battle more difficult, in some ways, it is the fact that the presence of the spiritual enemy is not always seen in such stark contrast. Americans tend to believe that the highest moral value is an individual’s personal choice. This quickly causes problems when the competing demands of personal choice clash, and often in violent, assaulting forms (social media attacks, physical attacks, harassment, and assault). This idolatrous elevation of personal choice is further bastardized as little to no emphasis is placed on personal responsibility. Personal choice is king, and no individual dare expect individuals to be morally responsible. This seems to be the *de facto* societal ethic. This is a somewhat dark take (I admit) on the chaos and confusion we struggle with today. My observation could be supported with evidence from many authors (that may be a fitting subject

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<sup>39</sup> Townsend, *Mission at Nuremberg*, 343.

for another MAP). This chaos and confusion results from the lack of an ultimate moral authority or grounding. When I wrote this, a Navy administrative memo had just been released that illustrates the shifting norms of reality and what is known as “real life experience.”<sup>40</sup>

Currently, many who have conservative morals find it difficult to engage in cultural dialogue and serve in the military when social and ethical norms governing the most basic matters of life, marriage, parenting, sexuality, property, reputation are shifting. The enemy is camouflaged beneath the spiritual chaos, clutter, and complacency so common in the milieu, where all is relative, and the primary thing is personal choice and private happiness. The battle for souls is always a struggle. Our current context with the chaos and confusion from relativism, pluralism, nihilism, and moralistic therapeutic deism exacerbates the struggle. In the triumph of the individual, the seeds sown into the classic western liberalism have reaped a whirlwind.

Apart from God, this world is a dark and bewildering place, and at times the contrast between good and evil is so apparent that even the less religious and less spiritual notice it, as in the case of the war crimes committed by Nazis during World War II. The Christian exercising his or her vocational duties has a clear advantage in the darkness, because of the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit. Chaplain Gerecke’s service reminds me to emphasize that enlightening work of the Spirit. As the Spirit of Truth gives us faith in Christ Jesus, convicts of sin, and righteousness and judgment, the Spirit guides us into all truth (John 16:1–15). The Spirit frees us from confusion by bringing us to repentance and faith, as we walk in the light of Christ Jesus.

This enlightenment continues as the Spirit keeps on reminding us of all that Christ did and said for us to save us (John 14:25–27). In this world, vocational troubles, and tribulations, that

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<sup>40</sup> United States Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, “Interim Guidance for Service of Transgender Navy Personnel,” NAVADMIN 112–21, June 3, 2021, <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Portals/55/Messages/NAVADMIN/NAV2021/NAV21112.txt?ver=LuE9Glp3b43j07YX8pHFDg%3d%3d>. “Real life experience,” refers to personnel dressing according to newly selected gender.

once overwhelmed and bewildered, need not anymore. With Spirit-given clarity we believe with certainty that Christ has overcome the world for us, even as our crucified, risen, and ascended Christ Jesus has blessed us, with his peace and joy (John 16:33; Luke 24:51–53). The context and contours of our various callings may be constantly changing. Vocational responsibilities are always challenging if not confounding. We may still be unsettled and confused about the best choices and actions in uncertain times. But the one Shepherd has risen from the dead, and under his providence and protection we are called to return to the world confident of God’s blessing, and sure of our vocational duty under God. In the light of Christ, I echo the closing refrain of Ecclesiastes: “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccles. 12:13–14). Within that faithful fear of God, I set out to provide pastoral care for the National Guard and the Reserve, as they struggle with the unique burdens of their vocations. With all the work to be done, I begin with William Laud’s prayer.

Grant, O Lord, that we may live in thy fear,  
die in thy favour, rest in thy peace,  
rise in thy power, reign in thy glory;  
for thine own beloved Son’s sake,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2015), 110.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROJECT IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. . . . So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God (1 Cor. 7:17, 20).

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:17).

IN THE FIRE, smoke, and deafening thunder of battle, men seldom had time to reflect on God's goodness, sovereignty, and the problem of evil. Instead, most men embroiled in battle instinctively reacted—at once to survive and simultaneously to reach out to help others in need. In the throes of this horror, men naturally drew upon the spiritual resources that had been deposited in the banks of their souls—at home and during those quieter times at camp chapel services and during the worship services on ships, before sailing or flying into combat zones.<sup>1</sup>

When members of the National Guard and Reserve (NGR) come to the fire, smoke, and deafening thunder of battle, they cannot expect to find quiet moments to reflect as they sort through moral dilemmas, and carefully weigh and balance the best course of action. The heat of battle gives just enough time to respond (react) as trained. Then character, instinct, and habits—formed and reformed by disciplined training—take over. We expect the military to provide the disciplined training for fitness and readiness in the warrior disciplines. What about the spiritual fitness for the NGR to serve with honor, courage, and commitment? If our NGR are to be ready to serve *in extremis* honorably and courageously, NGR need the forming and reforming, discipline and discipling gained by liturgical rites, catechetical training, and practical application of theological truth. As I thought about the spiritual resources that NGR needed to be equipped for the extreme and routine vocational challenges, I realized that I had to carefully select Biblical material to address their need for spiritual reformation and readiness. The material had to target

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<sup>1</sup> Dorsett, *Serving God and Country*, 219.

the mundane challenges endured in peace time and prepare NGR for extreme hardships of warfare on land and sea. My research question helped focus research efforts and narrow down the Biblical material which can be suitably studied within the proposed five Bible study sessions.

My research question is worth repeating at this point: What Bible study materials can I create to equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges, and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance is needed, so that they faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges?

At the start of this study, I assumed there are hardships and burdens unique to NGR. I also assumed God's Word gives material useful to teach and encourage, guide and correct, and even rebuke (as needed) so that NGR handle hardships with faith, hope, and love. I realized that some Christians struggle mightily under the burdens they carry as NGR and may even think their whole service has been a waste of time (See Ecclesiastes for the concept of vanity). I also hoped to find Christians who identified ways to address vocational challenges so that the challenges were invigorating and not overwhelming. I set out to learn from those who found ways to apply the instruction from Scripture to find hope and joy in their work—received from God as a gift—as they struggled under burdens. This project helped me learn from those who found faithful ways to master challenges. I attempted to share what I learned for the benefit of all who struggle.

I approached my research by focusing on the Biblical teaching of vocation to help NGR better understand vocational duties and navigate vocational burdens. It is my goal to help NGR better understand and apply what Christian vocation is, how God designed humans for vocation, and how God works through us to serve our neighbors as we carry out our various callings.

Vocation is my focal area. The solid foundation for faithful vocational living is the chief article of justification. Any Biblical study will need to help the NGR grasp Christ as gift

(doctrine of Justification), and Christ as example (doctrine of sanctification). God's Word reveals the standard by which humans are expected to live in relation with God, and their fellow creature. God's Word reveals that the painful consequences for going against the grain of the universe. In ultimate terms: "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Prior to death itself, there is sickness, failure, and frustration in a fallen world. Sinners who come to grips with the wrath which they deserve from God must also hear how God makes things right again in Christ. Made right with God, sinners are set free to run in the path of God's commands. The doctrine of justification provides that solid foundation and core reality for all of life and living life by God's design. It will give the proper basis for addressing vocational responsibilities.

Since vocational responsibilities are often challenging and burdensome, I set out to help NGR see these as areas for growth in character, spiritual stamina, and endurance. I assumed NGR need to continually grow in godly character, including overcoming and enduring vocational challenges. Even in routine and mundane matters in peacetime conditions, NGR face burdens and obstacles that test character, challenge competence, and demand reliance on connections with others in their military community, spiritual community, and ultimately in fellowship with God.<sup>2</sup> Chapter Two lays out the Biblical and theological foundations for my project which guided the research and teaching I offered NGR in the five-session Bible study.

### **Biblical and Theological Foundation**

I have approached the research problem with my focus on the *locus* of sanctification, with attention further narrowed to Christian vocation as it applies to the role of the NGR in his or her

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<sup>2</sup> Character, Competence, and Connection are key terms of emphasis in the *Navy Leader Development Framework*. For the purposes of relaying general themes on leadership in the military, as well as focused attention to character, competence, and connections I will cite the *Navy Leader Development Framework* in the literature review. This document emphasizes leaders develop as they travel down "a path with three lanes," competence, character, and connections. US Navy, *Navy Leader Development Framework*, ver. 3.0 (May 2019), 5.

vocation. I approached the research problem and question for this project, with a Biblical basis which I outlined below, with key statements from the *Lutheran Confessions*,<sup>3</sup> application selections from writings from Martin Luther, as well as contributions from more recent Lutheran scholarship that have helped me to refine my focus. This chapter gives key selections from the Bible, Lutheran Confessions, and other theological excerpts to show the theological and Biblical approach that guided my MAP. First, I offered key Bible passages that are the *sedes doctrinae*, and exposition and application of vocation. Second, I move on to a baptismal view of vocation. Third, I show a hopeful approach to vocational challenges in light of the gift of eternal life.

In parts four and five, I considered how two-realm theology and two kinds of righteousness apply. I considered the connection between prayer and vocation, as well as cross and vocation in parts six and seven. Due to vocational challenges Joseph encountered, as recorded in Genesis, I consider his example (part eight) drawing upon insights from Luther's lectures on Genesis. Since my project focuses on NGR, I touched on Luther's guidance on military vocation in part nine. In part eleven, I offered a brief exegetical commentary on Ecclesiastes to give Biblical relief for vocational frustrations. Finally, I summarized other Biblical and theological resources which I have found beneficial for this MAP as applied to the Bible study I prepared for the NGR.

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<sup>3</sup> "The Lutheran Confession," The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/lutheran-confessions>. For my definition of *Lutheran Confessions*, I used the following from the cited LCMS website. "Drawn from God's Word, the Lutheran Confessions are a true and binding exposition of Holy Scripture and serve as authoritative texts for all pastors, congregations and other rostered church workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod accepts the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and the LCMS subscribes unconditionally to all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God. We accept the Lutheran Confessions as articulated in the *Book of Concord* of 1580 because they are drawn from the Word of God, and on that account we regard their doctrinal content as a true and binding exposition of Holy Scripture and as authoritative for all pastors, congregations and other rostered church workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." These are the documents contained within the Lutheran Confessions: The Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian), Augsburg Confession, Defense of the Augsburg Confession, Large Catechism, Small Catechism, Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Epitome of the Formula of Concord, and The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord.

## Key Passages on Vocation

First Corinthians 7:17, 20 are the first verses I go to when considering the Biblical teaching of vocation. Within the larger context of 1 Cor. 7:17–24, verses 17 and 20 receive key emphasis: “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. ... So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.” The term vocation is based on the Latin verb *vocō*, *vocāre*, which means “to call.” A key Christian belief about the sanctity of work is that God calls us to perform work under God’s good and gracious ruling activity. We make choices about whom we marry, where we live and work, go to school, etc. Despite the choices we actively pursue, or situations in our vocations we passively receive and enjoy, suffer and endure, it is God who ultimately calls us to serve in various stations (offices, places of duty) we hold in life. We serve as child or parent, husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister, citizen or ruler, doctor or patient, etc. because God directs the course of events in our lives and in this world to lead us into each specific vocation.<sup>4</sup> God reveals in his Word how he wants us to carry out our vocational duties, serving our neighbors in love. This service will require constantly putting the sinful nature to death in daily contrition and repentance. The sinful flesh and the devil try to oppose the faithful execution of vocational duties, so we must obey God’s Word and walk by the Spirit, as Paul emphasized in Gal. 5:16: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Consider how God’s direction applies to life as Ps. 16:5–6 expressed it, “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.”

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther noted the connection between Gal. 5:16 and faithful service. “Thus a prince walks by the Spirit when he does his duty diligently, rules his subjects well, punishes the guilty, and defends the innocent. His flesh and the devil oppose him when he does this, and they urge him to start an unjust war or to yield to his own greedy desires. Unless he follows the Spirit as his guide and obeys the Word of God when it gives him correct and faithful warning about his duty, he will gratify the desires of the flesh.” Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5–6*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter Hansen, vol. 27, *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 69–70.

In all the stations of life I could list, humans are called to reflect the image of the Lord—God who placed the care of created things under the dominion of humans (Gen. 1:28). As we care for our neighbor, we do so within the family God has created for us (Gen. 2:18), as well as the larger society, congregation, and the occupation we hold. Each area of service is sacred work that we carry out as co-workers with God, under God’s authority. God calls humans to care for creation, which makes the concept of vocation powerful and helps us see the various stations held in life as something sacred. The work done within vocation is sacred too, a solemn duty, because it is the work God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:10). Through and through it is God’s work we are privileged to do.

As I approached the teaching of Christian vocation, I relied on the image Ps. 127 provides: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city the watchman stays awake in vain.” Worker and God work together within vocation. With God’s presence and blessing we find work reaching its goal. If God withdraws His work and blessing, all comes to nothing. Without God’s blessing, human efforts to be creative merely result in wasted time and energy, chaos and confusion, and wind-chasing—what Ecclesiastes termed “vanity of vanities.”<sup>6</sup> That calls each person to serve with humility as she or he approaches the plans and projects of personal vocation.

Passages such as 1 Cor. 3:5–7 emphasize how God works within the vocations that Christians carry out. When the Apostle Paul taught about the role humans play in the ministry of the Word, in 1 Cor. 3:5–7, he pointed to the work done by Apollos and himself, but he emphasized that only God’s productive activity brings any result. “What then is Apollos? What

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<sup>6</sup> The latter portion of the Biblical and theological foundation of my MAP will draw upon material from Ecclesiastes, which provides the expressions vanity of vanities.

is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” This is a key emphasis within the biblical doctrine of vocation. While humans are active in vocational duties, they are led to trust God to bless the work so that their labors are not in vain. Only God deserves the glory when all works well (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

Other Scripture which I also find helpful to teach and illustrate the vocational focus will be Pss. 118, 147; Rom. 5:1–11; 8:28–29; 12:1–2; 14:7–8, 12, 23. Luther’s Table of Duties, from the Small Catechism, will also inform the study for its emphasis on duty as that applies to the character of NGR. Luther’s commentary on the First Commandment, especially as it relates to the avoidance of idolatry in the handling of one’s vocation faithfully, will also be informative.<sup>7</sup>

Christians, serving as NGR, are equipped for every good work that God has prepared for them to do (Eph. 2:10). Our vocational duties are especially important because God created that work for us. Through this vocational work God works in the world, cares for creation, protects us from evil, pushes back the wicked, and rewards those who do good.

### Baptismal View of Vocation

Baptism is foundational for my approach to the vocational challenges of NGR, especially as baptismal identity gives a stable foundation for approaching the shifting vocational opportunities and challenges; baptismal identity empowers, informs, and shapes the office holder as he or she faithfully exercises the duties of vocation. The nature of baptism has a sanctifying

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<sup>7</sup> “Therefore, let us learn the First Commandment well, so that we see that God will tolerate no presumption or trust in anything else; he makes no greater demand on us than a heartfelt trust in him for every good thing, so that we walk straight ahead on the right path, using all of God’s gifts exactly as a shoemaker uses a needle, awl, and thread for his work and afterwards puts them aside, or as a traveler makes use of an inn, food, and lodging, but only for his physical needs. Let each person do the same in his or her walk of life according to God’s order, allowing none of these things to be a lord or an idol.” Large Catechism, I.47 in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 392.

impact on daily life. Baptism is God's work and God's gift for us in Christ. It saves us and unites us to Christ's death and resurrection. Martin Luther emphasized in his 1519 Treatise, "The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism," that faithful vocational living is the way Christians live within baptism, live from baptism, and grow into their baptism. In other words, one's vocation becomes a station from which Christians live out their baptismal identity.

God has given every saint a special way and a special grace for living according to his baptism. But baptism and its significance God has set as a common standard for everyone. Each of us is to examine himself according to his station in life and is to find what is the best way for him to fulfil the work and purpose of his baptism, namely, to slay sin and to die in order that Christ's burden may thus grow light and easy [Matt. 11:30] and not be carried with worry and care.<sup>8</sup>

Luther emphasized that baptism provides all Christians with a common identity as it declares all baptized to be sons of God through faith in Christ. With our identity established by God in baptism, there is freedom in selecting how to live out that baptismal identity; finding out "what is the best way for him to fulfil the work and purpose of his baptism."

In Chapter Three I reviewed the contributions from Walter Steele's Ph.D. Dissertation,<sup>9</sup> in which Steele engaged in a dialogue with Erik Erikson's theory of identity development in light of Pauline Baptism theology. My review of his work will be saved for Chapter Three, but I can emphasize now that Steele's dissertation offers some profitable pastoral care connections between vocation and baptism which directly impacted the preparation of my Bible study for NGR.

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther, "The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism," in *Word and Sacrament I*, eds. E. Theodore Bachmann and Helmut Lehmann, vol. 35 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 40.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Steele, "A Theological Dialogue with and Evaluation of Erik H. Erikson's Theory of Identity Development in Light of Pauline Baptismal Theology in Romans and Some Implications for Pastoral Care" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2017), 298, <https://scholar.csl.edu/phd/40>.

## Hopeful Approach

I undertook this MAP because there were some annoying vocational hardships that personally bothered me. I read about the experiences of others to better understand vocational challenges and burdens NGR encounter. There are hardships and burdens unique to NGR. I addressed those in a faithful Biblical and theological manner. With this focus on problems, challenges, and burdens I need my Biblical and theological foundation to give me a hopeful approach to addressing the vocational challenges and hardships of NGR.

My approach to vocation is hopeful. My hope is built upon the Triune God who works within the lives of NGR who are saved by grace through faith in Christ. This hope rests on the larger hope that each Christian is given in Christ. When Christ returns in glory, and brings the resurrection of the body, we have the sure and certain hope that we will be raised with a glorious body like His and come to the joys of eternal life. All the labors we perform in the work to which God has called us will be fruitful, and not in vain because of the transformation that awaits us at the resurrection of the body and life everlasting (1 Cor. 15:58). As I explored the hardships, challenges, and suffering unique to NGR, I did so with hope for eternal life and hope in what God works in us through vocational service for the good of others. By focusing on what God does for us in Christ, and accomplishes through us in vocation, I have been able to develop a Bible study to better equip NGR for crosses they carry in their callings. I have created this study with the full confidence that God's Word and sacraments are the gracious means God uses to increase faith in Him and love for neighbor.

What keeps my approach to vocation hopeful is the goal toward which the Christian faith points us, namely the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Vocation is important, but eternal life—which starts now and culminates at the resurrection of the body—is most important. This is a point that Luther emphasized in his sermon, "Our Blessed Hope." Vocational duties

matter, but they are not of ultimate importance. Luther's sermon "Our Blessed Hope," delivers a twofold message on hope of eternal life and living godly lives now that are diligent in good works. Luther emphasized the importance of keeping our vocational service relative to the ultimate gift of eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth. It is worth noting that Francis Pieper cited large portions of the same sermon several times in his *locus* on sanctification, and he concluded his *locus* "The Christian Life, or Sanctification and Good Works," in volume 3 of *Christian Dogmatics* with a large selection from that sermon, including this portion that closes his treatment of sanctification. I quote the following large section from Luther's sermon on "Our Blessed Hope," because it focused on the ultimate. I too easily get obsessed with "earthly things" and forget the "things above" (Col. 3:1–4). Luther kept the two in their proper balance.

We have not been baptized into this life. We are not called Christians in order that we might be citizens, peasants, masters, servants, mistresses, maids, rulers, subjects, laborers, and householders. But for this we are baptized, for this we hear the gospel and believe in Christ, that we may set aside all these vocations (though we abide in these vocations here on earth as long as it pleases God and therein serve God, each one in his appointed calling) and turn from this world to another existence and life, where there is neither servant nor master, neither maid nor mistress, neither wife nor husband, but where we are altogether equal and one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28), which equality begins here in faith, but yonder is made perfect in sight (1 Cor. 15:53f.), where there is no death, but only eternal and imperishable life; no sin, but only righteousness and innocence; no fear nor sorrow, but only security and joy; no dominion nor authority nor power, but God alone will be All in all; in short, where God and Christ Himself is with all His elect and saints. Unto this eternal life we are baptized, unto this life Christ has redeemed us by His blood and death, and to reach this life we have received the gospel. As soon as a child is baptized and is clothed in the baptismal gown, it is from that hour dedicated to eternal life, so that henceforth he is only a pilgrim and guest in this world, prepared and ready to leave this temporal life, always hoping and looking for yonder enduring life.<sup>10</sup>

Luther encourages Christians to diligently carry out their vocational duty on earth while placing ultimate hope and value in what God has in store for us in the new heavens and the new

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<sup>10</sup> Luther, "Sermon on Our Blessed Hope," *Journal of Theology* 35, no. 3 (September 1995): 4, [https://journaloftheology.org/jtheo\\_arch/jt-1995-vol-035-num-03.pdf](https://journaloftheology.org/jtheo_arch/jt-1995-vol-035-num-03.pdf).

earth (2 Pet. 3:13). This does not diminish the value of our vocational service. In fact, Luther ended with an emphasis on two points balanced throughout the sermon: “Therefore we should learn these two articles well so that we may know wherein our hope consists, namely, not in this life but in another future life; and how we should live godly lives in this world and be diligent in good works.”<sup>11</sup> With sure and certain hope in the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting (Rom. 8:18–24), Christians look forward to the day when they will rest from labors; for their deeds will follow them (Rev. 14:13). Until that day comes, we joyfully and confidently serve in the station to which God has called us and perform the duties He called us to execute for the good of others.

My approach to the vocational challenges and burdens of NGR is also hopeful because vocational theology gives hope in God who is hidden under the ordinary and mundane, as well as the unusual duties found in vocational labor. God hides behind it all, as if wearing a mask. God protects our country through the NGR who serve in the military. While Christians can be confident in God who is at work in, with, and under the vocations in which He calls us to serve (1 Cor. 7:17,20), it is good to remain circumspect in our ability to see the larger strategy of what God is doing. Fear of God and love for God ought to keep Christians from defining exactly what God will do under cover of vocational duties. Humility is called for; God’s ways are “too wonderful” for us (Ps. 139:6). Nonetheless, Christians can confidently confess that the LORD builds and watches; He sows, waters, and harvests; He tears down and builds up, He destroys and restores; God even wages war and wins peace. That gives us hope, and revives us, when all our labors seem in vain.

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<sup>11</sup> Luther, “Sermon on Our Blessed Hope,” 11.

## Two-Realm Theology

As I approached the work of NGR to help them deal with the struggles unique to their vocational duties in the civilian and military realms, I did so with great respect for the good work they do and the role they play within the larger reality of what God does in the *left-hand* realm. Lutheran theologians often use the short-hand expression “left-hand” to refer to the work God does in the world through civil authorities, as well as economic, educational, intellectual, and cultural activity. In the left-hand realm, God works through reason and force, the threat of the sword’s punishment and promise of reward for those who do good, follow just laws, and work hard. The left-hand realm refers to all that falls under God’s creative and preserving activity as defined in the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Martin Luther gives concrete explanation of that activity in the Small and Large Catechisms. The right-hand realm is all that God does in the church, through the gospel, giving the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation as a gift—not as the reward for good works. This gift God gives fully and only because of all Christ did to atone for our sin by his life, death, and resurrection. The Augsburg Confession, Article XVI, offers a fundamental understanding of what the left-hand realm is, and the activities to be engaged in by Christians within the left-hand realm. This article is quoted in full:

Concerning civic affairs they teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God and that Christians are permitted to hold civil office, to work in law courts, to decide matters by imperial and other existing laws, to impose just punishments, to wage just war, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property. To take an oath when required by magistrates, to take a wife, to be given in marriage. They condemn the Anabaptists who prohibit Christians from assuming such civic responsibilities. Because the gospel transmits an eternal righteousness of the heart, they also condemn those who locate evangelical perfection not in the fear of God and in faith but in abandoning civil responsibilities. In the meantime the gospel does not undermine government or family but completely requires both their preservation as ordinances of God and the exercise of love in these ordinances. Consequently,

Christians owe obedience to their magistrates and laws except when commanded to sin. For then they owe greater obedience to God than to human beings (Acts 5[:29]).<sup>12</sup>

In the following pages I compare the theological perspective which sees our activity in God's world and God's church in the categories of two realms. This comparison is done to clarify my theological view of how life is lived. I owe much of my ability to grasp and clearly explain these two categories to two lectures. Much of the material under the "Two-Realm Theology" heading is based upon a 2007 lecture given by Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto, and a 2010 lecture given by Dr. Joel Biermann.<sup>13</sup>

Christians live out their baptismal identity within two realms often termed the right-hand and left-hand, with all things falling under the rule of God. Two-realm theology describes God's two-fold rule of this world. Christians live within the right-hand realm, where God has revealed himself most fully to us through Jesus Christ, as they live out life in the vertical relationship with God (*coram Deo*). In the right-hand realm Christians are the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:24), which will meet its full maturity and completion in the end (Eph. 4:12–15). The right-hand realm reveals God to us in Christ. In the left-hand realm we are citizens in this world, with our ultimate citizenship in heaven. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Phil. 3:20–21).

All people live in the left-hand realm (earthly realm), within a horizontal relationship with fellow humans (*coram mundo/coram hominibus*). In this realm, relationships are finite and will

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<sup>12</sup> *The Augsburg Confession*, "Concerning Civic Affairs," XVI.1–7, in Kolb and Wengert, 49, 51.

<sup>13</sup> My outline of the theological tension and paradoxical nature of two-realm theology is owed to notes I took from Joel Biermann, "Christian Vocation: Giving God His Due and Caesar Too," (lecture, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cary, NC, August 2–4, 2010). His lecture further refined a two-column chart which Uwe Siemon-Netto presented as a participant handout for his lecture, "The Two Kingdoms Versus The One Me," (lecture, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cary, NC, May 26–27, 2007).

end when all things are brought directly under God in the new heavens and the new earth. In the right-hand realm Christians are members of Christ's body. In the left-hand realm they are also masks for God (*larvae Dei*), where God works in a hidden way through the actions of his people.

All humans are citizens of the left-hand realm, but only Christians live as dual citizens as heirs to the kingdom of God in the right (*coram Deo*) while serving as willing partners with God in the care of creation in the left. Our citizenship in the kingdom that has no end has been given to us as an inheritance or gift, a kingdom that Christ reveals and gives as a gift (Matt. 25:34). Our citizenship in the left (*coram mundo*) requires us to work. Humans are partners with God (*cooperator Dei*) in the ongoing creation (*creatio continua*) which includes giving birth and raising children, ruling over and subduing the earth, all of this done as humans reflect God's image before the world (Gen. 1:26–28). This creative work is still blessed (Gen. 1:26–28), even though we know the burden of sin's curse on work (Gen. 3:17–18) due to Adam's fall into sin. Work as God's partners in creation is creative and fulfilling, but sin often makes it painful; there are thorns and thistles that make work difficult and frustrating. There is pain that comes with bearing and raising children. That is why we need to pursue creative solutions through agricultural science, medical, military, and political science in the *cooperator Dei* role.

The governing principle within the realm of the left is the law; the law revealed through Moses and the law found in the heart; "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them" (Rom. 2:14–15).

Within the spiritual realm, or realm of the right, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the governing principle. The Gospel announces the good news of specific and unique historical events that

promised the reversal of the death and destruction brought into the world by Adam's fall into sin. That good news is simply and profoundly this: The Son of God took on our human existence (became incarnate) as the son born of the Virgin Mary who is simultaneously the Son of God. He was given the name Jesus because he came to save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21). Jesus lived a perfect life so that he could be our righteous substitute *coram Deo*, and then Jesus died an innocent death on the cross to atone for our sins *coram Deo*. No death could be considered good news, but his death was unique, in that it atoned for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The good news was announced by angels from heaven, and then by the women who first witnessed him in risen glory. Jesus rose from the dead so that all who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). The very same Jesus of Nazareth, that history recorded as crucified under the left-hand authority of Pontius Pilate, had indeed risen from the dead (Acts 2:22–41). Peter announced the good news for all: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:38–39). The Gospel rules the right-hand realm, opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

As we live our lives in the right-hand realm, we are governed by grace, faith, and love given to us by God. Grace, faith, and love are strengthened and sealed (guaranteed) through God's means of grace that bring God's grace to work in our lives. God forgives our sins, declares us to be His children, strengthens our faith and sets us apart for sanctified living through the Gospel given to us in God's Word as well as the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In the left-hand realm, reason is the governing power. Although Martin Luther's disdainful comments for reason, as it relates to theology are well-known, he praised reason highly when it

is working within its proper realm, the left-hand realm. Martin Luther stated this in his comments on Ps. 101, “written as a manual for the Christian Prince”<sup>14</sup> in 1534: “To be sure, God made the secular government subordinate and subject to reason, because it is to have no jurisdiction over the welfare of souls or things of eternal value but only over physical and temporal goods, which God places under man’s dominion, Genesis 2:8ff.”<sup>15</sup> In a comment recorded from his table talk, Luther also gave high praise for reason since it is “the heart and the empress of the laws; [it is] the fountain whence all laws come and flow.”<sup>16</sup> In this next comment, also cited by Siemon-Netto in *The Fabricated Luther*, Luther stated: “In temporal matters man...needs no other light than reason. This is why God does not teach in Scripture how to build houses, make clothes, get married, conduct war and the like.... [F]or all this the natural light is sufficient.”<sup>17</sup>

Although our reason is impacted by the fall, reason can function well in matters of civic righteousness. Humans can function well by using reason to pass laws and administer them. Within the left-hand realm, God has given hints of his power and might through natural knowledge, so that even human reason recognizes that human authorities are not ultimate but operate within limits under God. By contrast, the right-hand realm lives with knowledge revealed by Sacred Scripture where humans who passively inherited the citizenship of heaven, confess their faith in God made known in the person and work of Jesus, as recounted in Scripture, and recounted in summary form in the Apostle’s Creed.

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Luther, “Introduction,” in *Selected Psalms*, ed. Jaroslov Pelikan, vol. 13, *Luther’s Works* (St Louis: Concordia, 1958), x.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 101,” in *Selected Psalms*, ed. Jaroslov Pelikan, vo. 13, *Luther’s Works* (St Louis: Concordia, 1958), 198. Luther’s “Commentary on Psalm 101” will also be a valuable source of material on the topic of two-realm theology.

<sup>16</sup> Uwe Siemon-Netto, *The Fabricated Luther: Refuting Nazi Connections and Other Modern Myths*, 2nd ed., (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 84–85

<sup>17</sup> Siemon-Netto, *Fabricated Luther*, 85.

The Gospel fully reveals God to us in the light of Jesus Christ who forgives all our sins, declares us to be holy and righteous *coram Deo*, perfectly reconciled and at one with God, living in harmony with God because of the peace of Christ. In the left-hand realm, God remains not fully revealed, or known only in a general way through natural or general revelation. The natural knowledge of God lets us know there is a god, but not who the true God is. We rely on God's revealed knowledge spoken through the inspired Word, and revealed ultimately in Jesus Christ, the word made flesh.

Whereas the Gospel rules the day in the right-hand realm, the Law is the primary concern in the earthly realm, where the focus is on law as it keeps order. In the right-hand realm man can be saved by grace alone, but in the left-hand realm an honest day's work is rewarded with an honest day's pay. In the left hand, crime is punished, and the powers that be (Rom. 13) protect relative peace. Justice is not perfect. Wages are not perfectly administered. Peace is not kept entirely. Fallen humans are not capable of perfect justice and peace in the left-hand realm.

In the left-hand realm, humans continually work toward peace to gain limited, imperfect peace, whereas we have perfect peace right now in Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:7). To keep the peace on the left, the powers that be use the sword (Rom. 13:4). On the left, it is the responsibility of the agents of government to preserve and protect creation, preventing the harmful destruction of animate and inanimate creation. On the right, Christians have a sure and certain hope that all creation will be redeemed and restored to the glory God intended (Rom. 8:18–25).

Justice remains the focus in the left (*coram mundo*), where God governs our human relationships through structures and institutions, beginning with the most basic household rule within the family, and then expanding to other ruling structures as the family needs assistance. Christians recognize that the left-hand realm is God's realm, and the proper interests of the home

and state are God's interests, although those who hold offices in the left-hand realm do not always know or practice God's interest.

Mercy remains the focus in the right-hand realm as God works through his Church, the body of Christ, to reveal and deliver God's grace and mercy. The church is made of fallen sinners who are declared to be saints, glorious, without spot or wrinkle, washed in the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5). Robert Benne has helped me express this paradoxical reality.

In the paradox tradition Christians live in two realities at the same time. Each reality is under the governance of God but in sharply different ways....God's aim in both modes of rule is the same, to overcome evil and recall the disobedient creation to himself, but God uses very different means in each 'kingdom.'<sup>18</sup>

Joel Biermann, in his lecture on the topic of the two realms, highlighted the purpose of redemption and restoration, as he emphasized that it is God's purpose in Christ to redeem and restore. Noting that Christ's purpose is the restoration of all creation, that changes how we see the value and purpose of vocational service in the world. I recall Biermann emphasizing that too often salvation is pictured as a rescue operation; God swoops in like a Coast Guard helicopter to rescue people from a ship. The ship sinks, but we pluck a few people out. That is how the church too often is pictured, but that is wrong. It is not enough to yank a few people out of a sinking ship. Christ came to restore the whole creation and Christ will put the whole thing back together again (Rom. 8). That puts a new perspective on the world and our activity in it. When I get my tail saved, I am put back into the world to restore and redeem the whole thing.<sup>19</sup>

As Christ saved us from sin and death, He has saved us for fulfilling vocational service in this world. We maintain our sure, revealed hope in heaven even as we display godly value of

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Benne, *The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 82.

<sup>19</sup> Joel Biermann, "Christian Vocation: Giving God His Due and Caesar Too," (lecture, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cary, NC, August 2-4, 2010). This is my paraphrase of his comment from the lecture.

faithful service on earth. Biermann’s lecture helped me grasp and emphasize the importance of this balance. In addition to his lectures on the two realms, I also benefitted from the insights he shared on the two kinds of righteousness as noted in the next section.

### Two Kinds of Righteousness

As I explored the blessings and burdens that NGR encounter in their unique and challenging vocational service, it was important to see the vocational duties from the theological perspective of two realms as well as the two kinds of righteousness. A seminal text on the two kinds of righteousness is Martin Luther’s introduction to his commentary on Galatians, which is titled “The Argument of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians.” Luther identified Paul’s argument as this: “Paul wants to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, the forgiveness of sins or Christian righteousness, so that we may have a perfect knowledge and know the difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness.”<sup>20</sup> Luther defined the other kinds of righteousness as political, ceremonial, and the righteousness of the Law. “Over and above all these,” he continued, “there is the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, which is to be distinguished most carefully from all the others.”<sup>21</sup> Luther distinguishes this “Christian righteousness,” by noting that the other forms of righteousness have their source in civic rulers, church authorities, and even the revealed law of God. Furthermore, these kinds of righteousness can be achieved by human works. But the Christian righteousness is “of faith, which God imputes to us through Christ without works,” and further it is “passive righteousness” unlike the

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<sup>20</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1–4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 26, *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 4. The other kinds of righteousness were listed above. Luther often contrasted the spiritual and political righteousness. Philip Watson provided this quote from Luther’s commentary on Galatians, as an example of Luther contrasting spiritual and political righteousness. “There is a double forum, theological and political. The righteousness that justifies before Pilate, does not forthwith justify before God.” Cited from Philip S. Watson, *Let God be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948), 141.

<sup>21</sup> *LW* 26:4.

other three that are “active.”<sup>22</sup> It is important for theological precision, to make a distinction between “Christian righteousness,” and the other forms of righteousness, as Luther emphasized in this next passage.

This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits. Christian righteousness applies to the new man, and the righteousness of the law applies to the old man, who is born of flesh and blood.<sup>23</sup>

Following Luther’s cue, the proper time to apply “passive” righteousness is when the spiritual use of the law has done its work of troubling the conscience. The conscience, troubled by sin and sensing the condemnation for sinful acts done or left undone, needs to be comforted by the absolution that comes from the “passive” righteousness. Proper pastoral care applies the passive righteousness to the troubled conscience after the law has exposed sin and convicted of guilt.<sup>24</sup>

With the gift of passive righteousness from Christ, the sinful heart and conscience are convicted of righteousness, but not from guilt but grace. It is the righteousness, which is imputed to the Christian by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Luther went on to describe the impact of the Gospel: knowing, trusting, and believing that Christ is one’s righteousness leads to a fruitful and productive life, as Luther emphasized in this refreshing image:

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<sup>22</sup> *LW* 26:4.

<sup>23</sup> *LW* 26:7.

<sup>24</sup> As an example of pastoral care, note Luther’s commentary on Gal. 2:14, cited from *LW* 26:117. “The knowledge of this topic, the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, is necessary to the highest degree; for it contains a summary of all Christian doctrine. ... Therefore when the Law terrifies you, sin accuses you, and your conscience is crushed, you must say: ‘There is a time to die and a time to live (Eccl. 3:2). There is a time to hear the Law and a time to despise the Law. There is a time to hear the Gospel and a time to know nothing about the Gospel. Let the Law go away now, and let the Gospel come; for this is the time to hear the Gospel, not the Law. But you have nothing good; in fact, you have sinned gravely. Granted. Nevertheless, I have the forgiveness of sins through Christ, on whose account all my sins are forgiven.’ But in a matter apart from conscience, when outward duties must be performed, then, whether you are a preacher, a magistrate, a husband, a teacher, a pupil, etc., this is no time to listen to the Gospel. You must listen to the Law and follow your vocation. Thus the Law remains in the valley with the ass, and the Gospel remains with Isaac on the mountain.

When I have this righteousness within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises. If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the saddened, I administer the sacraments. If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty. If I am a magistrate, I perform the office which I have received by divine command. If I am a servant, I faithfully tend to my master's affairs. In short, whoever knows for sure that Christ is his righteousness not only cheerfully and gladly works in his calling but also submits himself for the sake of love to magistrates, also to their wicked laws, and to everything else in this present life—even, if need be, to burden and danger. For he knows that God wants this and that this obedience pleases Him.<sup>25</sup>

We certainly need NGR who, as Luther put it, “cheerfully and gladly” work in their calling, and who submit themselves for the sake of love to their superior officers, “even, if need be, to burden and danger.” The righteousness before God frees the conscience from guilt, as the blood of Christ cleanses and the righteousness of Christ declares us holy, set free to serve in peace. The two-kinds-of-righteousness doctrine frees us to serve well, as Placher stated so well as follows:

Because Christians trust that they have been justified by grace, they need not worry about justifying themselves. That frees them to act boldly, to take chances, to risk the foolishness of love, in the confidence that God will sustain them—to ‘sin boldly,’ as Luther put it, knowing ‘that by the riches of God’s glory we have come to know that Lamb that takes away the sins of the world.’<sup>26</sup>

The first kind of righteousness promotes the second, namely vocational righteousness.

The righteousness of God through faith in Christ is gift. The righteousness we are called to do in our vocation is work. The righteousness done for others (*coram mundo*) is all that follows God’s design for the interaction of humans with fellow humans and all of creation (Gen. 1:26–30). When things work, as God designed them, that is righteousness. When people do good work, as God defines good through Word and nature, when we act in ways that are wise, trustworthy, right, beautiful, pure, and pursue activities of value to others, as God assigns that

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<sup>25</sup> LW 26:11–12.

<sup>26</sup> William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 214.

value (e.g., cf. Ps. 19:7–11), that is righteousness. Habits formed by the practice of such virtues are useful to others (*coram mundo*), and the cliché, “practice makes perfect,” which is heresy *coram Deo*, is very helpful for habits we need to form in daily acts of righteousness.<sup>27</sup> Declared righteous by God’s gift in Christ, the Christian will be active in righteousness done for others. This is how God’s kingdom works.

Dear friends, the kingdom of God—and we are that kingdom—does not consist in talk or words [I Cor. 4:20], but in activity, in deeds, in works and exercises. God does not want hearers and repeaters of words [Jas. 1:22], but followers and doers, and this occurs in faith through love. For a faith without love is not enough—rather it is not faith at all, but a counterfeit of faith.<sup>28</sup>

Do NGR understand how God’s kingdom works? Do they rest in Christ alone, for the peace and forgiveness needed due to sin? Do they see life as praise and thanks to God for salvation? Is that what fuels them to be active in their vocational duties as warriors? It is more likely that many Western Christians, confused by the empty wisdom of the world, have a hard time knowing or imagining how God’s kingdom comes, and how God’s will is done. I am indebted to Martin Luther for the healthy Christian emphasis found in the two kinds of righteousness.

#### Prayer and Vocation: Ora et Labora

God created all things and holds all things together. He does this through fathers and mothers, farmers and factory workers, doctors and nurses, teachers and lawyers, judges and elected officials, police and warrior. In his commentary on Ps. 147, Martin Luther emphasized the gifts that God provides, and how God expects us to “lend” ourselves to God as his “mask”

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<sup>27</sup> “Practice makes perfect” is a paraphrase or summary of Aristotle, from *The Nichomachean Ethics*: “Moral virtue, like the arts, is acquired by repetition of the corresponding acts” Cited from Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, ed. Lesly Brown, Book II, Moral Virtue, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23, Kindle. Aristotle’s ethics recognized the danger of excess and the problem of deficiency, the positive practice of the balanced view is “sober judgment” (Rom. 12:3). For example, excessive courage is recklessness, and deficient courage is cowardess.

<sup>28</sup> LW 51:71.

through the hard work we do. Our work is the child's play under which God works, as Luther expressed it in his commentary on Ps. 147:

What else is all our work to God—whether in the fields, in the garden, in the city, in the house, in war, or in government—but just such a child's performance, by which He wants to give His gifts in the fields, at home, and everywhere else? These are the masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things.<sup>29</sup>

God calls and equips us to carry out our work with faith and trust in God, doing the work that is within our calling, while calling upon God with prayer that expresses faith and trust in God. We need to carry on our vocational tasks with prayer, counting on God's blessing, while we maintain the balance of *ora et labora* (pray and work). This balance of work and prayer is a theme Luther often repeated in his lectures on the Psalms. "God gives all good gifts; but you must lend a hand and take the bull by the horns; that is, you must work and thus give God good cause and a mask."<sup>30</sup> We may need to work hard for the money that allows us to buy what we need, but at the beginning and end of the day, "In God We Trust," needs to reflect how we live. We work while faith trusts in God for the work to be fruitful, as Luther encouraged:

Now all this is said to refute those who tempt God, want to do nothing, and think God will give them whatever they desire without any work or diligence on their part. There is a fitting proverb for such people: 'Sit still, and have faith; wait for the fried chicken to fly into your mouth.' God wants no lazy idlers. Men should work diligently and faithfully, each according to his calling and profession, and then God will give blessing and success. ... But here again the right balance is this: 'Don't be lazy or idle, but don't rely solely on your own work and doings. Get busy and work, and yet expect everything from God alone.' That is to say: Everything must be done in faith and trust in God.<sup>31</sup>

A powerful example of doing everything with "faith and trust in God" played out in American movie theaters in 2016. The movie was called "The Finest Hours," and it was based on the true

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<sup>29</sup> *LW* 14:114. In this quotation, "masks of God" is given this explanation in the footnote: "A common term in Luther for the means employed by God to perform His work and to make Himself known while remaining hidden."

<sup>30</sup> "Psalm 147," in *LW* 14:115.

<sup>31</sup> "Psalm 147," in *LW* 14:115.

story captured by the book, *The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue*. Of particular interest to me was the detailed account of faith from Bernie Webber, the Coastguardsman who piloted the rescue boat. This profession of faith is not obvious from the movie but becomes clearer in the details found in the book. As the movie depicted, Bernie and his crew sang as they headed out into the midst of a storm-tossed sea. The movie showed that well enough. But if they sang sea chanteys, as the movie depicted, that was not all they sang. Webber remembered singing the hymn, "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me." It was a natural choice. As a pastor's son, Bernie Webber grew up singing Christian hymns. He and his crew sang that hymn to solidify their courage in the face of the real fear of death. Also of particular interest from the book are the themes related to vocation, and trust in God's providence. Sometime after the famous rescue, Bernie Webber and his crew performed another sea rescue. They came across a fisherman's boat that was capsized, and rescued her captain, Joe Stapleton. "Webber believed in his heart that he was not the true hero behind this rescue. His boat was. Who could explain how the unattended 'old thirty-six' managed to lead the crew to Joe Stapleton's exact location? Bernie felt the hand of God playing a role once again."<sup>32</sup> We all have challenges and hardships in our callings that are difficult—even humanly impossible—for us to navigate through on our own. We must trust God to provide us with partners and colleagues, family and friends, and the help which God alone can give. All of this drives us to pray.

We all have our stories of prayers offered, heard, and answered. I can share a few from my own life, but for the purposes of this chapter, I borrow a prayer from a World War II Veteran whom I served while a pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church, in Cary, NC. The Veteran's

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Tougias and Casey Sherman, *The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 168.

name is Bert Price. Mr. Price went to be with the Lord in 2011, with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. During a flight mission in World War II, Bert's plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire, and Bert was forced to jump from his B-24 Liberator. After his parachute opened, he offered a brief yet powerful prayer: "Thank you, God. I'm yours."

Some background to this prayer may be helpful. It was Bert's twelfth mission over Austria, in 1944, when his B24 Liberator was hit and began to hurtle toward the ground. The order was given to the crew to parachute from the plane. Bert hesitated as he approached the door because he knew that his parachute was damp and moldy from his last mission. He feared that the pack would not open, and he would fall to the ground like a rock. When the parachute opened, he said a quick prayer, "Thank you, God. I'm yours." After landing in enemy territory, Bert spent roughly one year as a prisoner of war. As he waited for his captivity to end, Bert rested in the shelter God gave in answer to prayer. Luther wrote about the shelter prayer gives in this reflection on the Lord's Prayer in the Large Catechism.

This we must know, that all our safety and protection consists in prayer alone. For we are far too weak against the devil and all his might and forces arrayed against us, trying to trample us underfoot. Therefore we must keep this in mind and grasp the weapons with which Christians are to arm themselves for resisting the devil.<sup>33</sup>

The shelter that Luther envisions—calling upon God in all times of trouble—is nothing less than martial arts for Christians as they build the spiritual muscle and moral habit of balancing trust in God and laboring at our work. This is the *ora et labora* of vocation. There is an old pastoral saying: "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." Faithful vocational service calls for prayerful trust in God who hides behind our vocation (mask for God), while we work as if God were not present at all. We are masks for God, and

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<sup>33</sup> LC III.30 in Kolb and Wengert, 444.

unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stands guard in vain (Ps. 127:1). Trusting that God gives us meaningful service to perform, for the good of others, invests our vocation duty with a sense of dignity and responsibility. We are doing God's work as God himself works behind all our efforts, masked by our vocation. We are God's agents conducting God's work with God's ways and mean, with the time, talent, and resources God loans to us.

This vocational understanding of God giving us work, defining the purpose of work, and concealed underneath the cover of our work should cause us to approach work with a sense of reverence and prayer. This prayer thanks God for those routine moments of vocational service when we are receiving God's gifts and asking for God's grace to make us strong to do his will. Our routine prayers will be given at every meal and offered before we start our day. There are also prayers which we offer in extreme moments (*in extremis*), such as the prayer prayed by Berth Price, the WWII B24 Navigator. Praying for God's provision does not mean we put God to the test and expect God to provide what we need apart from our work. We do not wait for fried chicken to fly into our mouths. We pray with gratitude to God, and with trust in God who works behind the scenes, behind the covering of our calling (vocation).

#### Cross and Suffering in Vocation

Cross and suffering (Matt. 5:10–11; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) provide a theological lens to appreciate the suffering that NGR endure. Passages such as Rom. 5:1–5; Rom. 8:28–36; Eph. 6:10–20, are crucial for their emphasis on the cross and suffering in Christian vocation, and the spiritual dimension of vocational struggles; NGR will face struggles and burdens as they are tugged between God and the devil (as Luther put it). If diabolical agents inflict hardships to damage and destroy, God repurposes those destructive hardships. As God involves himself in our suffering, He limits the effects of evil and works out the suffering for our good.

We need the special revelation that Scripture gives, explaining how God uses cross and suffering for our good. We do not see it from the powers of natural observation. It is not always clear that God cares or provides in vocational struggles. The NGR must execute duties at times when it seems as though God is not present in the daily labor. As the old Latin slogan expressed it, there are times when it seems *etsi Deus non daretur* (as if God is not a given, or as if God is not there). Luther expressed that troubling sensation in his commentary on Ps. 127.

You have just heard that those in authority should be watchful and diligent, and perform all the duties of their office ... In general, they should proceed as if there were no God and they had to rescue themselves and manage their own affairs; just as the head of a household is supposed to work as if he were trying to sustain himself by his own labors.<sup>34</sup>

In this commentary, Luther urges hard work as the companion for faith in God. While we serve under God who parted the Red Sea, and raised the dead, we go about our work as if our work alone will bring the results we need, while faith still trusts in God to provide. The cross that we carry may give us the sense that God is not graciously and powerfully ruling over us and providing for our needs. It may seem as though God has no interest or abandoned us in extreme conditions, yet we may serve *etsi Deus non daretur*. When Christians carry out their vocational service with faith in God and love for their neighbor, vocational service becomes a form of service to God as well as one's neighbor, as made clear. That type of service is true fear of God:

In Hebrew 'to fear God' really means 'to serve God.' The fear of God is the service of God. Now we cannot serve Him bodily and visibly here on earth, for He is invisible. We can serve Him spiritually by honoring, teaching, and confessing His Word and by living according to it. Of course, crosses, suffering, and affliction from the devil, the world, and our flesh are the results.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Martin Luther, "Exposition of Psalm 127, for the Christians at Riga in Lovinia," in *The Christian in Society II*, eds. Walther Brandt and Helmut Lehman, vol. 45, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 331.

<sup>35</sup> "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14:57.

Luther goes on to describe these crosses further. These crosses may become so prevalent that only the eyes of faith can recognize God's steadfast love that endures forever (Ps. 118:4). The Christian already lives in the gift of eternal life, confident of the steadfast love that endures forever. Not every cross comes in the form of naked oppression and lethal threat to life for one's Christian confession. Christians, called to honor God in all they say and do, will suffer when they uphold God's created order against the mad claims of the world. The cross and the persecution Christians suffer are not always externally inflicted, they can simply be "heartache from their own flesh," as Luther understood:

As these would now honor God's Word and serve Him, they must truly suffer and endure mockery, shame, hurt, hatred, envy, defamation, fire, sword, death, and every other calamity from the other three groups, besides much evil, dangerous, and wicked treachery from the devil and his angels, and sin, unrest, and heartache from their own flesh. Paul says (2 Tim. 3:12): 'All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.' And Christ Himself says (Luke 9:23): 'If any man would come after Me, let him take up his cross.' In Acts 14:22 we read: 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.' And the wise man tells us (Ecclus. 2:1) [sic]: 'My child, if you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself to be tried.'<sup>36</sup>

These trials, which Luther listed, may pile up to the point that there seems to be no benefit in being a Christian. As Christ brought salvation for the world, by taking away the sins of the world through his death on the cross, so Christians bear the cross for the good of others. Paul Althaus emphasized this purpose for the cross Christians carry, in this quotation from Luther: "You should bear your cross not to save yourself but so that your neighbor might benefit by seeing it and by being encouraged to bear his cross."<sup>37</sup>

One of the crosses Christians bear in vocation may be the sense of "frustration" over how the wicked prosper (Ps. 73:3; Jer. 12:1). In his commentary on Ps. 118, Luther contrasted

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<sup>36</sup> "Psalm 118," in *LW* 14:58. Not certain which book Luther cited as Ecclus, but it is not Eccles. 2:1.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Translated by Robert C. Schultz, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 308.

“genuine Christians” with “the ungodly in the three groups,” whom Luther said, “seem to be the very children of God.”<sup>38</sup> The “three groups” refer to three broad areas of vocational service, “the spiritual government or ministry” (clergy and supervising clergy), “the temporal rulers,” and “the common people.”<sup>39</sup> This cross or frustration over watching the wicked prosper, pushes us to not rely on outward appearances, but trust in God. Luther encouraged Christians to serve in their vocation, and count on God’s steadfast love which endures forever (Ps. 118:4), despite the apparent power and prosperity enjoyed by the ungodly who serve as clergy, political rulers, and general citizenry. Luther understands how easy it would be to become discouraged, and even despise all clergy, politicians, and the hoi polloi as being an abomination. Luther emphasized even more how vocational stations or offices remain God’s good creation, despite the wicked who abuse these offices. “Yet the order is nonetheless good and holy and a divine gift, not to be condemned because of its abuse.”<sup>40</sup> With fear and love for God, we count on the Lord to work his creative, life-creating, and life-preserving love through the three general offices in this world (clergy, political, and common class) despite the wicked office holders.<sup>41</sup>

Vocational cross and hardships can be used by God to set our minds on higher things as we crucify sinful and selfish motives for service (Col. 3:1–4). Luther emphasized how important it is to keep the ultimate reward of eternal life as our encouragement and motivation for our daily mundane duties. It is a very human desire to crave tangible benefits that we can see, progress we

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<sup>38</sup> “Psalm 118,” in *LW* 14:58.

<sup>39</sup> “Psalm 118,” in *LW* 14:56.

<sup>40</sup> “Psalm 118,” in *LW* 14:56.

<sup>41</sup> “Psalm 118,” in *LW* 14:57. “For there are still to be found pious, God-fearing, faithful bishops, ministers, preachers, and pastors. We also find pious and godly princes, lords, nobles, aldermen, and judges, and many pious and God-fearing artisans, farmers, servants, and maids, though they are rare. Because of them God preserves the three groups listed above and bestows so much good on them. Were it not for these, the world would pass away this very hour, as Sodom and Gomorrah did.”

can chart, and investments that pay off. We may not always realize these. While we serve out our vocational duties—especially when we suffer overt or subtle persecution for Christian convictions—the ultimate reward of eternal life is our primary motive. The unseen eternal glories that far outweigh our sufferings will empower us to endure extreme burdens and mundane annoyances that come with vocation (2 Cor. 4:16–18). This is especially important when outward appearances are deceiving, and the eternal glories are not evident. When that is the case, faith trusts that God has blessed his “small band.”

Thus the favor bestowed by God on this little group is completely hidden from the world and appears to be nothing but eternal wrath, punishment, and torment from God Himself. By contrast, the ungodly in the three groups seem to be the very children of God, because they are so fully and richly endowed with the visible, temporal, and manifest blessings of God. . . . The flesh would rather have evident, temporal consolation and help, and be above anxiety and need. But it must not and cannot be otherwise. There is no other way to life eternal than this narrow path, which so few come upon (Matt. 7:14) and only this small band finds. In short, the blessing of the three groups is this temporal life and being; the blessing of the small group is everlasting life. Therein lies the real difference.<sup>42</sup>

Many times, when all that is seen are masks behind which God hides as God provides, God’s grace and power will not be evident to human observation. God hides behind the mask of our neighbors whom He called to serve and to provide all that we need in life. God provides for our needs through the masks of God, making himself known although hidden, giving gifts, and providing for all our needs, through the vocational service of our neighbors.

When cross and suffering make vocational duties a burden, NGR need to fix their eyes on Jesus (Heb. 13:1–3), receive his grace for their inability and failure, and then imitate his example. As Christ’s grace refreshes us, we are freed to imitate the attitudes and actions of the Son of God who humbled himself to set us free from sin and death and restore life and salvation

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<sup>42</sup> “Psalm 118,” in *LW* 14:58. The “three groups” are clergy, politicians, and common citizens.

(Phil. 2:1–11). In “The Freedom of a Christian,” Martin Luther emphasized that God’s way of saving us through Christ (Phil. 2:1–11) has given us the motivation and strength needed to faithfully perform vocational duties. Christ our Savior is also a model to follow. The sinful nature still rebels against God. That must not be ignored, nor should we forget that all good works—prepared by God (Eph. 2:10) and empowered by Christ at work in Christians (Gal. 2:20)—are to be done as humble service in imitation of Christ. As Christ motivates and empowers our loving deeds of service and sacrifice for others, Christ also models for us the form our vocational service will follow as Luther reminds us.

Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval.<sup>43</sup>

God calls us to look out for the interests of others, through vocational service, because we are called to reflect His sacrificial giving spirit in our care for creation. It is through our service for others that we can flourish as humans, ruling over creation and subduing it with the royal attitude of service which Christ displayed for us (Phil. 2:5–11). In an amazing summary statement near the end of “The Freedom of a Christian,” Luther tied together the essence of the Christian life when it is lived with faith in God and love for the neighbor. A Christian is moved by both gospel and law, that is the Christian life as Luther emphasized here:

We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself to his neighbor.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian,” in *Career of the Reformer I*, eds. Harold Grimm and Helmut Lehmann, vol. 31, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 366.

<sup>44</sup> “Freedom of a Christian,” in *LW* 31:371.

Since Christians live in Christ through faith—confident of forgiveness, life, salvation, and the resurrection of the body and life everlasting—they also live in their neighbors through love. The importance of living “in his neighbor through love” is something chaplains expressed in their care for marines during World War II. Toys for Tots (a well-known Christmas toy drive run by marines) was started by chaplains to give off-duty marines something healthy to do; helping them take their minds off boredom and homesickness by living for the neighbors. The gift drive became an opportunity to live in their neighbors through love, as documented here by Dorsett.

Always urging the men and women to get their eyes off themselves, chaplains organized them on liberty to go into nearby cities and towns to serve local civilians. The idea for the Marine Corps ‘Toys for Tots’ program, where the marines acquire secondhand toys and then distribute them to needy children at Christmas, began in World War II with chaplains taking troops to San Diego or Los Angeles to bless disadvantaged children.<sup>45</sup>

In small ways and large, for more serious matters and the more whimsical toy drives (such as Dorsett chronicled), we are called to serve a cause greater than self. The “Toys for Tots” program gives a concrete example to which NGR can relate as they serve others.

#### Example of Joseph: Faithful Service in Home, Church, and State

For helpful insights on vocation, and wisdom applied to Christian vocations within home, church, and civil realm, I have found the Life of Joseph (specifically Gen. 39–41) to be helpful, especially when using Martin Luther’s lectures on Genesis as a vocational guide. Engaging with Luther’s lectures on Genesis, which he delivered near the end of his life, is a bit like reading the transcripts of an interview or conversation. As I analyzed his lectures for my MAP, I looked for themes and sub-themes that may be useful to address the vocational challenges which NGR face. Luther offers plenty of themes and insights that apply to NGR.

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<sup>45</sup> Dorsett, *Serving God and Country*, 45.

Luther's lectures on Genesis highlighted helpful insights on vocation that emphasize the importance of the offices in our various vocations, the need for hard work and prayer in vocation, as well as attitudes helpful for approaching work, and a central emphasis on Word-created faith and hope which equip for adversity and difficulty. Some of those insights from the life of Joseph and the comments from Luther have been referenced in my Bible study material. Even when not cited, his lectures informed my approach to teaching and encouraging NGR as they faithfully and punctually execute their vocational duties.

Serving a cause greater than self often fits the sacrifices made for the mission. When the sacrifice is great, we are reminded that we serve a cause greater than self—the family back home, our community and country. The cause greater than self also reminds us that God does something through our service that far surpasses what we can see, hope, or imagine. In that sense, what makes this cause “greater than self” is the fact that we are masks behind whom God hides and works to achieve greater things than we know. Joseph is a prime example of that. In the following passage, Luther finds in Joseph's suffering an embodiment of what Christ taught in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.” This is the fruit that Luther found in Joseph.

Learn, therefore, to trust, believe, wait, and endure, and to depend on the Word and say with St. Paul: ‘The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us’ (Rom. 8:18). It is too little. ‘For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison’ (2 Cor. 4:17).

Joseph was undoubtedly angry with himself, and said when he had escaped without harm: ‘Why did I murmur in the prison? I see that God in His very great mercy stood by me when I was sad and murmured. I should rather have exulted, laughed, and been joyful in tribulation.’<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 38–44*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter Hansen, vol. 7, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 136–37.

Luther is certainly not stating that we must not show authentic emotional response to hardships and suffering, but he calls us not to live by bread alone but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God. In faith and hope we trust God to provide for us as we hope for a greater purpose God has in store for us. We are confident that God who is with us and for us in Christ Jesus also cares for the little details. The hairs on our head are numbered. Overcome by sorrow, God gathers our tears in a vial. When sleepless nights come, God tracks our tossing and turning.

When the vocational challenges make us feel as though all we have done is meaningless (cf. the following section on Ecclesiastes), we trust that God has a greater design in mind, a grander purpose, and a mysterious way of forcing our troubles to bring even greater weight of glory. It can certainly be hard to see that at times, but Luther would encourage us to stay grounded by the Word of God, baptism, absolution, and the Holy Supper:

Therefore there is need of wisdom and doctrine exceeding the whole grasp of human reason, by which I am able to say: ‘I have been baptized; I have been absolved from my sins; I have eaten the body and drunk the blood of Christ; I have the most certain Word of God; He will not lie and not deceive me, however much all things seem to be carried in a contrary direction.’<sup>47</sup>

When the difficulty inherent in our work, or ingratitude from those whom we serve makes our vocational service draining and burdensome, then our motive for serving needs to be tied to our identity as children of our heavenly Father. His steadfast love and faithfulness keep us going.<sup>48</sup>

In his commentary on the life of Joseph, there is a lot to be learned from Luther on vocation, as it relates to service in civil offices, seeing the state as an ordinance of God, practicing humility and fear before God. Since the offices we hold in the home, church, and state are divine ordinances, we are called to approach our vocational service in prayer and faithful

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<sup>47</sup> Luther, *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 31–37*, eds. Jaroslov Pelikan and Hilton Oswald, vol. 6, *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 361.

<sup>48</sup> *LW* 7:97.

trust in God. This is all part of how we practice being “still before God” (Ps. 37:7), counting on God to lead us; God directs us, we do not direct God.

It is challenging to follow God since his paths and ways of operating in our earthly vocations are often hidden from us, and mysterious. Especially when we have reached the limit of our strength, human wisdom, and resources we can feel the cross which Christ told us we would carry. Although it does not come naturally to us, Christ calls us, as his disciples, to lose our life to gain life. In that sense, Joseph served as both a prophetic image—ultimately fulfilled in Christ—and an encouragement for us. Josephs shows how life is lost and gained. Joseph is an example of those who love God and find God working “all things together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Throughout the challenges we endure, and the humbling experience of running up against our limits again and again, we learn to trust that God who created all things *ex nihilo* is not frustrated by our emptiness and failures.

‘He commanded and they were created,’ says Ps.148:5. It is always God’s wonderful practice to make all things out of nothing and again to reduce all things to nothing. And one should accustom oneself to this practice and cling to the Word, in order that those things which disturb and hinder faith, no matter how great and splendid they are, may be removed from our eyes.<sup>49</sup>

As we continue to live by faith and not by sight, growth in vocational virtue will help NGR trust God who still creates good out of nothing.

#### Luther’s Guidance on Military Vocation

When chaplains need to equip NGR with a healthy appreciation for the purpose of the warrior’s office, and the attitude with which the warrior should execute his duty, it helps to review Luther’s catalogue of Scripture and the pastoral care he offers in his treatise, “Whether

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<sup>49</sup> LW 7:105.

Soldiers Too Can Be Saved.”<sup>50</sup> Luther emphasized that he wrote this advice for Christian who stand on God’s Word for all matters of conscience and faith. Then he emphasized that God’s Word and command established the office of the soldier—a term I understand to cover all military service. Because God established the soldier’s office, Christians can be confident that military service is an instrument God uses to punish those who do wrong and keep the peace.

For the very fact that the sword has been instituted by God to punish the evil, protect the good, and preserve peace [Rom. 13:1–4; I Pet. 2:13–14] is powerful and sufficient proof that war and killing along with all the things that accompany wartime and martial law have been instituted by God. What else is war but the punishment of wrong and evil? Why does anyone go to war, except because he desires peace and obedience?<sup>51</sup>

Because God instituted military means to punish evil, protect the good, and preserve peace, Christians who serve as NGR can “obediently serve God” in their military vocation, as Luther notes in this quote with an allusion to Luke 3:14.

St. John the Baptist instructed soldiers as a Christian teacher and in a Christian manner permitted them to remain soldiers, enjoining them not only to use their position to abuse people or to treat them unjustly, and to be satisfied with their wages. Therefore, even under the New Testament the sword is established by God’s word and commandment, and those who use it properly and fight obediently serve God and are obedient to his word.<sup>52</sup>

Luther insisted that the soldier, despite the horrible means used to execute his vocational duty, performs an act of love in the use of martial arts. Luther compared the warrior’s work to surgical amputation, which is used as a last resort to save human life. With this comparison Luther declares the warrior’s work to be a harsh, but necessary, form of love.

[W]hen I think of a soldier fulfilling his office by punishing the wicked, killing the wicked, and creating so much misery, it seems an un-Christian work completely contrary to Christian love. But when I think of how it protects the good and keeps and

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<sup>50</sup> Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society III*, eds. Robert Schultz and Helmut Lehmann, vol. 46, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1967).

<sup>51</sup> *LW* 46:95.

<sup>52</sup> *LW* 46:98.

preserves wife and child, house and farm, property, and honor and peace, then I see how precious and godly this work is; and I observe that it amputates a leg or a hand, so that the whole body may not perish. For if the sword were not on guard to preserve peace, everything in the world would be ruined because of lack of peace.<sup>53</sup>

The doctor amputates a limb. It looks horrible, and would be senseless and criminal, if not done to save life. Luther was not cavalier in the use of this analogy, comparing warrior's service to the surgeon's work of amputation. Luther certainly lived closer to the brutal reality of war than most American citizens ever will, and he witnessed the suffering brought on by the plague of war.

What men write about war, saying that it is a great plague, is all true. But they should also consider how great the plague is that war prevents. If people were good and wanted to keep peace, war would be the greatest plague on earth. But what are you going to do about the fact that people will not keep the peace, but rob, steal, kill, outrage women and children, and take away property and honor? The small lack of peace called war or sword must set a limit to this universal, worldwide lack of peace which would destroy everyone.<sup>54</sup>

Luther had a realistic assessment of human nature in this fallen world, and the crimes that are the result of sin. In this fallen world God keeps us alive through the work of surgeons and soldiers. "For the hand that wields this sword and kills with it is not man's hand but God's; and it is not man, but God, who hangs, tortures, beheads, kills, and fights."<sup>55</sup> This last quote from Luther is a crisp distillation of the doctrine Scripture teaches from passages such as Psa. 127:1, Gal. 2:20, and Rom. 13:1–7. When warriors use lethal arts in war, they are doing God's work. Misuse and war crimes happen. That is the fault of the person executing the duties of the office. It is not the fault of the office. NGR need to be certain of the godly work they perform in the execution of just war. "For what is just war but the punishment of evildoers and the maintenance of peace?"<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *LW* 46:96.

<sup>54</sup> *LW* 46:96.

<sup>55</sup> *LW* 46:96.

<sup>56</sup> *LW* 46:98.

## Luther: On Monastic Vows

Wingren and Biermann both prompted me to take a second look at Luther's *De Votiis Monasticis* (On Monastic Vows), which Luther wrote in 1521.<sup>57</sup> In this book, Luther emphasized that all Christians live by the same faith in Christ produced by the same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit governs and guides Christians, even though the external appearance of our life and works may be different. What God does in the life of one of his saints need not be duplicated in the life of another. God's paths are hidden. Humans will struggle to accurately map God's actions in the past (unless revealed in Scripture) or predict where God's future footsteps will lead. The context in which Christians serve differs. The people, whom God calls Christians to serve, are unique. The needs of those we serve are unique. Context, people, and needs of others all matter as it relates to vocational duty. In the following selection, Luther emphasized the flexibility for the execution of vocational duties, depending upon local circumstances, while he emphasized that vocational duties are carried out by "the same Spirit and by the same faith."

In God's sight this principle stands firm and unshakable: all saints live by the same Spirit and by the same faith, and are guided and governed by the same Spirit and the same faith, but they all do different external works. For God does not work through them at the same time, in the same place, in the same work, or in the sight of the same people. He moves at different times, in different places, in different works, and in different people, but he always rules them by the same Spirit and in the same faith. So that his ways may be hidden and his footsteps unrecognizable [Ps. 77:19], he provides each one with other works in other times and places, just as he did with other saints. And each one is compelled by the work, place, time, persons, and circumstances, previously unknown to him, to follow God as he rules and guides him.<sup>58</sup>

As each Christian executes his or her unique vocational duties Luther offered guidance from Ps. 62. He emphasized hope in God, trust in God, and waiting for God's faithful action and

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<sup>57</sup> Martin Luther, "The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows," in *The Christian in Society I*, eds. James Atkinson and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 44, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).

<sup>58</sup> *LW* 44:269.

providence, in good times and in trying times. Luther noted that twenty times the psalmist repeated expression of hope, trust, and waiting upon God in Ps. 62:1–12. Contrary to a trust in what we can do ourselves, Luther emphasized trust in God, as seen in this selection:

For we see in those followers of the saints nothing but a tumultuous confusion of works which they have seen in the saints. Day and night they wear themselves out with these works. But they are never still in the presence of God or subject to him in faith. For that reason they are troubled and their hearts are unsteady, for the heart cannot find peace by doing good works. Their confidence is in the works they strive to do following the example of the saints. They believe that by doing these works they can attain what the saints attained by faith alone.

The psalmist, however, cries out against their headlong blindness. They rush in to imitate the work of some great man or other. They rather ought to learn to keep silence before God and to have faith in God. Why, God asks, do you fall over yourselves to do what is merely a semblance of good works? Why do you all kill yourselves doing these works? You are all rushing around and plunging to your death. God is a high wall and sure defense.<sup>59</sup>

In the original context, Luther addressed the self-righteous, semi-pelagian heresy that monks embraced as they tried to earn God's favor and achieve a state of perfection through their works. Some monks, whose consciences were burdened by works-righteousness, wore themselves out trying to imitate the examples of other saints. They wore themselves out in hope of gaining some peace with God through works. How often does works-righteousness creep into our thinking today? Perhaps it will not look exactly like the sixteenth century version, but there is nothing new under the sun. How often do we strive for promotion, crave a sense of accomplishment, award, recognition, or level of pay, hoping that goal will bring satisfaction and peace? We can wear ourselves out with that too, and it may reveal an idol that has taken the place of God in our hearts. While we do what God calls us to do, our refuge is found in God alone. God will provide

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<sup>59</sup> *LW* 44:271.

for us so we can be still before Him. Trust God to work what He wills. This *coram Deo* reality is the bedrock for all that we do in the busy-ness of our *coram mundo* vocations.

Built on this bedrock, we find freedom and clean conscience by qualities Luther emphasized about vocational duty. First, human works do not justify before God, and second, the works done in vocation are necessary for the good of one's neighbor. Luther further emphasized: "Nor can these works be set aside even where faith, which alone justifies, is present, since they are the fruits of a justifying faith. For faith without works is dead and worth nothing."<sup>60</sup>

When providing pastoral care to the conscience, two kinds of righteousness, or two forms of good works matter.<sup>61</sup> As it relates to salvation, forgiveness, and atonement for sins, only the good works of Christ will free from sin, give peace to conscience, and victory. The conscience that is troubled by shame, guilt, and sin can only find peace in the righteousness Christ has achieved through his works. In this next selection, Luther writes about finding comfort and forgiveness in the works of Christ, not our own works:

Through these works shall I be justified, through them be saved, through them set free from all sin and evil. I have no doubt about all this because it is for this very purpose these things were done by him, and in baptism all these blessings were poured over me. ...It is by the works of Christ that conscience is victorious and despises its own works, lest they destroy it. The works of Christ are more powerful to save us and to give us peace than are our works to capture and terrify.<sup>62</sup>

For NGR who failed to strike the right balance among the civilian employer, the military employer, home and other community needs, attempts to justify one's actions and decisions may be a natural response. A healthier response is to acknowledge one's humanity, and sinfulness. Our human effort to get the balance right will not comfort conscience. The conscience may

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<sup>60</sup> *LW* 44:298.

<sup>61</sup> Refer to the preceding section on two kinds of righteousness for more exposition on that topic.

<sup>62</sup> *LW* 44:299.

consider its own works, not to justify or make oneself acceptable before God, but to find something useful to serve the neighbor in love. For peace of conscience, however, seek comfort in Christ alone as Luther emphasized here:

Of course, conscience lays hold of its own good works too, but declares these works are to be done freely and only for the good of one's neighbor, and to give the body something to do, but in no case to acquire righteousness and peace and the satisfaction and remission of sins. For conscience seeks these things only in the works of Christ and finds them in a firm faith, just as it sees that Christ did all his works freely for our good and submitted his life to the will of God.<sup>63</sup>

Luther lauded the freedom and healthy conscience that results from “the works of Christ” which He accomplished “for our good” to bring us salvation. Luther emphasized: “To those who believe in Christ there are no works so bad as to accuse and condemn us, but again, there are no works so good that they could save and defend us. But all our works accuse and condemn us. Christ's works alone protect and save us.”<sup>64</sup> Christ's works done for us, his salvation that comes from outside of us is what brings freedom. This freedom, Luther insisted, does not release us from the need to do good works to benefit others. Freedom allows us to do works freely—freed from the fear that salvation depended upon work, freed from exploiting work to silence a guilty conscience, freed from selfish motives—we serve freely for the good of others. Gospel freedom sets us free to serve others in love.<sup>65</sup> Note Luther's emphasis on works being done freely in this next quote: “But these works should be done freely and for no reward, to the benefit and

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<sup>63</sup> *LW* 44:299.

<sup>64</sup> *LW* 44:301.

<sup>65</sup> The balance of freedom and service for others is found in Gal. 5:13, “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” In his 1535 lecture on Galatians, Luther closed his commentary on Gal. 5:13 with this statement, cited from *LW* 27:51. “Therefore every Christian should know that in his conscience he has been established by Christ as lord over the Law, sin, and death, and that they do not have jurisdiction over him. On the other hand, he should know also that this external obligation has been imposed on his body, that through love he should serve his neighbor. Those who understand Christian freedom differently are enjoying the advantages of the Gospel to their own destruction and are worse idolaters under the name ‘Christian’ than they used to be under the pope.”

advantage of our neighbor, just as the works of Christ were done freely for us and for no reward.”<sup>66</sup> I have found this emphasis beneficial to deliver Bible study material for NGR. Christians should not expect their vocational duties to give them peace of mind or consoled consciences. There will always be more to do, more people who could have been saved and served, work done better. Our vocational duties are mishandled if we exploit them to save the soul or give a burdened conscience peace. Luther’s contributions from his work “On Monastic Vows,” has helped me to recognize when warriors reach for duty well-done to silence a nagging sense of guilt. Then chaplains need to turn the NGR warriors to the wounds and work of Christ to heal the wounded conscience. With that healing then vocational service can be the place to serve from the freedom and joy which Christ’s free and full salvation give.

For additional guidance, and theological foundation helpful for the NGR in the experience of vocational struggles, I now turn to Ecclesiastes.

#### Ecclesiastes as Antidote to Vocational Frustration

Demands placed upon NGR can be all-consuming if allowed. These demands can be especially frustrating and consuming when they compete with the time NGR want to spend enjoying life with family and friends. To help keep the experience of frustrations and failures within their proper context and help defend the needs of family and friends against the all-consuming demands of military duty, Ecclesiastes offers perspective that is very useful in the left-hand realm activity of the NGR. Anxiety over present and future is a common malady, and Ecclesiastes provides an indispensable tool for pastoral care in any setting, especially for NGR.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> “Monastic Vows,” in *LW* 44:301.

<sup>67</sup> This section of my biblical and theological foundation is a revised form of an earlier paper I submitted at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for the course EXE 601, Exegetical Theology Today, during the 2019 Spring Term. I would note that Marrs, whose work will be cited later in Chapter Three, gives an example of a dialogue between a counselee and soul care giver, drawing on the insights from Ecclesiastes. This can be found in Rick W. Marrs,

Ecclesiastes warns the reader that it is useless, vanity of vanities (הַבָּל הַבָּלִים, *havel havalim*),<sup>68</sup> to look at this created world, and any work, wisdom, pleasure, righteous pursuit, etc., as an end in and of itself. All who seek their highest good, *summum bonum*, apart from God grasp at air. The only world view that holds fast is that which finds God himself as the highest good. The only meaningful life is lived in His service. While a full exegetical treatment of Ecclesiastes will not fit within the structure of this MAP, I offer some introductory points, highlight key terms, and emphasize crucial themes, as they help with the interpretation and application of Ecclesiastes in pastoral care. I limit comments to Eccles. 1:1–3, and Eccles. 12:11–14. A correct understanding of these verses will open to an edifying study of the whole. The wisdom which the preacher (*Qohelet*) in Ecclesiastes offers will help NGR and all to live joyfully and reverently before God. Consider Martin Luther’s take on anxiety.

To put it briefly, Christ says in Matthew 6[:34], ‘Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have its own anxiety; it is enough that every day has its own evil.’ This saying is really the interpretation and content of this book. Anxiety about us is

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*Making Christian Counseling More Christ Centered* (Bloomington: Westbow, 2019), 162–64.

<sup>68</sup> “*Vanity of vanities*” is the translation of choice for many English translations, such as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century King James Version, American Standard Version, Amplified Bible, King James Version, BRG Bible, Darby Translation, Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition, English Standard Version, English Standard Version Anglicised, Geneva Bible, Lexham English Bible, Jubilee Bible 2000, American Bible Revised Edition, New American Standard Bible, Modern English Version, New King James Version, New Revised Standard Version, NRSV Anglicised, NRSV Anglicised Catholic Edition, NRSV Catholic Edition, Revised Standard Version, RSV Catholic Edition, World English Bible, Wycliffe Bible, Young’s Literal Translation.

For other translations of הַבָּל הַבָּלִים, consider the following: *Absolute futility* (Christian Standard Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible); *Perfectly pointless* (Common English Bible); *Pointless! Pointless!* (Complete Jewish Bible); *Everything is so meaningless!* (Easy-to-Read Version); *Absolutely pointless!* (God’s WORD Translation; Names of God Bible); *Useless! Completely useless!* (Expanded Bible); *It is useless, useless,* (Good News Translation); *Useless! Useless!* (International Children’s Bible; New Century Version); *Utterly pointless,* (International Standard Version); *Smoke, nothing but smoke* (The Message); *nothing is worthwhile; everything is futile* (The Living Bible); *Meaningless! Meaningless!* (New International Version, New International Version-UK); *Futile! Futile!* (New English Translation, Tree of Life Version); *“It is of no use, “It is of no use!* (New Life Version); *“Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!”* (New Living Translation); *Hevel havalim, saith Kohelet, hevel havalim; all is hevel.* (Orthodox Jewish Bible; Teacher: Life is fleeting, like a passing mist. *It is like trying to catch hold of a breath;* All vanishes like a vapor, everything is a great vanity (The Voice).

God's affair; our anxiety goes wrong anyhow, and produces nothing but wasted toil.<sup>69</sup>

Anxiety is God's work, so leave it with God. While this advice does not automatically cause anxiety to melt away, it may help the anxious to shift from self-limited anxiety toward meditation on the word, works, and wonders of God. That will serve the heart well.

Ecclesiastes responds "to a messy universe. That is why, in the end, his book is somewhat messy, nonlinear, and nonsystematic. Its form mirrors its content and its focus of interest."<sup>70</sup>

How does Ecclesiastes fit within the larger Scripture? "Ecclesiastes is the contrast, the alternative, to the rest of the Bible, the question to which the rest of the Bible is the answer."<sup>71</sup>

Kreeft suggests, "In this book God reveals to us exactly what life is when God does not reveal to us what life is. Ecclesiastes frames the Bible as death frames life."<sup>72</sup> How does Qohelet see life?

Kidner thinks that Qohelet "puts himself—and us—in the shoes of the humanist or secularist. ... the person who starts his thinking from man and the observable world, and knows God only from a distance."<sup>73</sup> If that's what Qohelet does, he does so to bring his listeners to repentance.

Ecclesiastes is a John the Baptist kind of book ... it is cleansing. It is repentance. It is purging. The pastor reads Ecclesiastes to get scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment, from ideas that are idolatrous and feelings that are cloy. It is an expose' and rejection of every pretentious and presumptuous expectation aimed at God and routed through the pastor.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Martin Luther, "Preface to Solomon's 'The Preacher,'" in *Prefaces to Old Testament*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, vol. 35, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 264.

<sup>70</sup> Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 36.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Kreeft, *Ecclesiastes: Life as Vanity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 19. Ecclesiastes shows the need for Christ who gives life to the full. In John 10:10, Jesus announced: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." Christ silences Qohelet's cry "all is vanity" (1:2). Without the resurrection of Christ all would be in vain. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, granting us the victory of death and all vanity, so we can dedicate our lives to service in the Lord confident that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15, especially verses 12–20, and verses 56–58.

<sup>72</sup> Kreeft, *Ecclesiastes*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Derek Kidner, *The Message of Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 14.

<sup>74</sup> Eugene Peterson, "Ecclesiastes," in *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

For those who forget their creaturely position before Almighty God, Ecclesiastes is a vital tonic.

I affirm what Eugene Peterson asserts about our modern tendency to obscure the gulf between man and God, forgetting fear for God, and our own sinfulness before the holy God.

The pervasive danger in [pastoral work] is that while developing and encouraging personal relationships with God, the difference between God and humanity is denied and the distance between holiness and sinfulness is obscured. Relationship with God is banalized into a chummy acquaintance with The Man Upstairs. In all Hebrew and Christian experience there is a strong sense of the permanent gulf between God and humanity.... ‘The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man’ (12:13)...[Qoheleth] remains a faithful guardian of that divine otherness which cannot be absorbed into any human system. ‘God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him’ (3:14).<sup>75</sup>

Qohelet calls for a repentant spirit to realistically assess the burdens of our fallen, human condition. That repentant spirit does not lead us to wallow in despair or adopt a cynical and pessimistic ethic. As Peterson also observed, Qohelet’s call for repentance invites us to embrace “robust cheerfulness” through trust in God.

Ecclesiastes is sometimes dismissed with the labels ‘cynical’ and ‘pessimistic.’ But the labels won’t stick. There is too much evidence of robust cheerfulness. ‘I commend enjoyment’ (8:15) is a theme recurrent throughout (2:24; 3:13; 8:15; 9:7—10; 11:7). In the Jerusalem Talmud (*Kiddushin*) there is a saying, ‘Every man must render an account before God of all the good things he beheld in life and did not enjoy,’ a saying very much in the spirit of Ecclesiastes.<sup>76</sup>

Ecclesiastes may be “an essay in apologetics. It defends the life of faith in a generous God by pointing to the grimness of the alternative.”<sup>77</sup> Qohelet speaks to the disillusioned, who sense that life is vanity, and points why life has meaning. The Preacher (Qohelet) warns that there may not be a human way to fix the vanity, but he offers a reason for enduring and leaves the fix to God.

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1992), 155–56.

<sup>75</sup> Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones*, 157–58.

<sup>76</sup> Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones*, 159.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Eaton, *Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 44.

## Ecclesiastes 1:1–2

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

דְּבַרֵי קִהְלֵת בֶּן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

הֶבֶל הֶבְלִים אָמַר קִהְלֵת הֶבֶל הֶבְלִים הֵפֶל הֶבֶל:

הֶבֶל הֶבְלִים, *havel havilim*, “vanity of vanities” is the emphatic word from Qohelet,

which establishes his theme. The dictionary entry word for הֶבֶל is *hebel* (pronounced *hevel*), a masculine singular noun that means “vapor” or “breath.”<sup>78</sup> The Septuagint translated *hebel* as *ματαιότης* (*mataiotees*), suggesting New Testament verses that expand an understanding of the vanity Qohelet explores.<sup>79</sup> “Vanity” is cited in 1 Pet. 1:18, where the Apostle writes: “you were ransomed from the futile ways (*ek tees mataiotees*, ἐκ τῆς ματαιίας) inherited from your forefathers.” This redemption from vanity came through “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18).<sup>80</sup> The reality of Christ’s resurrection, and the hope for our own resurrection (based on Christ’s resurrection and second coming) are key aspects of our liberty from futility and vanity.

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<sup>78</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 210, I, s.v. *hebel*, figuratively vanity. Abbreviated in following as BDB. “Vanity of vanities” is the translation of choice for many English translations.

<sup>79</sup> In Rom. 8:20, creation is subjected to *ματαιότης* (dat. sing. *ματαιότητι*) frustration (NIV); *ματαιότης* is the Greek for *hebel*. Note the use of “vanity” in Rom. 1:21–22: “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile (verbal form *ματαιότης/ ἐματαιώθησαν*) and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.” The “vanity” Qohelet explores is the foolishness of humans claims to be wise while rejecting God. Paul (Eph. 4:17): “You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking (ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν).” Jam. 1:26, calls religion worthless: “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless (μάταιος ἢ θρησκεία.)” 2 Pet. 2:17–18 “These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly (*ματαιότητος*), they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.”

<sup>80</sup> See 1 Pet 1:14–19, for context. With only natural knowledge of God, what we see and understand of life is limited. Ecclesiastes does not teach that life is evil or meaningless in and of itself. It does not invite us to despise life. But all things in themselves, apart from God, when not used for his glory, are vain. In the light of Christ’s redemption, Ecclesiastes is vital in pastoral care, as it helps push against vanity and embrace the gift of life.

Although the use of vanity in 1 Cor. 15:14, 58, and the use of futility in Rom. 8:18–22, use different Greek terms from ματαιότης (*mataiotees*) for vanity and futility, the concept is the same, and will also be beneficial for reference and support.<sup>81</sup>

Provan’s commentary on the translation of *hebel* helps avoid an anachronistic reading of Ecclesiastes that would erroneously make Ecclesiastes an example of French existentialism.

We will not be interpreting *hebel* in this commentary to mean something like ‘meaninglessness’ or ‘absurdity,’ . . . . The view taken here is that this kind of interpretation is (perhaps unknowingly) too much indebted to an influential modern French existentialism and insufficiently grounded in biblical texts. Qohelet is not Camus. With the word *hebel* he refers to the fragile, fleeting nature of existence, which should cause us to seize the moment and live well in it before God, while at the same time leading us to spurn the desire for any control of life and to disdain that insane grasping after *yitron*, which so often characterizes human activity. We will translate and interpret *hebel* in a manner that fits this general context, stressing the ephemerality of existence or its elusiveness and resistance to intellectual and physical control.<sup>82</sup>

Teaching NGR to live well before God is faithful pastoral care. Teaching NGR, as Provan wrote, to “spurn the desire for any control of life,” is also the proper realm of pastoral care. That kind of practical pastoral care is well-supported by Ecclesiastes and builds warrior spiritual toughness.

As breath cannot be captured in the fist, the human mind cannot grasp the full reality of life, nor control it. Life will not be neatly sorted, predicted, or controlled. The use of vanity (*hebel*) in Ecclesiastes emphasizes “the passing nature of existence and its elusiveness and resistance to intellectual and physical human control. The main obstacle to living well in the

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<sup>81</sup> “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. . . . Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14,58). “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now” (Rom. 8:18–22).

<sup>82</sup> Provan, *Ecclesiastes*, 56–57.

world is that mortal beings consistently refuse to accept their mortality and finitude.”<sup>83</sup>

### **Ecclesiastes 1:3**

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

מה־יִתְרוֹן לְאָדָם בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ שֶׁיַּעֲמֵל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ:

יִתְרוֹן, *yitron*, “gain” or “profit”—used only in Ecclesiastes—is based on the noun *yeter*, which means remainder, excess, preeminence, abundance.<sup>84</sup> The question of gain is asked by those who think of life as “raw material to be invested in, manipulated and shaped,.... The person who asks about *yitron* brings a capitalistic, consumer-oriented perspective from the world of business and commerce and applies it to life more generally.”<sup>85</sup> Ecclesiastes 1:4–11 calls us to look at creation to show that there is no יִתְרוֹן, *yitron*, for mortals whose life is fleeting. Life is *hebel*, a chasing after the wind. It cannot be stored as surplus, but there is no need to try to store surplus life. Observe the passing generations (1:4), sunrise and set (1:5), blowing winds (1:6) and streams flowing to the seas (1:7); any attempt to store up or consume life as יִתְרוֹן is pointless.

Lack of profit makes life an empty toil, and Qohelet tells of five toils that seek meaning, only to find *hebel*. The five toils are “wisdom, pleasure, power and riches, altruism, and conventional naturalistic religion—and he will show that each one is equally ‘vain’”.<sup>86</sup> Kreeft translated these five toils as “1. Philosophy to fill your mind, 2. Hedonism to fill your body, 3.

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<sup>83</sup> Provan, *Ecclesiastes*, 38. “Qohelet frequently underlines the same truth by using a quite different metaphor—by combining a *hebel*-saying with a reference to ‘chasing after the wind.’” These passages 1:14,17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4,6,16; 6:9 use the expression *chasing after the wind*, Hebrew, רָעַזוּן רֵיחַ or וַיִּרְעוּת רֵיחַ. Chasing after the wind, as Provan noted, “is to seek to grasp hold of and control something beyond our grasp and uncontrollable,” 53.

<sup>84</sup> BDB, 451-452, III s.v. יִתְרוֹן.

<sup>85</sup> Provan, *Ecclesiastes*, 54.

<sup>86</sup> Kreeft, *Ecclesiastes*, 35. Kreeft also noted that “‘Toil’ means all our attempts to find or make meaning. ... Each ‘toil’ lacks the ‘gain’ we seek from it—not a ‘gaining’ of money but a ‘gaining’ of meaning,” 36.

Materialism to fill your pocket, 4. Ethics to fill your conscience, 5. Religion to fill your spirit.”<sup>87</sup>

If NGR try to fill the void with יִתְרֹן, *yitron*, for pastoral care chaplains can emphasize the emptiness (as Qohelet) and assert we are meant for more; God has “put eternity into man’s heart” (Eccles. 3:11).

*Under the sun*, תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, *tachat ha shamesh*, used 27 times in Ecclesiastes, is Qohelet’s trademark and key to his teaching. I agree with Luther that תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, does not speak of “the works of God, ...but ...the works of men, who are driven and carried along by their own counsels; in this way he wants to limit their calamities and toilsome chores...[The works of God] are above the sun and beyond the efforts of men.”<sup>88</sup> Luther emphasized that vanity *under the sun* contrasts man’s work, versus God’s work *above the sun*.<sup>89</sup>

Qohelet ends by having his readers reflect on death (12:1–8). Since death cannot be avoided, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ ...before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern...” (Eccles. 12:1,6). Death reminds us that humans are not in ultimate control, so keep death in view (Eccles. 7:2),<sup>90</sup> to honestly and hopefully find the value of life under the sun.

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<sup>87</sup> Kreeft, *Ecclesiastes*, 37.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Luther, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and a Treatise on the Last Words of David, Notes on Ecclesiastes*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 15, *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 14.

<sup>89</sup> This contrast, which Luther gives, between man’s work and God’s work is cited from *LW* 15:14–15. “The creatures are indeed subjected to vanity, as Paul declares in Rom. 8:20, but they themselves are good things. Otherwise he would have said that the sun is vain; but he makes the sun an exception, for he says: ‘under the sun.’ Therefore he is dealing not with the works of God, which are good, true, and above the sun, but with works that are under the sun, works that we carry on in this physical and earthly life.”

<sup>90</sup> Provan, “It is best therefore to give up any attempt to control destiny and simply to live life out before God.” *Ecclesiastes*, 39.

The function of Ecclesiastes is to bring us to the point where we begin to fear that such a comment is the only honest one. So it is, if everything is dying. We face the appalling inference that nothing has meaning, nothing matters under the sun. It is then that we can hear, as the good news which it is, that everything matters—‘for God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.’<sup>91</sup>

### **Ecclesiastes 12:11–12**

The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים כְּדַרְבָּנוֹת וְכַמְשֻׁמְרוֹת נְטוּעִים בְּעֵלְי אֶסְפּוֹת נִתְּנֵי מִרְעָה אֶחָד:

My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

<sup>12</sup> וַיִּתֵּר מִהֵמָּה בְּנֵי הַזֶּהָר עֲשׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבֵּה אֵין לֵץ וְלֹהֵג הַרְבֵּה יִגְעַת בְּשָׂר

The ESV translation of Eccles. 12:11–12 needs no correction. “Shepherd” refers either to Qohelet or God as the *one Shepherd*. The title of shepherd is certainly used for the king (cf. 1 Sam. 25:7). If *Shepherd* refers to God, Pss. 23:1; 28:1,9, and 80:1, certainly inform and support that understanding.<sup>92</sup> Since Qohelet has been used consistently for the author as the originator for this proverbial material (cf. Eccles. 12:9), Shepherd is not introduced at this late stage in the book as an alternate honorific title for Qohelet, but as an emphatic concluding acknowledgement that the source for these “words of the wise” is the LORD, my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

Although Qohelet can take credit for working hard to assemble these wise words, words that he produced from his own reflection, and arranged with art and careful thought, these words

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<sup>91</sup> Kidner, *Ecclesiastes*, 20.

<sup>92</sup> Psa. 23:1 “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psa. 28:1,9 “To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit... Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.” Psa. 80:1 “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.”

came from God, the one Shepherd.<sup>93</sup> As “one Shepherd” serves as a name for God, the “words of the wise ones” דְּבַרֵי הַחֲכָמִים (*divar hakamim*) are the inspired Word of God. Yes, Qohelet wrote these words which are “like goads,” and these words came from God as the Holy Spirit inspired Qohelet (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21); so it is with inspired power that these words “spur the will and stick in the memory.”<sup>94</sup>

As shepherds used staffs with nails embedded in them to spur sheep on, keeping them on the right path, these wise words from God, recorded through the art and wisdom of Qohelet keep the sheep in the paths of righteousness. These words “not only bring pleasure and truth, therefore, but they also bring pain, as they dispel illusions and confront folly, thereby preventing the receptive listener (however reluctant a listener may be) from straying from the straight and narrow path through life.”<sup>95</sup> Qohelet warns not to despise God’s word: “My son, beware of anything beyond these” (Eccles. 12:12).<sup>96</sup> Such a warning is comparable to the closing of several books in the New Testament, which warn not to despise the contents of these books (cf. Rom. 16:17–20; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim 6:20; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 22:18). These warnings are appropriate since God’s Word should not be despised, and these books should be read “not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13).

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Michael Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2016), 154. “The *Shepherd* has been taken to refer to the king (cf. 1 Sam. 25:7) or to God himself (cf. Pss 23:1; 80:1). The latter is more likely, since the name ‘Preacher’ has already been given to the originator of the material of the book (vv. 9f.). Although his words are the result of his own reflections, at the same time they come from God. There is here, therefore, a doctrine of inspiration. The Preacher (or his editor) is conscious of his own activity (v. 10) with regard to both the form (v. 9) and the content (v. 10) of his work; yet he contends that the finished product is the word of God as well as the word of man.”

<sup>94</sup> Kidner, *Ecclesiastes*, 106.

<sup>95</sup> Provan, *Ecclesiastes*, 227.

<sup>96</sup> Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, 155. “In the closing remarks a warning is given comparable to those which close a number of biblical writings (cf. Rom. 16:17–20; 2 Thess. 3:14f; 1 Tim. 6:20f.; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 22:18f.). Beyond these refers back to the sayings ‘given by one Shepherd’, outside of which caution is required.”

The high regard for God’s Word, the one Shepherd’s Word, leads naturally to the closing verses which call for fear of God, and give keys for understanding and applying the whole book.<sup>97</sup>

### **Ecclesiastes 12:13–14**

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

סוף דְבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרָא וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שְׁמֹר כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם:

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

כִּי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֵא בְּמִשְׁפָּט עַל כָּל־נִעְלָם אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע:

Hebrew word order in verse 13 emphasizes *God* and *commandments*; literally translated: “*God* you fear, his *commands* you keep.” In a complex, confusing world, the fear of God reminds us that there is truth, right and wrong, because we have God’s commands. We believe that “God will bring every deed into judgment.” His judgment is not subject to futility; it is not *under the sun*. God has the final say on what really matters. It matters to live by the truth. His Law transcends all that happens under the sun. His Word is eternal and endures forever.

For honest workers not rewarded, and all who suffer *hebel* under the sun, “God will bring every deed into judgment.” God will right the wrong. By Christ’s resurrection, God makes all good; your labor in the Lord is not in vain.<sup>98</sup> Personal injustice is not a call for revenge. God will take up the sword. Vengeance belongs to God (Rom. 12:19), who sits upon the throne, just as salvation belongs to our God, and to the Lamb that was slain (Rev. 7:10). “For the lamb in the

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<sup>97</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:11–12 certainly deserve more commentary. The imagery of verse eleven invites more specific reflection. Who are the wise? Why are their words like goads? Where did the Shepherd figure/image come from? Why use this label for God at this point in the book? The verse is loaded with images, and more time and space (than the current MAP) should be used to answer these and similar questions.

<sup>98</sup> Allusion to 1 Cor. 15:58. The Greek (κενός, kenos) translated as “in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58) is not the LXX choice for הָבֵל, *habel*, in Ecclesiastes. See Isaiah 65:23 for the “in vain” allusion in 1 Cor. 15:58.

midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17). Leave judgment to God; He alone will get it right. “I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him” (Eccles. 3:14).

With fear of God and obedience to his commands, we can hate sin and wickedness, and lament when the righteous suffer what the wicked deserve (Eccles. 8:12–13). But the fear of God also reminds us to avoid self-righteousness (7:16–18), “For God will bring every deed into judgment.” Content that God is judge, enjoy the life God gives (8:15). A faithful fear of God leads us to receive life as a gift, living repentantly, “joyfully and reverently before God” now.<sup>99</sup>

Reverent fear of God allows us to see the vanity of life *and* find joy in the gifts God gives in work and rest, in family and country, life and death. Fear of God leads to a respect for the limits God places on life, taking a humble approach to the life God gives; receiving life as a gift from God. Fear of God leads us to see the created world as a gift to be received from God, not an idol that shapes destiny. Life is good, to be savored, but not the ultimate good. God alone is good. Fear of God will teach us to receive the good in life as a gift from God to be enjoyed, and therein, Provan observed, is how Ecclesiastes resolves the paradox of fear and joy.

central to the structure of Ecclesiastes in the juxtaposition of the *carpe diem* passages with the enigmatic passages and...this juxtaposition creates gaps which the reader has to fill. Chapter twelve of Ecclesiastes is fundamental to the book in the answer it gives us to how the gaps should be filled, namely by remembering one’s creator....The resolution of this paradox is found in the fear of God (rejoicing and

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<sup>99</sup> Provan, *Ecclesiastes*, 228–29. “Qohelet’s consistent advice throughout the book has been to live joyfully and reverently before God in the midst of what is often a complex world, believing that God himself will judge every human work . . . . We remind ourselves here of passages like 2:24–26; 3:12–17, 22; 5:1–7, 18–20; 7:15–18; 8:11–13; 9:7–10; and 11:9–10. . . . [These passages] are designed so that we may live well before God, reverencing him and bearing always in mind that the universe is a moral place in which there is accountability for the way in which we spend our days.”

remembrance) which enables one to rejoice and apply oneself positively to life in the midst of all that one does not understand, including and especially death.<sup>100</sup>

“Fear God and keep his commandments.” Fear leads us to trust God, when we cannot track what God is doing, or understand how God is working all things for good (Rom. 8:28ff). “We have faith in the God of paradoxes who, on the jumbled landscape of our broken world, draws straight with crooked lines. We trust that God who specializes in bringing good out of evil will make something beautiful out of our efforts to love him and our neighbors in creation.”<sup>101</sup>

Where there is fear of God, we obey God’s commands even when the race is not always to the swift (Eccles. 9:11).<sup>102</sup> Doing the right thing will not always result in a reward *under the sun*, but the fear of God motivates doing what is right for the good of others, without reward and at great cost. “Christian virtue will be a leaven that works creatively on the hard demands of worldly life. It is the creative task of each Christian to find the fitting deed between an adventureless acceptance of the world as it is and an irresponsible desire to replace it with some utopian scheme.”<sup>103</sup>

In the fear of God, work can be a source of rejoicing: “So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?” (Eccles. 3:22). This is what God-fearing people enjoy. As work can be fulfilling, God-fearing people can enjoy family, and a God-fearing man joyfully embrace his wife (Eccles. 9:9–10). With fear of God, and obedience to His ways of ruling and giving, we learn to discern

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<sup>100</sup> Provan, *Ecclesiastes*, 229.

<sup>101</sup> John Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 291. Cf. Eccles. 1:15 “What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.”

<sup>102</sup> Our motive is higher than things under the sun; we fear, love, and trust in God above all other things. Nietzsche said: “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.” Our why is God.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Benne, *Reasonable Ethics: A Christian Approach to Social, Economic, and Political Concerns* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 76.

the times God gives (Eccles. 3:1–14); there is a time for everything, a time for work and a time for family. In the following quote, a Navy wife shares her own sadness over her husband’s failure to discern the time for family. Her husband’s response was a reflex, a reflex leaders too often display, in response to the relentless needs of the Navy:

I could not believe my ears. My husband, chief of staff at Naval Surface Force Atlantic, was headed into a meeting. I had called, and the front desk put me through to him so I could tell him that I was short of breath and unable to walk to the bathroom—I thought it was a heart attack. His answer, ‘Honey, this is a really important meeting—call 911 and I’ll be home as soon as it’s over.’ I said nothing, just started to cry. Then I heard him crying too, ‘What the hell was I thinking—I’m on my way.’<sup>104</sup>

Gudrun Cordle and her husband survived that awful moment in their marriage. Her husband pushed back against the foolishness that says the needs of the Navy are more important than your needs, and your family’s needs. Chaplains can help sailors respectfully, legally, ethically push back against the Navy’s insatiable demands and guard time for family. Balance between work and home is crucial. As Qohelet counsels, “Enjoy life with your wife” (Eccles. 9:9).<sup>105</sup>

The fear of God, coupled with faithful obedience, resists despair and the sense of futility. When frustrated by unethical behavior, laziness, apathy, and the failure to see profit from hard work, leave the results in God’s hands. “We should,” Luther teaches us, “not prematurely define the hour in which our labor is to succeed; God will see to that. But you just do your job and do what God places into your hands. Nor should you suppose that everything can be set right by

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<sup>104</sup> Gudrun Cordle, “The Navy’s Stress Problem—A Spouse’s Perspective,” *United States Naval Institute* (blog), April 26, 2019, <https://blog.usni.org/posts/2019/04/26/the-navys-stress-problem-a-spouses-perspective?fbclid=IwAR3LJXdSxPKYcqpAMet8yqexkAUwAuT35uS57sFOVcPf-qHqZIKUnCnUA8A>.

<sup>105</sup> Luther gave this commentary on Eccles. 3:22, cited from *LW* 15:62. The comment is related to the theme of Eccles. 9:9 which emphasizes the wisdom of finding balance between home and work. “This, therefore, is the portion of the righteous: to enjoy the things that are present and not to be afflicted by the things that are in the future. But this does not happen under the sun. Those who act otherwise, take a double burden upon themselves: they do not make use of the things that are present, and they do not gain the things that are in the future. The same thing happens to them that happened to the dog in Aesop, which snapped at its shadow and lost the meat.”

you, that all rulers will be good and all craftsmen harmonious and honest.”<sup>106</sup>

With character shaped by humility and fear of God, we learn to trust God, not ourselves, technology, military power, or our planning. Fearing God and obedient to His commands, we keep a loose hold on technology. We plan without trusting in plans. When success comes, we praise God who calls and equips us to serve. Where success escapes us, Qohelet “instructs us not to trust in our own wisdom and counsel but to do what He has given us to do; if it does not succeed, we should commit it to God.”<sup>107</sup> And what exactly is success in the first place? True “success” is often difficult to judge and discern “under the sun”.

As these pages on the pastoral application of Ecclesiastes end, I conclude with 1 Pet. 1:18, where Qohelet’s favorite word *hebel* appears. Peter speaks of *futility* inherited from our ancestors. This futility is *hebel* or ματαιότης, *mataiotees* (LXX). Peter calls the baptized in Christ to live a holy life because they were “ransomed from the futile ways (ἐκ τῆς ματαίας, *ek tees mataias*) inherited from your forefathers.” The “precious blood of Christ” frees us from *vanity*.

When Qohelet spoke of life under the sun, he addressed an understanding of life limited to human observation. The resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3–6) freed Peter to announce that the risen Christ frees us from the vanity of life handed down to us from our human ancestors (1 Pet. 1:18–19). Paul says the same in his triumphant resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15) as he concludes victoriously, “your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58). The risen Christ frees us from the empty way of life. With the light from Christ’s resurrection revealing full new life, and the precious blood of Christ setting us free from vanity of vanities, Qohelet’s words can invite and equip us to live joyfully and reverently before God. “The end of the matter; all has been heard.

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<sup>106</sup> Luther, commenting on Eccles. 4:4, in *LW* 15:64.

<sup>107</sup> Luther, commenting on Eccles. 2:12–14, in *LW* 15:40.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccles. 12:13–14).

### Additional Biblical and Theological Resources

When I address the vocational challenges which NGR face, I rely upon my Lutheran theological heritage, drawing on key writings from Martin Luther. I found it helpful to review Wingren’s *Luther on Vocation*, in preparation for this project. He helped me organize themes Martin Luther explored in his study of Christian vocation and led me to key resources within Luther’s works. In addition to works already cited, I also reference material from “The Freedom of a Christian,” “On Temporal Authority,” and others cited in the literature review. These writings (and others) helped me clarify my Biblical and theological foundation.

More recent Lutheran theologians, especially in practical theology and systematic theology, have also addressed challenges I identified through this project. Robert Benne engaged the dimensions of two-realm theology in the NGR vocation, especially in the treatment he offers in *The Paradoxical Vision*.<sup>108</sup> I also consulted the *Spirituality of the Cross* by Gene E. Veith,<sup>109</sup> and recent work by John Nunes, *Meant for More: In, With, and Under the Ordinary*.<sup>110</sup>

I relied on material Joel Biermann provided in *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethic*,<sup>111</sup> especially because of his emphasis on virtuous character tied to the creedal framework.<sup>112</sup> Since not every vocational hardship or suffering can be removed, and individual

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<sup>108</sup>Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*.

<sup>109</sup> Gene Edward Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999).

<sup>110</sup> Nunes, John. *Meant for More: In, With, and Under the Ordinary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2020).

<sup>111</sup> Joel Biermann *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

<sup>112</sup> *Creedal framework* is a term Joel Biermann used in *A Case for Character*. This term will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three. Biermann is sensitive to the concerns of succumbing to the twin errors of rigid legalism on the one hand and hedonistic antinomianism on the other. In his search for a theologically defensible

NGR will need to grow through suffering toward improved character, I have engaged the concepts expressed in *A Case for Character*. Joel Biermann also helped engage challenges NGR face as they faithfully serve in the spiritual and earthly realm. For that emphasis I leaned on his application of theology in *Wholly Citizens*.<sup>113</sup> His insights will help with my Bible study preparation, and more discussion of that will be found in Chapter Three.

For some voices outside of the circle of Lutheran theology, I consulted Os Guinness, especially his classic, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Central Purpose of Your Life*, and Eugene Peterson's works, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, as well as *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*.<sup>114</sup>

Learning to see one's vocation within the larger scale of what God is doing to preserve and protect life does not remove all difficulty and hardship. A better understanding of vocation does not promise that every hardship, challenge, and difficulty associated with the NGR's work will be removed. It is possible, however, to better understand difficulties (or, *tentatio*) as they arise, see these difficulties within the larger context of the creedal framework, grasp what God is doing in the realm of creation (to the best of our knowledge), and grow by God's grace to trust in God whose ways are hidden and whose love for us comes in the shape of the cross. It is also possible to better appreciate the value of our vocation as masks of God, and trust God as He carries out His larger plans within the vocation of NGR.

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promotion of virtue ethics, Biermann developed the creedal framework to encourage Lutherans to teach virtue and embrace the habitual practices needed to embody virtue ethics. To encourage practice of character virtue, Biermann reviewed the two kinds of righteousness, grounded in Luther's preface to Galatians. He outlined a three kinds of righteousness framework which works with the use of the Law as curb and guide. The three kinds of righteousness framework is further informed and explained by creedal content, which he terms the Creedal Framework.

<sup>113</sup> Joel Biermann, *Wholly Citizens: God's Two Realms and Christian Engagement with the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

<sup>114</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003). Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones*.

Having laid out my theological perspective, and clarified my biblical and theological foundation, I assert that this foundation has provided a solid basis for approaching this project. With a faith-filled view of the vocation of NGR, men and women can be better equipped to endure sacrifices for the good of their neighbor, while also maintaining hopeful optimism that God uses suffering for our good, and when we share in suffering with Christ, we also share in his glory (Rom. 8:16–17, 28). This is the realistic and faithful perspective from which I prepared my Bible study for NGR. This provides the theological basis from which I planned to examine the research data which helped create Bible study material that suitably equips NGR to faithfully deal with their unique vocational challenges.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT RESEARCH

This chapter captures my interaction with authors in fields of Psychology, Sociology, and Christian Theology. I had my own biases and assumptions—formed by my own Navy reserve service—about the challenges faced by NGR. Much of the material which I reviewed homed in on those challenges, further detailing the multiple NGR responsibilities in military and civilian life. The literature helped synthesize the vocational challenges of NGR and reinforced my plan to provide a Christian Bible study resource to address those challenges in the context of Christian vocation. The literature review uncovered many resources on stressors from war, deployment, and reintegration for NGR. It did not find much literature about the impact routine challenges and burdens have on NGR as they try to balance military and civilian responsibilities.

I turned to Psychology and Sociology to identify unique problems and challenges faced by NGR. I relied upon Theological literature to analyze the problem and provide pastoral care resources suitable to the vocational challenges of NGR. The date range used for the Psychology and Sociology literature was primarily from 2001 to 2020. That range is due to the impact that September 11, 2001, had upon how NGR forces were employed.

I conducted key word searches through Google Scholar, Concordia Seminary St. Louis Library (CSL) resources, including CSL Scholar, ATLA Religion Database JSTOR, and EBSCO data base. Key words in the search included: Bible study, National Guard, reserve, pastoral care, chaplain care, reintegration, religious, spirituality, spiritual resilience, resilience, unique challenges, vocation, vocational. I also began a search for material using these key words: hope, mental health, PTSD, religiosity, veterans. These search terms could uncover more useful material with additional exploration.

As I scanned resources discovered through data base searches, I analyzed titles to see if they addressed vocational challenges and burdens experienced by NGR. If the titles contained the specific key words, or addressed themes related to those results, then I reviewed the abstracts or summaries for the dissertations, journal articles, manuals, and book chapters. If that second review suggested promising material to either support or contradict my basic assumptions, with which I began this study, then those materials were given a more careful review.

### **Originality**

I proposed to create a Bible study to help NGR approach vocational challenges, as a form of pastoral care, since I have not found any Bible study material focused on helping NGR deal with their routine vocational challenges. A lot of research, articles, dissertations, and books have focused on the difficulties of the active duty military and their families. Much of this research focuses on psychopathology such as PTSD. Research on PTSD focuses on the difficulties reserve members and their families face as they transition back to their civilian lives after deployments.<sup>1</sup> A lot of work has been done, and still needs to be done, to address the psychopathologies linked with deployments and return, but that was not my focus. Based on my review of available literature, I saw a need for research focused on the routine hardships which reserve members face due to their dual status as they balance vocational duties in civilian life and military life. That was my focus on the review of literature.

Much has been written, and deservedly, about the operational and combat stresses our military members endure. The literature does not give sufficient attention or address routine

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel David Rabb and Lieutenant Colonel Cynthia Rasmussen, "Citizen/warriors: Challenges Facing U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers and Their Families," in *War Trauma and Its Wake: Expanding the Circle of Healing*, eds. Raymond Monsour Scurfield and Katherin Theresa Platoni (New York: Routledge, 2013).

hassles and hardships faced by reserve members. As routine physical stressors, over time, can cause skeletal injuries that can be prevented with better equipment, or better exercise technique; so repeated stress on the psyche, can accumulate to harm the soul. My goal was to contribute a Bible study to alleviate, mitigate, and help deal with common stressors that accumulate for NGR.

I found material focused on preparing sermons to nurture a Lutheran identity in the military, providing chaplain care for wounded in military hospitals, and employing religious rites to help deal with PTSD, Moral Injury, and the hardship of military life in general. I did not find Bible Study materials to address unique hardships that reserve members endure and attempt to overcome on a regular basis. It is possible that there are valuable resources, written by LCMS chaplains, that would address the hardships unique to NGR service. Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) holds some papers and writings from LCMS chaplains in their archives. I reached the point in my study where I could not invest the time and resources required to read through and catalogue pertinent material from those collections held by CHI. I encourage other researchers, especially those focused on contributions of LCMS chaplains in military ministry, to review material and catalogue the CHI collection. This may uncover beneficial material and provide an index of material from LCMS chaplains that could give insight to current challenges.

I started this project to address the unique challenges faced by NGR. I used the survey of recent research in psychology, sociology and theology to develop a Bible Study that identified the challenges and suffering that are unique to reserve members. I then designed the Bible study with the intent to help NGR address those vocational challenges in a godly fashion. The following review of literature helped me achieve that design.

### **Review of Psychology and Sociology Literature**

An initial review of literature supported my assertion that NGR face unique vocational

hardships. Military psychologists, Crabtree et al., catalogued the “unique challenges” that NGR face.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 37, “Unique Challenges Faced by the National Guard and Reserve,” in the *Military Psychologists’ Desk Reference*, was one of the first references that substantiated my hunch that NGR have unique vocational struggles. This chapter addressed the challenges of NGR through a psychological lens. Challenges include straddling civilian and military lives, grief resulting from separation from the military, lack of social support from active duty counterparts, difficulty obtaining medical care through the VA, struggles keeping strong civilian social connections, and strained familial relations. Crabtree et al. helped establish the unique challenges from a psychological perspective. “Researchers have found 20.3% of Active Duty, compared to 42.4% of the RC, screened positive for PTSD, alcohol misuse, major depression, anxiety, or other mental health problems (Milliken, Auchterlonie, & Hoge 2007).”<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of PTSD among reserve forces when contrasted with active duty forces is alarming. There is a correlation between the unique stressors NGR encounter, and increased rates of PTSD.

In a study of National Guard soldiers, Riviere, Kendall-Robbins, McGurk, Castro, and Hoge (2011) found correlations between financial hardship, civilian job loss, lack of civilian employer support, and perceptions of negative effect of deployment absence on civilian coworkers with rates of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>4</sup>

Crabtree et al. spotlighted the correlation of higher rates of PTSD, with the struggles unique to NGR. They also noted the lack of studies conducted on the “characteristics, needs, and strengths” of NGR families.<sup>5</sup> Crabtree et al. concluded their chapter with recommendations for

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<sup>2</sup> Crabtree, Bennett, and Schaeffer, “Unique Challenges,” 179.

<sup>3</sup> Crabtree, Bennett, and Schaeffer, “Unique Challenges,” 181. I have reviewed these percentages several times, and returned to “Unique Challenges” in several revisions of my text, to verify that I did not copy those numbers incorrectly. The percentages are listed correctly. The numbers are accurate and alarming.

<sup>4</sup> Crabtree, Bennett, and Schaeffer, “Unique Challenges,” 181.

<sup>5</sup> Crabtree, Bennett, and Schaeffer, “Unique Challenges,” 181.

military and civilian mental health providers to provide psychological care that is alert to the unique challenges and characteristics faced by those with NGR service.

Jean Marie Pyzyk focused on NGR difficulties during transition to civilian employment. She used interview data to give show unique difficulties faced by NGR, documented in her PhD dissertation for urban education.<sup>6</sup> While NGR will have similar experiences with hardships on deployment, life is different for the NGR in the training stage, prior to deployment. NGR typically work twelve-day stretches without a day off, whereas most active-duty military often have the weekend as a haven from military duties. The weekend for NGR is time for monthly training, and supervising officers and enlisted use weekend and evening hours for NGR administrative duties. When NGR return to civilian work, especially after deployments of six to twelve months, or one to three years, the return to the civilian workplace comes as a culture shock. Employers also need to adjust to the needs and expectations of their NGR employees.

When Pyzyk wrote her dissertation, the global war on terrorism was still in full swing, and the NGR force was employed operationally with NGR facing multiple deployments over their career. Many were gone for more than one year at a time.<sup>7</sup> Pyzyk noted that phenomenological studies had not been conducted on the lived experiences that NGR had as they transitioned back to civilian employment. Pyzyk helped validate my claim about the unique vocational challenges NGR faced. She also prompted me to focus on something I found missing, namely a disciplined focus upon the unique vocational challenges and burdens that arise when NGR strive to balance demands from their dual military-civilian vocations. I did not find research material focused on

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<sup>6</sup> Jean Marie Pyzyk, "Building Bridges Over Troubled Waters: A Phenomenological Study of Post-9/11 National Guard and Reserve Military Veterans Transitioning to the Civilian Workplace" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2017), <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1529/>.

<sup>7</sup> As of 2021, a shift away from the operational use of the Navy Reserve is taking place; the DoD is moving back to the strategic Reserve force. It remains to be seen what impact that shift will have on frequency and duration of mobilizations and deployments.

the lived experiences of NGR as they experience unique vocational challenges and seek to address those challenges in the framework of Christian teachings on sanctification and vocation.

Lane et al. contrasted the reserve community with the active duty community as they studied the mental health and stress levels among deployed NGR. Their conclusions noted that deployed NGR members had higher rates of PTSD, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.<sup>8</sup> The DoD Suicide Event Report (DoD SER), which has monitored “fatal and nonfatal (i.e., deliberate self-harm, suicidal ideation, or suicide attempts) suicide events among active duty members, reserve components and the National Guard (Gahm et al., 2012)” since 2008, noted higher rate of suicide among NGR, based on the 2013 DoDSER.<sup>9</sup> Note the following statistics:

According to the 2013 DoDSER, for every 100,000 service members, the rate of suicide for the active component was 18.7. The rate for the reserve of the SELRES was 23.4 per 100,000 and the rate for the Army National Guard component of the SELRES was 28.9 per 100,000. The DoDSER also calculates the rates for suicide for each of the four services. The following rates are for the active components of the services with elevated rates for the Army component of SELRES. The suicide rate for Army reserve was 30.1 and Army National Guard was 33.4.<sup>10</sup>

This data from 2013 raised concerns relative to psychological burdens faced by the NGR. What accounts for such increased rates of suicide among the NGR? What can be done to address this?

Cohen et al. noted higher rates of alcohol use disorders among NGR in contrast with active duty. Cohen et al. noted the prevalence for PTSD among the reserve component (at 9.8%) was similar to active duty (at 8.9%),<sup>11</sup> but alcohol use disorders among NGR was 14.5% compared

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<sup>8</sup> Marian Lane, Laurel Hourani, Robert Bray, and Jason Williams, “Prevalence of Perceived Stress and Mental Health Indicators Among Reserve-Component and Active-Duty Military Personnel,” *American Journal of Public Health* 102, no. 6 (January 19, 2012): 1213, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300280>.

<sup>9</sup> Maryke Harrison, Tracy Lauren Vargo, Conrad Joseph Camit, Vedant Agrawal, Laura Gramling, Rayna Sanghvi, Lori Holleran, and Bruce Bongar, *Suicide Prevention and Psychological Resilience for Military and Veterans* 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935291.013.37>.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, et al., *Suicide Prevention and Resilience*, 5. SELRES is an abbreviation for Select Reserve.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory Cohen, David Fink, Laura Sampson and Sandro Galea, “Mental Health Among Reserve Component Military Service Members and Veterans.” *Epidemiologic Reviews* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 7–22,

with 11.7% among active duty.<sup>12</sup> NGR also had increased rates of depression. This 2014 publication noted that more “standardized documentation” of the mental health burdens among the NGR as well as explanatory factors needed to be conducted. Cohen et al. noted:

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the Total Force Policy was adopted to treat the 2 components as a single operational force. The first significant demonstration of the unified operational force created by the Total Force Policy was during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF; October 2001–present day) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF; March 2003–December 2011), which exerted substantial demand on the US Armed Forces to train and deploy combat-ready troops to multiple fronts for over 10 years of sustained conflict. As a result of the high operational tempo experienced through OEF/OIF, the military began to place a greater reliance on the reserve component to meet demands. During the height of mobilization in OIF/OEF, reserve component forces constituted approximately 40% of deployed service members in combat operations.<sup>13</sup>

The high percentage of support from NGR for operational deployments is worth noting.

Griffith observed a significant difference in the prevalence of PTSD among NGR; “after deployment, reserve personnel reported higher rates of PTSD and related symptoms than active duty personnel.”<sup>14</sup> Unlike their active duty counterparts who return to the States following a deployment, and face only minor adjustments to their employment (such as the loss of combat pay, hazardous duty pay, etc.), NGR need to reestablish relationships with their citizen employers. While the transition back to civilian work routines can be stressful in and of itself, in

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxu007>, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, et al., “Mental Health Among Reserve,” 7.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, et al., “Mental Health Among Reserve,” 8. References cited: 1. *Department of Defense. Directive 1200.17* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008). 2. Department of Defense. *Title 10: United States Code, Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2011). 3. Department of Defense. *Title 32: US Code* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012). 4. Department of Defense. Joint Publication 1–02: *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> James Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers: A Review of Deployment Stress Symptoms Among Reservists,” *Military Psychology* 22 (2010): 176, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995601003638967>. Near the end of his study, as Griffith analyzed the higher frequency of PTSD among reserve members, he considered several possibilities for this, including the way in which sampling was done. Regarding the sampling, he noted, “It is also possible that reservists who have returned to their civilian jobs gain additional benefits (e.g., psychological, financial, and work-related) by increased reporting of mental health issues,” 201.

some cases NGR may come back to lesser employment, or no employment following a deployment, which is certainly the cause of additional stress as it relates to employment and family relations.<sup>15</sup> Griffith also noted that “extended deployments revealed problems in reservists’ extended absences from civilian employers, including difficulties in transitioning from civilian employment, arranging for employment benefits during and after deployment, and in returning to the previous job position.”<sup>16</sup> Citing a study by Vogt et al., Griffith noted that NGR, who served in the first Gulf War (1990-1991) were also “more likely to report family/relationship disruptions than active duty soldiers, and these disruptions were more strongly related to PTSD symptoms among Guard/Reserve soldiers than among active duty soldiers.”<sup>17</sup> The part-time nature of military service can be a source of social stress as the NGR do not feel fully included in the military culture and military social network.<sup>18</sup> The transition from part-time to full-time status during deployment is accompanied with its own social-psychological consequences.<sup>19</sup> Griffith et al. recommended proactive efforts to address increased stressors. NGR members and their families and employers “should be informed of likely stressors in the deployment cycle, ways of coping with such stressors, and how to recognize when more formal assistance is needed, whether family support group, employer support for the

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<sup>15</sup> Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers,” 197–98.

<sup>16</sup> Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers,” 198.

<sup>17</sup> Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers,” 197.

<sup>18</sup> For example, it is customary to have some public way of saying farewell to active duty personnel before they move on to their next duty station. Depending on the rank and social connections of the service member, these farewell events can range from the formal presentation of farewell mementos at a simple meal, to more elaborate. If a member of the NGR serves with a predominantly active duty force, the farewell is often dismissed since the service member is “just returning” to NGR status. The NGR service members was never really “one of us,” and the tour was shorter than the typical two or three years, so a farewell is not needed. Consciously or unconsciously, the departure is not acknowledged. The NGR member, after active duty, is just returning to NGR status. In some cases, the NGR member is returning to no job and a lot of stress that comes from unemployment after an active duty tour.

<sup>19</sup> Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers,” 178.

guard/reserve, and formal health care.”<sup>20</sup> The Bible study I developed is offered as a proactive measure for recognition of stressors and provision of a tool for coping and strengthening NGR.

Anderson and Goodman emphasized the importance of one’s identity, and sense of purpose, especially as identity can be lost or tested after transition from active duty back to reserve duty, and civilian routines. Military service—especially with clearly defined missions and noble goals—can provide a sense of pride, and a feeling that one matters. As Anderson and Goodman noted in the following, there is a sense of loss with leaving active duty.

When individuals muster out of service, they often feel as if they don’t matter anymore. This can be compounded by family members who have learned to manage without them and don’t need them as they did before the deployment and by employers who may not recognize the value of military experience.<sup>21</sup>

As I reviewed this input from Anderson and Goodman, this loss of identity surfaced as a theme that should be addressed in the Bible study material for NGR. It also highlighted the need to address shifting vocational identities and responsibilities. Moving the identity emphasis away from the changing external details toward a more fixed identity based upon fear of God and obedience to His commands (Eccles. 12:13–14), could be beneficial. For the Christian, one’s identity remains fixed regardless of changing context of vocational identity and responsibilities.<sup>22</sup>

In her research, “When Veterans Return: The Role of Community in Reintegration,” Anne Demers also picked up on the critical importance of identity, and loss of identity for NGR as they leave active duty. Demers emphasized that military identity is lost when NGR end a deployment, and the way that military culture contrasts with civic culture:

Military identity is infused with the values of duty, honor, loyalty, and commitment to comrades, unit, and nation. It promotes self-sacrifice, discipline, obedience to

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<sup>20</sup> Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers,” 180.

<sup>21</sup> Mary L. Anderson and Jane Goodman, “From Military to Civilian Life: Applications of Schlossberg’s Model for Veterans in Transition,” *Career Planning & Adult Development Journal* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 42.

<sup>22</sup> The Bible study addressed this problem of identity from the perspective of Baptismal identity.

legitimate authority, and belief in a merit-based rewards system (Collins, 1998). These values are in conflict with more individualistic, liberty-based civic values, which embrace materialism and excessive individualism. Military training is rooted in the ideal of the warrior, celebrating the group rather than the individual, fostering an intimacy based on sameness, and facilitating the creation of loyal teams, where recruits develop a ‘bond that transcends all others, even the marriage and family bonds we forge in civilian life’ (Tick, 2005, p. 141).<sup>23</sup>

This emphasis on military identity, contrasted with civilian identity is important. It is also important to note the loss of identity NGR suffer as they leave active duty military. Looking ahead to theological observations, this relates to baptismal identity, and the stabilizing gift of baptismal identity as NGR struggle with the shifting vocational identities and responsibilities.

Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier focused on combat veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life. Those who research PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and traumatic impact of amputations as it impacts the lives of our veterans, and their caregivers may find this research helpful. In addition to the focus on combat-related disorders, this study analyzed “functional problems that impede full reintegration into civilian life.”<sup>24</sup> It is the latter emphasis which will be most useful to the purpose of my MAP. This 2014 study highlighted a common concern about lack of research done on NGR. Sayer et al. noted:

Surprisingly little research has compared interpersonal and family functioning between active duty and National Guard or reserve component veterans. Research is needed to identify the potentially distinct needs of the latter given the U.S. military’s increased reliance on National Guard and Reserve component troops in recent wars (IOM, 2010).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Anne Demers, “When Veterans Return: The Role of Community in Reintegration,” *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 16, no. 2 (March 24, 2011): 162, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2010.519281>.

<sup>24</sup> Nina A. Sayer, Kathleen F. Carlson, and Patricia A. Frazier, “Reintegration Challenges in U.S. Service Members and Veterans Following Combat Deployment,” *Social Issues and Policy Review* 8, no. 1 (2014): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12001>.

<sup>25</sup> Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, “Reintegration Challenges,” 46-47. IOM is the abbreviation for Institute of Medicine.

Some points that Sayer et al. noted included the fact that reserve members tend to be older, on average, compared with the active duty community.<sup>26</sup> Reserve members also are at a greater risk of developing PTSD than are active duty forces.<sup>27</sup> All veterans tend to have higher annual unemployment rates, compared with other civilians.<sup>28</sup> Sayer et al. is also helpful for the summary of the unique historical context of the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and neighboring countries.

One area of stress NGR experience is within the return to civilian employment after a long duration (year plus) on active duty. A 2005 report published by the Congressional Budget Office focused attention on this. Since mobilized reservists often faced employment discrimination upon return from active duty, Congress passed The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), to protect the civil rights and employment rights of military members. While USERRA does provide employment protection, it does not give employment protection for self-employed (including clergy), and business owners.<sup>29</sup>

The preceding literature reinforced my assertion that NGR have unique vocational hardship

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<sup>26</sup> Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, "Reintegration Challenges," 36.

<sup>27</sup> Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, "Reintegration Challenges," 52. In my Bible study with NGR, I was alert to the signs of PTSD. The Bible study includes open-ended discussion questions which could elicit feedback related to PTSD symptoms, although that was not the aim for the open-ended questions. If anyone presented PTSD symptoms, or commented to that effect, I had information available about resources such as the Veterans Administration self-administered PTSD screening, as well as local support. Although PTSD is not the focus of my MAP or the Bible study, it is my responsibility to notice responses to their deployment, any impact on civilian career and personal relationships with family and friends, that may be an indicator of PTSD. The self-administered PTSD screening is at: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/ptsd-screening#noJavascript>. Other self-report tools are available at: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/adult-sr/index.asp>.

<sup>28</sup> Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, "Reintegration Challenges," 48. This 2012 statistic, cited by Sayer et al., is worth noting for historical comparison: "The higher rate of unemployment is particularly pronounced among younger veterans. Specifically, in 2011, veteran unemployment in 18–24 year olds reached nearly 30% compared to 17% among civilians (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012)," 48. Statistical updates are needed to determine if this is still a significant problem.

<sup>29</sup> Heidi L. Golding, J. M. Gilmore, and Matthew S. Goldberg, *The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers* (US Congress, Congressional Budget Office, 2005), 1. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA596347>. Note footnote 3 from this citation: "Codified at 38 U.S.C. § § 4301–4333 (2000), as most recently amended by the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. 108–454, § 201–204, 118 Stat. 3606. The protections of USERRA do not apply to self-employed reservists or reservist business owners, terms that are used synonymously in this paper to refer to both incorporated and unincorporated businesses owned by reservists."

to overcome and endure. Since I sought to help NGR overcome or mitigate unique vocational challenges, I now highlight a few ways to deal with those vocational challenges.

Innamorato encouraged addressing stressors with better military leadership, improved military support, and improved training in resilience practices.<sup>30</sup> In line with that thinking, I noted that the *Navy Leader Development Framework* (NLDF) emphasized the importance of competence, character, and connections for leadership development. These are seen as three lanes leaders travel as they grow in their leadership ability. The “connections” lane was added to the most recent addition to the NLDF in 2019. This recognition for the importance of connections in leader development provides important leverage. It is an official Navy document that can be cited to convince leaders to support our NGR as they intentionally invest time in strengthening connections, including spiritual and personal connections. The NLDF states:

*Lane 3 develops intellectual and personal connections. Intellectual connections improve competence by sharing mental models, comparing notes, improving our ability to anticipate our teammates’ next move. Personal connections strengthen our character and resilience by building relationships. We share what we experience, and seek to understand what’s going on in others’ lives. Not only in mind, but in body and spirit as well. Personal connections—relationships—should certainly expand and deepen within our Navy Team, but can and should also include our families, our friends, our churches, our health clubs, and other communities. Personal and intellectual connections are essential to achieving the highest levels of performance.*<sup>31</sup>

I intend to leverage this acknowledgment of the importance of intellectual, spiritual, and personal connections to emphasize the importance of providing pastoral care for NGR.

Tackett focused on social support, spirituality and “self-efficacy factors” as they impact PTSD and for how these three factors “promote resilience” in NGR after deployment, as they

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<sup>30</sup> Lauren Marie Innamorato, “Coping Processes of Military Reservists and Veterans with Daily and Previous Stressors” (PhD diss., Northcentral University, 2020), <https://search.proquest.com/openview/43d71624987763043e16c794a2785d29/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

<sup>31</sup> US Navy, *Navy Leader Development Framework*, ver. 3.0 (May 2019), emphasis original, 5.

return to civilian life. Her definition and application of spirituality from the perspective of a psychologist is of interest.<sup>32</sup> One of her findings implied that it is important for trainers and leaders to understand “the importance of spirituality in maintaining resilience and preventing mental health problems among senior military personnel who deploy to combat zones.”<sup>33</sup> Tackett cited Sheridan for her definition of spirituality as “the search for meaning, purpose, and connection with self, others, the universe, and ultimate reality, however one understands it, which may or may not be expressed through religious forms or institutions.”<sup>34</sup> This definition leaves the door open for natural knowledge of the Creator. It must be complemented with special revelation from the Bible.

Tackett credited self-efficacy as a more important factor than spirituality and social support when it comes to readjustment for NGR. Tackett summarized self-efficacy as “the belief in one’s capabilities to produce desired actions.” Tackett further noted that self-efficacy “can be easily nourished, developed, and strengthened in the military environment.”<sup>35</sup> Note this comment from Tackett: “those with positive self-efficacy visualize success and those with negative self-efficacy

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia D. Tackett, “Resilience Factors Affecting the Readjustment of National Guard Soldiers Returning from Deployment” (PhD diss., Antioch University, Santa Barbara, 2011), 10, <http://aura.antioch.edu/etds/119>. Tackett’s research questions: 1. Are social support, spirituality, and self-efficacy factors that promote resilience in National Guard soldiers returning to civilian life following deployment to a combat environment? 2. Do social support, spirituality, and self-efficacy influence the development of PTSD in National Guard soldiers returning to civilian life following deployment to a combat environment? 3. Does resilience influence the development of PTSD in National Guard soldiers returning to civilian life following deployment to a combat environment?

<sup>33</sup> Tackett “Resilience Factors,” 10.

<sup>34</sup> Tackett “Resilience Factors,” 10. Tackett cited the definition from M. J. Sheridan, “Predicting the Use of Spiritually Derived Interventions in Social Work Practice: A Survey of Practitioners,” *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work* 23, no. 4 (2004): 5–25.

<sup>35</sup> Tackett “Resilience Factors,” 72. Tackett cited this definition of self-efficacy from Bandura: “Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.”

visualize failure.”<sup>36</sup> As I engaged Tackett’s work, I found affirmation for First Article wisdom; humans can do amazing things from the resources the Creator has invested in them.

It is my theological assertion that self-efficacy is not the most important factor for mitigating PTSD and improving the reintegration experiences for NGR. While self-efficacy is important, it is vital to focus on spirituality within communal relationships with God and fellow Christians. Intrinsic to Christian concept of spirituality is life which is lived with faith in God and love for one another, so the emphasis on spirituality will go with an emphasis on social support from spiritual, familial, and military connections. I did not entirely disagree with Tackett about the importance of self-efficacy, but self-efficacy is relative, and must be placed within its proper theological context and limits.

Tackett cited a study by a Navy chaplain that is of interest for its focus on spirituality.

Tackett gave a helpful summary:

As related by Drescher et al. (2006), a Navy chaplain conducted a survey in 2005 at a retreat for 31 Marine Corps chaplains and medical personnel who had recently returned from duty in Iraq. Almost all participants reportedly agreed that spirituality was important and that their experiences in Iraq had affected them in that respect. There were three common changes that emerged among the group: ‘(1) their faith had been challenged, (2) they had found new purpose, and (3) their spiritual religious practices had changed’ (p. 298).<sup>37</sup>

I have not explored the work of Drescher et al. yet, but it may provide some crucial insight.

Suzuki and Kawakami drew from their Japanese heritage as they studied the challenges

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<sup>36</sup> Tackett “Resilience Factors,” 25.

<sup>37</sup> Tackett “Resilience Factors,” 45. Also on page 45 of Tackett, “Drescher et al. identified the ways that veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan may be affected by war in general and the unique experiences presented by the current conflicts. They proposed three issues be considered when working with returning combat veterans: (1) that combat experiences may tax spiritual resources and result in greater need for medical services, (2) that negative religious coping symptoms may exacerbate or be associated with more severe depression or PTSD, and (3) those who have difficulty forgiving and with issues of guilt or hostility may be at greater risk for more severe problems as time passes. The authors suggest that the current conflicts, as identified in previous studies, have introduced distinctive challenges with multiple deployments and expansive use of the RC who have less training time, fewer resources, and have to make greater life adjustments.”

that American military face. Their study did not focus on reserve versus active duty. It contrasted civilian culture with military culture. Suzuki and Kawakami assert that they are highly attuned to the dissonance of the collective culture of the American military operating within a highly individualistic American culture. Within that context, they explored the theme of spiritual development, and cultural identity (individualistic vice collectivistic) as it related to the reintegration of American military personnel with American civilian society. For my focus on the general experiences that NGR have in their everyday vocational activity, Suzuki and Kawakami have been helpful. They did not focus on psychopathology—such as PTSD—but the “common themes that former service members found from their experience of acculturation and reintegration between military and civilian lives.”<sup>38</sup> Their spiritual approach relied on Buddhist teachings and practices, which contrasted with my Lutheran understanding of spirituality.<sup>39</sup> This contrast helped me see Lutheran tenets that need greater emphasis.

Anne Demers reminded me of the importance of narrative, especially as it relates to seeing traumatic experiences within a larger narrative, as noted in this selection:

Burnell, Hunt, and Coleman (2009) and others (Crossley, 2000; Pillemer, 1998; Westwood, Black, & McLean, 2002) assert that reconciliation comes about when negative narratives are integrated as one coherent chapter of a life story. Coherence is ensured when the story is linked together and not merely a succession of separate chronological events. The narrative must contain a theme that integrates events (Burnell et al., 2009), and dysfunctional integration (Berntsen, Willert, & Rubin, 2003)—integration of the trauma into one’s narrative whereby the traumatic experience becomes the focal point of one’s life story and the lens through which all other experiences are then interpreted—must be avoided.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Masako Suzuki and Atsuko Kawakami, “US Military Service Members’ Reintegration, Culture, and Spiritual Development,” *Qualitative Report* 21, no. 11 (2016): 2062.

<sup>39</sup> Suzuki and Kawakami, “Service Members’ Reintegration,” 2071.

<sup>40</sup> Anne Demers, “When Veterans Return: The Role of Community in Reintegration,” *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 16, no. 2 (March 24, 2011): 163, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2010.519281>.

Demers highlighted some First Article wisdom in the preceding quote. Her emphasis on narrative reminded me of a theological observation from Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*: “What we call our life, our troubles, our guilt, is by no means all of reality; there in the Scriptures is our life, our need, our guilt, and our salvation.”<sup>41</sup> First Article wisdom combined with Theological Wisdom, as the Bonhoeffer quote alluded, could help NGR who struggle with a sense of identity due to traumatic experiences, or due to transition from military to civilian settings. The light by which we interpret our experiences needs to be enlightened by the history of Jesus Christ, and the larger history of life and salvation revealed in Holy Scripture.

Demers noted that coherence and a greater sense of a larger narrative that includes traumatic events, comes from interaction with formal sources of professional help as well as information social networks.<sup>42</sup> Connection with others gives the individual a place within a larger community narrative, where a greater history of the community is important even as the individual finds respect and belonging. Demers emphasized identity sources in the following:

Identity is socially, historically, politically, and culturally constructed (Weber, 1998) within communities (i.e., within social or civic spaces) (Kerr, 1996). Ideally, these are places where others recognize, acknowledge, and respect one’s experiences, thus providing a sense of belonging. The way in which our identities are constituted is through narrative, or storytelling. Stories are the primary structure through which we think, relate, and communicate, actively shaping our identities by enabling us to integrate our lived experiences into a cohesive character (Mair, 1988; Cajete, 1994). Not only do the stories that we tell and live by shape our individual continuity by connecting past, present, and future, they also shape our communities. Thus, a reciprocal relationship exists between individual narratives and cultural narratives, each serving to inform the other and to maintain continuity of a sense of self and culture over time (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; O’Sullivan-Lago, de Abreu, & Burgess, 2008; Sussman, 2000).<sup>43</sup>

Demers prompted me to consider how Bible study and Christian fellowship could be part of the

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<sup>41</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper, 1954), 54.

<sup>42</sup> Demers, “When Veterans Return,” 164.

<sup>43</sup> Demers, “When Veterans Return,” 163.

“informal social support networks.”<sup>44</sup> Through shared Bible study, we gain support as we live from the larger narrative defined by Jesus Christ, and the history revealed in the Bible.

The research of Sharma et al. published under the title: “Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health of US Military Veterans,” is applicable for chaplains who offer pastoral care for NGR. The researchers asserted that their study was the first “to investigate the relationship between R/S [religion or spirituality] level and mental health, quality of life, and positive psychosocial characteristics in a nationally representative sample of U.S. military veterans.”<sup>45</sup> The abstract promised an affirmative perspective on the impact that religion and spirituality has for veterans who struggle with posttraumatic stress, depression, and substance abuse.<sup>46</sup> This study, based upon a nationally representative sample of 3,151 veterans, emphasized that the last three decades has witnessed an increased interest in the impact of religion or spirituality. The work of Sharma et al. is valuable for its focus on veterans, and the survey of literature which tracks the associated benefit of religion and spirituality. I appreciated its summary of recent studies which “suggest that R/S can help buffer risk for mental disorders such as depression and PTSD, as well as suicidality.”<sup>47</sup> Sharma et al. also noted: “A number of studies show that greater R/S is linked to

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<sup>44</sup> Demers, “When Veterans Return,” 164. As a final citation from Demers, I noted this helpful comment in her introduction to the Literature Review on page 161. “Unlike quantitative research in which a complete literature review is conducted prior to implementing the study, the relevant literature for qualitative research emerges during data analysis. Identity and the role of military culture in the formation of identity emerged as cross-cutting themes during the analysis process; hence, these topics formed the basis of the literature review and the lens through which the experiences of participants were interpreted.” After having personally experienced one IRB review within the Navy medical community, which predominantly works with quantitative research, I thought her explanation was helpful. Demers’ comments raised a few questions for me. Is the Navy IRB process suited for qualitative research works, since it is staffed with experts in the fields of medicine, and law, who are well versed in quantitative research? Additionally, are they also equipped to understand how qualitative research is designed and executed?

<sup>45</sup> Vanshdeep Sharma, Deborah B. Marin, Harold K. Koenig, Adriana Feder, Brian M. Iacoviello, Steven M. Southwick, and Robert H. Pietrzak, “Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health of U.S. Military Veterans: Results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study,” *Journal of Affective Disorders* 217 (August 1, 2017): 201, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2017.03.071>. Parenthetical text, religion or spirituality, was inserted by Schleusener for the abbreviation “R/S” which was used throughout the article for religion/spirituality.

<sup>46</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 203.

<sup>47</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 198.

lower rates and severity of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidality (Rasic et al., 2011).<sup>48</sup> The correlation between frequent attendance at worship (from a study of over 89,000 nurses) showed that “weekly or more frequent attendance at religious services was associated with a 5-fold lower rate of suicide compared with never attending religious services (VanderWeele et al., 2016).<sup>49</sup> This is significant! The study itself focused on two aims:

1) to examine the relationship between R/S and a comprehensive range of mental health outcomes in a contemporary, nationally representative cohort of U.S. veterans; and 2) to evaluate the extent to which R/S is associated with quality of life, resilience and other psychosocial characteristics which have not been examined in prior work.<sup>50</sup>

The study does not claim to make a causal connection between religion or spirituality and a preventative buffer against mental health disorders, but it noted the strong association that religion or spirituality “may serve to buffer risk” for some of the mental health disorders.<sup>51</sup>

Specifically, High R/S was associated with decreased risk for lifetime posttraumatic stress, major depressive, and alcohol use disorders, while Moderate R/S was associated with decreased risk for lifetime MDD, as well as current suicidal ideation and alcohol use disorder. Higher levels of R/S were also strongly linked with increased dispositional gratitude, purpose in life, and posttraumatic growth. Reverse causation may also explain these associations, as it is possible that living with these conditions helped to foster the development of greater R/S in some veterans, but may have led other veterans to move away from R/S.<sup>52</sup>

The authors concluded the discussion of their study with this evaluation: “While the present study does not have direct treatment implications, the data do support the notion that, for many veterans, R/S beliefs may have a protective role in mitigating risk for certain mental

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<sup>48</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 197.

<sup>49</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 197–98.

<sup>50</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 198. This quote from the same page is also worth consideration: “Given that R/S may relate to a wide range of mental health related variables, we specifically sought to examine associations between levels of R/S and rates of mental disorders, as well as measures of functioning, quality of life, and psychosocial characteristics (e.g., resilience, purpose in life).”

<sup>51</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 201.

<sup>52</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 201. MDD = Major Depressive Disorder.

disorders and promoting positive psychosocial characteristics.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Summary of Review: Psychology and Sociology Literature**

Those who serve in the dual role of civilian and warrior in the NGR have unique vocational characteristics and face specific vocational burdens as they alternate between their civilian and military lives. In summary of my review of recent Psychology and Sociology literature, I highlighted problems and a few approaches to mitigate those problems faced by NGR.

Inherent tension between civilian-military responsibilities, lack of social support from active duty peers, struggle to keep strong civilian social connections, and strained familial relations are some of the unique challenges faced by NGR (cf. Crabtree et al.). NGR suffer from a higher frequency of PTSD,<sup>54</sup> face difficulty as they leave active duty deployments and seek to return to civilian employment (cf. Pyzyk). Research, focused on the mental health and stress levels among deployed NGR, noted higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicidal actions (Lane et al.). NGR had higher prevalence of alcohol use disorders and increased rates of depression (Cohen et al.). Loss of community at the end of deployments, reintegration challenges with a return to civilian life/employment, and all the stress inherent with the shift is tied to higher rates of PTSD among NGR (Griffith). The part-time nature of military service for NGR can be a source of social stress as NGR are not fully included in the military culture and military social network. NGR suffer from a sense of loss (grief) as they shift from military identity and mission

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<sup>53</sup> Sharma et al., “Religion, Spirituality,” 203. Christians with a basic familiarity of the Bible could respond to this “protective role” noted by Sharma et al., and list Bible passages where God defines His protective role. Consider this: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward” (Gen. 15:1). “Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights” (Deut. 33:29). A search for shield, strength, fortress, hiding place, comfort, protection, and more key words will yield.

<sup>54</sup> Crabtree, Bennet, and Schaeffer, “Unique Challenges,” Lane et al., “Prevalence of Perceived Stress,” Griffith, “Citizens Coping as Soldiers,” Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier, “Reintegration Challenges,” all noted higher rates of PTSD among NGR.

back to civilian routines (Anderson and Goodman). If military service heightens vocational vitality and purpose, leaving the military brings a loss of identity. Reintegration struggles for NGR was a common theme (Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier). The cited literature reinforced my assertion that NGR have unique vocational hardship to overcome and endure.

The research literature also suggested responses that may help NGR deal with unique vocational stressors. There are several potentially significant solutions that stand out in this review. First, Griffith et al. suggested pre-deployment training be used to alert NGR to potential hardship, give coping methods, and links to formal help, including support for family as well as NGR. The Bible study I developed is a proactive means to address self-disclosed stressors and equip NGR to address the stressors in a way that is productive and leads to growth. Second, if loss of identity leads to grief, emphasis on Baptismal identity in Bible study can address that grief over identity loss. Third, leveraging the Navy's lanes of leadership (especially the "connections" lane), I will emphasize that pastoral care for NGR via Bible study can build intellectual, spiritual, and personal connections which will be beneficial for bearing the vocational burdens NGR face. Fourth, Tackett emphasized self-efficacy, social support, and spirituality to promote NGR resilience with the return to civilian life. I affirmed that self-efficacy is important, but it cannot be seen as absolute; its importance is relative. While useful in the left-hand realm, it needs to be balanced with spirituality and religious ties within communal relationships NGR have with God and one another. Fifth, Demers emphasized how narrative, and importance of community are vital as NGR deal with traumatic experiences. That observation was helpful, especially as it spurred me to use Bible study as part of that community support.

Finally, I note the emphasis from Sharma et al. regarding the positive correlation between religion and spirituality, and the ability of veterans handling posttraumatic stress, depression, and

substance abuse. I appreciated this article's summary from recent studies which "suggest that R/S can help buffer risk for mental disorders such as depression and PTSD, as well as suicidality."<sup>55</sup> Sharma et al. was valuable for the studies it cited which recognized "that greater R/S is linked to lower rates and severity of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidality (Rasic et al., 2011)."<sup>56</sup> The correlation between frequent attendance at worship and lower rates of suicide among those who frequently attend religious services is certainly heartening.<sup>57</sup>

I now offer some comment about my thought processes related to the psychological and sociological literature. I find myself fighting a battle on at least two fronts. I want to use literature such as the Navy's own leadership material, so the Navy sees quantitative support for the work chaplains do. Chaplains need military leaders to see the value of what chaplains do. Military leaders need to find chaplain contributions to be relevant, and useful to the military. It is also important to hold onto that pragmatic principle lightly, and not be "engrossed in the things of the world" (1 Cor. 7:29–31). Military approval is relative. The word of God endures forever (*Verbum Dei Manet Aeternum*). My work must be orthodox; faithful to Christian confession of the truth. I will continue to fight on both fronts as a citizen-soldier (to borrow Aristotle's term) in the world (*coram mundo*) and the church (*coram Deo*). While faithful to the Word of God, I have used the review of Military, Psychological, Sociological literature primarily to point out the unique needs, challenges, burdens of NGR. I also used the literature to highlight leadership principles, and community enhancing principles that are valued by society (*coram mundo*). I did so in order to highlight fruits of the Spirit, and other effects of sanctification, that grow from the Word of God that sanctifies us by the truth (John 17:17).

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<sup>55</sup> Sharma et al., "Religion, Spirituality," 198.

<sup>56</sup> Sharma et al., "Religion, Spirituality," 197.

<sup>57</sup> Sharma et al., "Religion, Spirituality," 197–98.

One of the dangers with a study of psychological and sociological troubles, as drawn from self-reflection encouraged by the field of psychology, is that one becomes egocentric with an anthropocentric focus. To prevent this focus from taking hold I turn to solid theological resources to keep my project Christ-centered. Before I turn to that material, I believe it is safe to conclude that more than sufficient literature exists to inform my study of the unique vocational hardships that challenge the spiritual stamina and endurance of NGR. The approaches for removing or mitigating those hardships, which other researchers examined, support my effort to help NGR respond to the challenges of reserve duty. This information helped me create the Bible study at the heart of this MAP that is focused on the vocational hardships of NGR.

### **Review of Theological Literature**

At the start of the review of theological literature, I offer a few assumptions for my approach to this review and project. First, my focus is on pastoral care for NGR using a Bible study to support that pastoral care. The Bible study, created for this MAP is not only an educational pursuit but a religious study which is offered according to the theological and confessional standards of my religious organization. The freedom to offer such a study is recognized and supported by Naval instruction.<sup>58</sup>

With that noted, I should be clear about the authority I accord the Bible. As a chaplain endorsed by the LCMS, my approach to the source and authority of the Bible, as Holy Scripture

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<sup>58</sup> Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1730.7E, signed on March 11, 2019, states: “Chaplains will offer faith group-specific RM consistent with the manner and form of their ROs and will always clearly identify their ROs prior to, or when participating in divine services, or when providing RM that is specific to their ROs.” RM is an abbreviation for Religious Ministry, and RO is an abbreviation for Religious Organization. It may also be of interest that 10 U.S. Code § 8221 (a) states: “An officer in the Chaplain Corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a member.” Cited from “Chaplains: divine services,” 10 U.S. Code § 8221, Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/8221>. Also of note is Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17, “Religious Liberty in the Military Services” which states: “no Service member may require a chaplain to perform any rite, ritual, or ceremony that is contrary to the conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the chaplain.”

is expressed in the following statement:

We believe, teach and confess that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit and that God is therefore the true Author of every word of Scripture. We acknowledge that there is a qualitative difference between the inspired witness of Holy Scripture in all its parts and words and the witness of every other form of human expression, making the Bible a unique book.<sup>59</sup>

The unique nature of the Bible is further outlined in the cited LCMS statement. In addition to the statement on inspiration, quoted above, the reader could reference the sections in the footnote for a more comprehensive outline of my view of the authority, central purpose, and general interpretive method I follow when citing the Bible.<sup>60</sup> The Bible to which I refer is the Christian Scriptures, both Old Testament and New Testament. No single translation is authoritative, however I use the English Standard Version (ESV) in this project, unless otherwise noted. The theological literature discussed in this section has been selected because it offers material, which I expected to be helpful for my focus on NGR, as they seek to carry out their vocational duties.

I approached my research as a Lutheran pastor and chaplain. I relied on other authors to help me access material in Luther, applicable to my research purpose. Some of those authors are listed within this review. As I already noted in Chapter Two, I have drawn from Luther's lectures of Genesis for vocational themes, and material from the life of Joseph to use in my Bible study for NGR. I have pulled material from "Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved," as I tackled unique vocational challenges of NGR. When there are sacrifices to endure, and character to strengthen, I used some of Luther's most powerful expressions in "The Freedom of a Christian," along with Luther's "Heidelberg Disputation," and "the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of

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<sup>59</sup> LCMS, *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), 2, <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/doctrine/statement-of-scriptural-and-confessional-principles>.

<sup>60</sup> LCMS, *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, contains these headings under section IV Holy Scripture: The Purpose of Scripture, The Gospel and Holy Scripture, The Authority of Scripture, The Canonical Text of Scripture, The Infallibility of Scripture, The Unity of Scripture, Old Testament Prophecy, Historical Methods of Biblical Interpretation, 2–7.

Christ, and the Brotherhoods.” Since my work for NGR falls well within the intersection of the two realms, I also found appropriate selections from “Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed,” as well as Luther’s commentary on Ps. 82. In addition to the selections taken from *Luther’s Works*,<sup>61</sup> I have often relied on material from Martin Luther which I have found referenced in Paul Althaus’s book *The Theology of Martin Luther*,<sup>62</sup> Francis Pieper’s three volumes of *Christian Dogmatics*,<sup>63</sup> and Philip S. Watson’s *Let God be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther*.<sup>64</sup>

Two realm theology and virtue ethics will be applied to the problem I address. To help me clearly communicate and apply two realm theology and virtue ethics, I relied on Joel Biermann’s work in *Wholly Citizens*, and *A Case for Character*.<sup>65</sup> His work has been especially applicable for helping NGR as they balance their civilian and military vocational responsibilities. More will be

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<sup>61</sup> The titles I have cited from Martin Luther are all found in *Luther’s Works: American Edition*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman, 56 vols. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955–1986. Footnotes provide specific volumes.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). Althaus provides a thorough and systematic survey of Martin Luther’s theology. He has many references to Luther, some of which are cited from *Luther’s Works: American Edition*, although most are from the Weimar editions and other sources. Althaus provided material I needed for the topic of vocation, as well as other theological *loci*. His citations from Luther’s theology have been a big help for Bible study preparation.

<sup>63</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vols. 1–4 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951). *Christian Dogmatics* remains a standard among Lutherans—especially LCMS and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—for the systematic treatment of Christian theology.

<sup>64</sup> Philip S. Watson, *Let God be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948). *Let God be God* emphasized Luther’s Christ-centered view of Scripture. Using the Copernican revolution in astronomy as a guiding metaphor to discuss Luther’s theology, Watson emphasized that Luther’s theology revolves around the work and will of God with the focal point on salvation given and revealed in Christ Jesus. Watson quoted Luther on page 23: “For the proper subject of theology is man as guilty on account of sin, and lost, and God the justifier and saviour of man as a sinner.” Luther pulled away from an egocentric theology where “man is the measure of all things—even of God. For God Himself is understood in the light of man,” 36, to a Christocentric view of theology. I have taken notes from Watson for past Bible studies and will turn to it for material needed to teach vocation, theology of the cross, the place for reason and theology of the Word, as well as help to expose and oppose moralism, mysticism, and rationalism (Watson, 93-96). Watson’s material drawn from Luther, the selected quotations from Luther’s writings, lectures, and sermons have impacted my approach to pastoral care. His many citations from Luther’s Galatians commentary reminded me to review that material as it is beneficial for pastoral care of NGR.

<sup>65</sup> Biermann, *Wholly Citizens*.

said about *A Case for Character* in the following pages.

Robert Benne has also been a faithful aid in my effort to communicate and apply two realm theological teaching to NGR challenges. I drew from his work in *Paradoxical Vision*, to develop Bible study material.<sup>66</sup> Benne's *Paradoxical Vision* helped me develop Bible study materials, from a Lutheran perspective, that equips NGR for their vocational challenges. Benne was helpful for his emphasis on the Lutheran paradoxical approach to vocation contrasted with Catholic and Reformed theology. Biermann gave this summary of Benne's paradoxical approach: "Benne's paradoxical vision includes the *simul iustus et peccator*, God's right-hand and left-hand rule, and the now-but-not-yet reality of God's kingdom."<sup>67</sup> While Benne emphasized the paradoxical approach which is distinctly Lutheran, I relied on Biermann's work to provide a framework that helps NGR as they address their unique vocational challenges.

In addition to Benne's contributions, there are more Lutheran resources I will tap to provide Lutheran theological emphases, especially drawn from Christian vocation, two kingdoms doctrine (or two realm) theology, and theology of the cross. Although I do not review these resources in the following pages, they have impacted my theological approach and practical application for teaching Christian vocation, specifically as it relates to NGR. Several resources that I will cite include Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*,<sup>68</sup> and Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross*.<sup>69</sup> I am also interested in Jon Ferguson's 2020 PhD dissertation, "The Sword & The Mask: Toward a Confessional Lutheran Account of Spiritual Warfare."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*.

<sup>67</sup> Biermann, *A Case for Character*, 57.

<sup>68</sup> Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>69</sup> Veith, *Spirituality of the Cross*.

<sup>70</sup> Jon Ferguson, "The Sword & The Mask: Toward a Confessional Lutheran Account of Spiritual Warfare" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2020), <https://scholar.csl.edu/phd/79>.

To help me engage in the work that has been done at the intersection of theology and recent challenges from our cultural zeitgeist, I have enlisted help from Christian Smith, James K. A. Smith, and James Davison Hunter.

### Christian Smith

As I addressed NGR vocational challenges I anticipated that I would need to address the influences Christians face in the Western world—materialism, practical atheism, normal nihilism, all have their impact. Christian Smith alerted me to these challenges and how they impact Christians, while he also spurred me to find a means to counteract them. His discussion of his findings under the heading of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) was especially pertinent. MTD is the summary term Christian Smith used to describe the spiritual and religious beliefs represented by 267 U.S. teenagers he surveyed from 45 states in rural areas, towns and cities, the analysis of which was published in 2005, in his book, *Soul Searching*. I focused on the fourth chapter, “God, Religion, Whatever: On Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”<sup>71</sup> Christian Smith summarized the interpretation of his research results as follows:

We advance our thesis somewhat tentatively as less than a conclusive fact but more than mere conjecture: we suggest that the de facto dominant religion among contemporary U.S. teenagers is what we might well call ‘Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.’ The Creed of this religion, as codified from what emerged from our interviews, sounds something like this:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.

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<sup>71</sup> Christian Smith, “God, Religion, Whatever: On Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford, 2005), chap. 4, 118–71.

4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.

5. Good people go to heaven when they die.<sup>72</sup>

As I have listened to conversations about religion and spirituality, I have heard a lot of talk about God wanting me to be happy (cf. point 3 of MTD). Defined by Biblical theology, that is not a problem in and of itself, although the terminology is not best. Too often talk of “being happy” is defined by human measures, not God's measures. God wants his people to be faithful. Christ called us to follow him, with losing our life to find life, and carrying the cross as He may require. In an age when *equity* is the big buzz word,<sup>73</sup> it is even more vital to remember that Christ does not promise that all crosses that Christians are called to carry will be equal. Individual crosses will vary. Regardless of the cross, Christ is always faithful (2 Tim. 2:13) to us and calls us to be faithful, as Christ said in Rev. 2:10: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” God wants us to follow Christ in faith, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, as we grow in obedience. God does not exist to make us happy. That challenges many popular notions expressed among

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<sup>72</sup> Smith, *Soul Searching*, 162.

<sup>73</sup> Christopher F. Rufo, “Critical Race Theory: What It Is and How to Fight It,” *Imprimis* 50, no. 3 (March 2021), <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/critical-race-theory-fight/>. As a historical footnote, I want to note a shift in terminology in the civic realm in the USA, as many speak less in terms of *equality* (equal opportunity) and more in terms of *equity* (equal results). Christopher Rufo asserts that the term *equity* is being used as a Neo-Marxist term, as noted in this lecture excerpt. “There are a series of euphemisms deployed by its supporters to describe critical race theory, including ‘equity,’ ‘social justice,’ ‘diversity and inclusion,’ and ‘culturally responsive teaching.’ Critical race theorists, masters of language construction, realize that ‘neo-Marxism’ would be a hard sell. *Equity*, on the other hand, sounds non-threatening and is easily confused with the American principle of *equality*. But the distinction is vast and important. Indeed, equality—the principle proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, defended in the Civil War, and codified into law with the 14th and 15th Amendments, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965—is explicitly rejected by critical race theorists. To them, equality represents ‘mere nondiscrimination’ and provides ‘camouflage’ for white supremacy, patriarchy, and oppression.”

Christians, by Christian writers, pastors, and teachers. It is not all about you. I am grateful for Christian Smith providing the research to understand that common spirituality of MTD.

All five points of the MTD creed are worth noting but I close my comments on Christian Smith with a few observations about point 4. Those who were teenagers when this book was published (2005) form the population base of many who currently serve in the military. I have often heard expressions like point 4. The NGR following MTD point 4 might say: “What God says does not impact my sex life or private life. If I am not hurting anyone, what I do is my own business.” I have counseled military who came to me because they feared certain physical symptoms indicated that they caught a sexually transmitted disease (STD). For some, the STD can be a tool God uses to work repentant faith. For others, especially those who got favorable medical diagnosis or treatment, God no longer seemed needed for them. Problem was solved with medical treatment. While the physical symptoms were addressed, the spiritual, moral, and character dimensions of the situation remained unaddressed. For far too many, God seems to be selectively available to get involved in life as a Divine Butler or Cosmic Therapist,<sup>74</sup> but God is not seen as the just and holy God to whom we are to give an account for all of life.

The Christian faith should be proclaimed as the revealed story of life with God that is worth living because it endures forever, but due to secularism infecting the church, Christianity has become “an extra thing added to their lives, an extra possession. It has been house, car, family, and, oh yes, of course, Jesus too. But with all these other things added on, life has not revolved around Christ and the righteousness he brings.”<sup>75</sup> In my military service, I have seen and heard too many examples of how secularism has robbed our warriors of a healthy “reason for

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<sup>74</sup> Smith, *Soul Searching*, 165.

<sup>75</sup> James G. Kiecker, *Martin Luther and the Long Reformation: From Response to Reform in the Church* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1992), 226.

being.” What has infected much of the world has also infected the church. There are compelling ideas, repetitive messages and mantras so commonly heard and believed in our society, that we may not even recognize them. Those ideas and philosophies habituate us to live like practical atheists who abide by a normal nihilism.<sup>76</sup> Christian Smith asserts that MTD “is colonizing many historical religious traditions and, almost without anyone noticing, converting believers in the old faiths to its alternative religious vision of divinely underwritten personal happiness and interpersonal niceness.”<sup>77</sup> Smith asserted that Christianity is suffering from something worse than the influence of secularism; it is not “being secularized. Rather more subtly, Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith.”<sup>78</sup> Christian Smith alerted me to the dangers of MTD and sharpened my resolved to address the misguided tenets of MTD in the Bible study I prepared to equip NGR to deal with their vocational challenges.

#### James K. A. Smith

James K.A. Smith helped me see the secular “liturgies” that mis-shape our habits, twisting souls with materialism and normal nihilism. I anticipated that James Smith would help me

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<sup>76</sup> James Edwards, “The City in a Dome,” in *The Plain Sense of Things: The Fate of Religion in an Age of Normal Nihilism* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997), 1–57. James Edwards coined the phrase *normal nihilism*, in his book, *The Plain Sense of Things*. Normal nihilism is the logical conclusion of the Enlightenment, and Nietzschean philosophy. If there is no god, life centers on the individual as the decider of truth, values, and what matters. Everything can be questioned and challenged, nothing is sacred. There are no absolute truths, and no god to reveal truth. The individual is free to choose truth, and free to choose what matters. The universe is not centered on any god or universal truth, but the individual and the individual’s choice. I decide what is real. Only ego’s choice is sacred. That is “normal nihilism.” This is not an option people choose but the reality for all who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People are not “free to choose” but because of the collapse of a world with foundations, all people are required to choose what will “work” for them. There is no “given” anymore to hold everyone together in a common world. Christianity, along with ever other way of making sense of the world is simply one of the options that cannot be proven. So, “take your pick!” An important step toward combatting “normal nihilism” is recognized its existence.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Soul Searching*, 171.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, *Soul Searching*, 171.

communicate for NGR the importance of sacred liturgies to resist cultural influences that deform us and use those liturgies to re-form Christian character so desperately needed.<sup>79</sup> Smith, addressed how secularism deforms the imagination: “If discipleship is a matter of Christian formation, and specifically the formation of the imagination, then we need to realize that these same dynamics of formation also characterize *deformation*. Disordered secular liturgies, ordered to a rival *telos*, also work on the imagination.”<sup>80</sup> Disordered secular liturgies which rail against truth and virtue leave generations with a pointless existence, no real *telos*, other than eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. The missing *telos* is the reality of normal nihilism which is the general quality of the world around. So, choosing the hedonistic route is one way to go. Christians need to realize that our formation must be deliberate and intensive if we hope to form our people into God’s “story” of everything. We need to review the history of the world, as the Holy Spirit enlightened us to see through the Word of God and live our lives as a rehearsal of the glory to come after “the resurrection of the body” when we enjoy “life everlasting,” as the orthodox phrases from the Apostles’ Creed bring to mind. This review and rehearsal come through worship, Bible study, and catechetical practices that rehearse the truth of Christianity in daily faithful living which Christians model for one another in the home, the congregation, and larger communities surround us where we live as salt of the earth and light of the world.

Because forces of hedonism and philosophical conclusions such as normal nihilism are working against solid character formation, I intentionally created the Bible study course for NGR to help *review*, *reinforce*, and *rehearse* for them what the good is and why the good is worth doing. To help NGR consider current or future parental vocational responsibilities, the

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<sup>79</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

<sup>80</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 140.

Bible study also addressed the need to equip our children by filling the heart, brain, and soul with a true purpose. Children may not follow their parents' military service, but all children will have vocational responsibilities to be good family members, neighbors, and citizens. In a world where people have no "why," or the "why" is flimsy and destructive, we need to arm our children with their God-given sense of purpose and direction in life. God has given them this sense of purpose and direction through the formation given in home and church. That includes teaching and modeling the ten commandments for children, so our children learn it by heart, and know right from wrong in a morally confused world. That means confessing the Apostles' Creed with our children and modeling the life that grows from that confession.

James K. A. Smith helped me emphasize the importance of seeing the larger narrative within which Christians live, move, and have their being. "Many see no point to life because they do not know the history of God's salvation. As Smith stated: "I can't answer the questions, 'What ought I to do?' unless I have already answered a prior question, 'Of what story am I a part?' It is a story that provides the moral map of our universe. It is narrative that trains our emotional perceptual apparatus to perceive the world as meaningful."<sup>81</sup> Few realize this truth. Life ends up being so shallow and empty because people try to slide through life without any idea about what the true life story is all about, as God has revealed for us in Christ Jesus. I facilitated discussion within the Bible study course to help NGR consider how faithful presence and faithful efforts can share the wisdom of the creedal history in which we live, move, and have our being. As we studied the Bible together, I exposed the futility of secular liturgies, empty Moralistic Therapeutic Deism litanies, and commonly accepted lies. For the NGR who already

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<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 108. In this quote, Smith summarizes the philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre who says that stories are so fundamental to our identity that we do not know what to do without one.

had a gut feeling about the banality of living by selfishly defined purposes, I pointed them toward life to the full in Christ Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Smith inspired me to use the Bible study to help NGR avoid a pointless and empty life by announcing the true narrative in which God called us to live within the life restored by God's salvation in Christ Jesus. There is satisfying purpose found in an obedient life of love that is lived for the good of others. Smith helped me understand the value of emphasizing that historical narrative.

#### James Davison Hunter

I also consulted James Davison Hunter to keep my solutions grounded. In his book, *Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, Hunter broadly covered the conflict Christians have with culture, examined why Christian institutional leaders engage in this conflict, summarized the approaches they take to “change the world,” and why these are counterproductive.

Hunter encouraged Christians to seek a “faithful presence” as they faithfully carry out vocational duties, rather than ambitiously (and erroneously) seeking to change the world through counterproductive means. He did this via three essays: “Essay I, Christianity and World-Changing; Essay II, Rethinking Power,” and “Essay III, Toward a New City Commons: Reflections on a Theology of Faithful Presence.” Essay I reviewed the “healthy desire” of Christians to change the world for the better, a desire rooted “in sound biblical and theological reasoning,” but that change comes “with mixed effect.”<sup>82</sup> Essay II sketched the Christian right, left, and Neo-Anabaptists as they use political power to change the world. Reflective readers should find their own church bodies within the mix.<sup>83</sup> I appreciated the way Hunter laid out his

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<sup>82</sup> James Davison Hunter, *Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 273.

<sup>83</sup> In an exchange the author had with his advisor, Joel Biermann noted that Hunter's “threefold division is

argument and finished his book with a summary of his main points in chapter six of essay III. He closed with an appeal for Christians in America to adopt a new way to “change the world.” In his appeal, he used a text for exiles in Jer. 29, followed by an illustration of Christian engagement in the world from centuries long past (a letter from Mathetes). Then he appealed for the pursuit of a “new city commons, grounded in a theology of faithful presence.” The appeal for Christians to strive for a “faithful presence” in the world is repeated throughout the book.<sup>84</sup>

In Essay II, “Rethinking Power,” Hunter summarized what makes power, in theory and practice. His critique of how Christians in America used that power on the right, left, and among neo-Anabaptists should give all Christians cause to reflect. Hunter gave a helpful exposé on the nature of power, and the increased politicization of everything; “law increases as cultural consensus decreases.”<sup>85</sup> By imposing ideology on others everything becomes politicized; “instead of the political realm being seen as one part of public life, all of public life tends to be reduced to the political.”<sup>86</sup> Hunter exposed the unintended consequences American Christians brought, in an attempt to change and improve culture with tools of power. All of this driven by a myth of the ideal America, a myth based on a selective recall and interpretation of history. Hunter is realistic in his view of how Christians have misused political solutions, the damage, and better ways “Christians must operate with as much grace and forgiveness as possible because failure to use power rightly is, as I say, unavoidable.”<sup>87</sup> Hunter sees power realistically and takes the neo-Anabaptists to task for thinking they can avoid using power as they engage culture.

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significant—I think it likely serves us today as Niebuhr’s fivefold division served in the last century.”

<sup>84</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 284.

<sup>85</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 102.

<sup>86</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 105.

<sup>87</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 184.

Christians have and use it, as Hunter noted, “The perfectionist impulse within the neo-Anabaptist tradition (or any other pietist confession) is, this side of heaven, fundamentally misleading.”<sup>88</sup>

Hunter concluded Essay II with a call to still engage the world for the good.

In Essay III, Hunter reflected on what that engagement might look like, with theological reflections to promote “faithful presence.” In Essay III, Hunter emphasized that it is helpful to look at the life Christians live “in the world but not of the world” via the dialectic of “affirmation and antithesis.”<sup>89</sup> A more robust leverage of First Article theology can help; since this is God’s world and it is God’s good creation, we must help one another see the goodness, beauty, and truth that remain in this world which, though fallen, is God’s good creation. As Christians strive to live with that faithful presence in life, Hunter suggested that they must not only be opposed to what is bad, merely living a life of negation. Yes, oppose what is bad, but we must also embrace, affirm, and promote the good that God has provided.

Considering Jeremiah’s word for exiles (Jer. 29:4–7), Hunter spurred Christian leaders to faithfully reflect upon how God calls us to exercise our vocational duties, especially when we live in a place where the people are “indifferent, hostile, or ungrateful.”<sup>90</sup> What are the unique features, challenges, and opportunities with the specific situation where God has sent us? How

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<sup>88</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 182. “The church certainly is community, fellowship, and gathering, but it is also an institution, and institutions, by their very nature, possess power and exercise power,” 182.

<sup>89</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 231.

<sup>90</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 278. In the following quote, also from page 278, Hunter connected Jer. 29 with New Testament themes: “The story of Jeremiah 29 comports well with what we learn from St. Peter, who with so many others speaks of Christians as “exiles in the world” (1:1, 2:11) encouraging us to “live [our] lives as strangers here in reverent fear” (1:17). God is at work in our own place of exile, and the welfare of those with whom we share a world is tied to our own welfare. In this light, St. Peter encourages believers repeatedly to be “eager to do good” (3:17) and for each person to “use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (4:10). This understanding also comports with other New Testament admonitions to “never tire of doing right” (II Thess. 3:13), to “let your magnanimity be manifest to all” (Phil. 4:5), and to “look to each other’s interest and not merely to your own” (Phil. 2:4). As Paul writes elsewhere, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). All of this is in keeping with the instruction that the people of God are to be committed to the welfare of the cities in which they reside in exile, even when the city is indifferent, hostile, or ungrateful.”

can we be faithful in that situation, bringing a faithful presence of God’s people? “A theology of faithful presence calls Christians to enact God’s shalom in the circumstances in which God has placed them and to actively seek it on behalf of others.”<sup>91</sup> How can we contribute to greater shalom for the community in which we live and serve? The challenge is for the chaplains and NGR whom they serve to consider how to build “human flourishing in a pluralistic world.”<sup>92</sup> This is living one’s vocation well. “Certainly Christians, at their best, will neither create a perfect world nor one that is altogether new; but by enacting shalom and seeking it on behalf of all others through the practice of faithful presence, it is possible, just possible, that they will help to make the world a little bit better.”<sup>93</sup> There is work to be done, with faith and hope in God.

Hunter helped me focus on two key questions as I pursue this project. First, what are the unique features, challenges, and opportunities within the specific situation where God has placed us? Second, how can Lutheran chaplains, pastors and congregations bring a faithful presence as God’s people when addressing the needs and concerns of NGR? Hunter contributed to my work by encouraging a consideration of faithful attempts to provide some improvement for the challenges NGR face, while encouraging growth of character. The appeal to Christians striving for a “faithful presence,” rather than futilely aiming for a wholesale change of world conditions, is repeated throughout the book.<sup>94</sup> His book was a valuable aid to keep my proposed solutions grounded in a faithful Christian response to challenges that is appropriate to vocational settings and cultural conditions. I now turn to a review of Lutheran theological material.

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<sup>91</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 278.

<sup>92</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 279.

<sup>93</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 286.

<sup>94</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 284.

## Lutheran Theological Material

Several Lutheran theologians contributed significantly to my thought processes as I worked on this project. I gave a more detailed review of those contributors in the following pages. I began with more recent work from Biermann, Steele, and Marrs, and worked back to Wingren, all of whom mined gems from Luther's theological writings. I have drawn out the key points of emphasis from these authors that impacted my analysis of other material and helped me build a Bible study for the benefit of NGR.

### Joel Biermann

Joel Biermann's work, especially in *A Case for Character*, was important for my MAP because he addressed the theological concerns Lutherans have of succumbing to the errors of rigid legalism on the one hand and hedonistic antinomianism on the other. Both errors deserve legitimate caution. Since I am focusing on sanctification, further narrowed to the *locus* of vocation (as this MAP does), I must communicate that justification remains the grace-based foundation for vocation. I keep in mind the theological concerns Biermann addressed from the start, concerns which too often kept pastors from properly teaching moral guidance from Scripture, and the importance of godly behavior and godly character.

Biermann introduced his book with a fictional story of a pastor preaching a Bible series from Colossians. When the pastor came to the text from Col. 3:18–25 that brings a focus on “right behavior within human relationships” and “ethical or moral directives and admonitions,” the pastor managed to avoid any such ethical or moral dimensions. He preached the law in its spiritual use to expose sin and then applied the grace of forgiveness, thus avoiding an ethical, moral, admonitory application of the law. Out of a fear of legalism the pastor defaulted to antinomianism, even though his goal was to keep the gospel central in his preaching. As noted,

this pastor's preaching was historical fiction. But the example is all too real. Biermann gave his analysis of the fictional example of Lutheran preaching:

The problem is not the gospel. ... The gospel is central and is the unique message of the Christian faith. It deserves a prominent and permanent place in the preaching of the church. The problem is not the gospel. The problem is when the preaching of the gospel leaves no room for anything else. The problem is when the gospel is made to trump the call for a certain way of life on the part of God's people. The problem is when those who hear Christian preaching conclude that morality is a matter of personal preference and individual interpretation. The problem is when the preaching of the church undermines and even eliminates any place for the teaching of morality.<sup>95</sup>

Biermann exposed theological barriers that frustrated efforts among Lutherans to “shape character and teach morality.”<sup>96</sup> He also offered a way to push through the barriers. In his search for a theologically defensible way to promote the building of character through virtue, Biermann developed a framework that can be used to encourage Lutherans to teach virtue and embrace the habitual practices needed to embody virtue ethics. Biermann reviewed the two kinds of righteousness especially as it is grounded in Luther's preface to Galatians.<sup>97</sup> Biermann then outlined a creedal framework, which he tied to the Lutheran confessions and key writings from Luther and Melancthon.

I have relied on Joel Biermann's creedal framework, which he introduced in *A Case for Character*, to help me communicate the Biblical concept of *righteousness* and apply that concept to Christian vocation. Biermann used the creedal framework to clearly explain that there are two

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<sup>95</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 5. Additionally, on page 6 of the same source, Bierman noted the impact the church can have on shaping character. “The church is perfectly poised to be a place of remarkable relevance in the world because the church is capable of producing the people of character and moral conviction that society desperately needs. But this cannot happen until the theological problem is addressed.” Shaping character and teaching morality may not be the central mission of the church, but it is part of what Christ has called us to do.

<sup>97</sup> See Chapter Two for a summary of the two kinds of righteousness, based upon Luther's introduction to his commentary on Galatians.

kinds of righteousness—active and passive righteousness—that play important roles in the Christian’s life. In each Christian’s relationship with God (*coram Deo*), a Christian is declared to be perfectly righteous because of Christ’s righteousness which is imputed to the Christian by God’s gracious gift, through faith in Christ. This is apart from any works that a Christian performs prior to conversion or after conversion to faith. The proclamation of this good news of Jesus Christ, and the clear exposition of justification must remain central. Biermann supports this central message throughout, but rightly stressed that it is not the only message: “Justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone remains the church’s central doctrine and *raison d’être*. It is not, however, the only thing that the church can do or is called to do.”<sup>98</sup>

When a Christian has this gift of righteousness before God (*coram Deo*), the Christian also produces a second kind of righteousness, which is the fruitful labors of love we perform for our family, congregation, civil society, country, and the world (*coram mundo*).

In his diagram of the three kinds of righteousness, Biermann labeled the passive righteousness received by grace through faith in Christ alone as righteousness 2 or *justifying righteousness*. Christ achieved this righteousness for us through His work as summarized in the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. The Christian—perfectly righteous *coram Deo*, solely because of this passive righteousness—will be active in vocational duties performed for the benefit of his or her neighbor, as vocational duties are carried out in love for the benefit of the world (*coram mundo*). These acts of righteousness (deeds of love), worked in and through the Christian by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, are labeled righteousness 3 or *conforming righteousness*. Righteousness 3 is associated with the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. I mentioned righteousness 2 and 3 first, to emphasize that righteousness unique to each Christian’s

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<sup>98</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 6.

life because of the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Righteousness 1 is *governing righteousness*, the moral activity of all people before the world (*coram mundo*) which has its basis in the creative work of God in the world. Righteousness 1 is the morality of all people (*coram mundo*) whether they are Christian or not, monotheists or atheists. This righteousness may be called civic duty, or civil righteousness in the Lutheran confessions.<sup>99</sup> I also turned to *A Case for Character*, to address vocational crosses. Biermann's emphasis on personal responsibility and character formation is based justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and faithfully doing what one has been given to do *coram mundo*.

Biermann emphasized that virtue ethics and character go together. Bierman explained that Virtue ethics combine the interests and concerns of the ethics of duty (cf. Immanuel Kant) and utilitarian ethics (cf. John Stuart Mill). "Virtue ethics is best seen not as an alternative or third way but, rather, as a wider view of the ethical task, one that encompasses the concerns and contributions of both deontological and utilitarian ethics."<sup>100</sup> Virtue ethics focuses on "being," which leads to doing, and considers the "doing" that helps to shape ones being.

Biermann emphasized the certainty of baptismal identity, as the basis for one's character, when considering an ethical response to challenging ethical dilemmas. Note the emphasis of virtue ethics and its connection to character: "Rather than obsessing over moral quandaries arising out of difficult, though exceptional and rarely encountered, ethical dilemmas, an ethics of

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<sup>99</sup> Biermann, Chart 5.1 in *Case for Character*, 149. Bierman used a diagram (Chart 5.1) to illustrate how the three kinds of righteousness are related. It shows how three kinds of righteousness are manifested as NGR interact with vocational challenges. In the diagram, Bierman illustrated that righteousness 1 does not overlap with 2 and 3.

<sup>100</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 20. Immanuel Kant was influential in deontologist morality, which Biermann contrasted with utilitarian in the following quote, also from page 20. "Affirming the reality and authority of absolutes, deontologists teach that there is a universal duty that one must follow in order to be moral. Utilitarian, or consequentialist, ethicists advocate a decidedly different approach. Represented well by John Stuart Mill, utilitarians discount the existence of absolutes and argue that moral actions are determined not by duty but by what brings the greatest good to the greatest number."

virtue concentrates on the development of people who display virtuous character in the mundane routines of ordinary life.<sup>101</sup> As Biermann emphasized the central importance of character development within virtue ethics, he cited Gilbert Meilaender and Stanley Hauerwas for support as noted in the following quote.

Certainly, extraordinary moments of ethical perplexity do arise. Nonetheless, ‘an ethic of virtue,’ Gilbert Meilaender observes, ‘seeks to focus not only on such moments of great anxiety and uncertainty in life but also on the continuities, the habits of behavior which make us the persons we are.’ Put another way, an ethics of virtue focuses on ‘being’ while traditional ethics of duty or utility tend to focus on ‘doing.’ Stanley Hauerwas concurs: ‘Christian ethics is concerned more with who we are than what we do.’<sup>102</sup>

Being leads to doing. Who we are results in what we do. I kept that in mind as I prepared Bible study material to encourage and equip NGR. Christians in the NGR did not need me to address every possible moral quandary or challenging set of circumstances within the tension of civilian and military duties. Rather, they needed a study focused on character development, attached to gospel-centered being. This being, given us in Christ, leads to a clearer perception of virtuous activity and ethical decisions. That is Biermann’s point in the following:

Another contribution of ethics centered on virtue is the recognition that an individual’s character has much to do with that individual’s perception of ethical situations. Put differently, the sort of virtues that shape a person’s life will determine how that person thinks about moral questions. One man’s paralyzing moral dilemma is another’s black-and-white conclusion. One woman’s compelling sense of moral obligation is for another a casually dismissed sense of preference. Meilaender notes, ‘What we ought to do may depend on the sort of person we are. What duties we perceive may depend upon what virtues shape our vision of the world.’<sup>103</sup>

Especially when vocational duties are difficult, emphasis on character and growth of character is vital. As hardships encountered in the civilian and military realms cannot be

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<sup>101</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 21.

<sup>102</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 21.

<sup>103</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 22. The quotation from Meilaender is drawn from Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 33–34.

removed or mitigated, the proper pastoral care for the NGR must focus on personal growth. As Christ has given chaplains to build up the body of Christ, chaplains can use counseling and Bible study to build character (cf. Eph. 4). This will not be merely a thought experiment in a classroom setting. Proper pastoral care for NGR must emphasize the practical execution of duties in the world (*coram mundo*) especially when duties come with suffering. While we endure that suffering, we do so from the solid basis of the peace we have with God (Rom. 5:1–2) through the gift of Christ’s righteousness (*coram Deo*). Note the suffering, endurance, character, and hope Paul expressed in Rom. 5:3–5: “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ shapes and informs the sort of people we are, and how we respond to suffering.

The sort of people we are finds its God-designed outlet in virtues that further shape us along with the relationship with God that shapes us. Using the image of rain, Luther emphasized how the gift of righteousness impacts us: “When I have this righteousness within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises.”<sup>104</sup> Biermann amplified this emphasis in *A Case for Character*, “In other words, the gospel carries not only negative content (freed *from* something), but also positive content (freed *for* something). “The free gift of God in Christ Jesus, we need to say is that we *get to do* all sorts of splendid things as his priestly people.”<sup>105</sup> Character is shaped and formed by the Divine Service and Bible study, and then exercised with

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<sup>104</sup> *LW* 26:11–12.

<sup>105</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 41–42. Biermann quoted David S. Yeago, “Sacramental Lutheranism at the End of the Modern Age,” *Lutheran Forum* 34, no. 4 (Christmas/Winter 2000): 14.

endurance during practical challenges in life; in this way the NGR is equipped to bear the burdens and vocational challenges of civilian-military service.

Biermann's work in *A Case for Character*, guided and assisted me well in practical application of theology. With a Bible study limited to five sessions, I needed to give theological application quickly, clearly, and concisely. The theological application needed to keep justification the foundational message, but not the only message. It needed to emphasize the gospel's negative and positive content (freed *from* and *for* something), as the Bible study material aimed to help develop NGR ability to "display virtuous character in the mundane routines of ordinary life."<sup>106</sup> Biermann's material from *A Case for Character* helped do just that.

#### Walter Steele

Although my MAP does not focus on psychology, Walter Steele's PhD dissertation helped me approach my research problem from a solid baptismal emphasis. Steele emphasized both the individual and corporate identity Christians received through baptism into Christ. This shared identity in the communion of saints (cf. Suzuki and Kawakami for community emphasis) brings a shared responsibility within this communion to be faithful in the context of a world that is not faithful. Steele emphasized: "The social milieu certainly presents value systems which contradict the word of God. Indwelling sin likewise is contrary to the will of God. In baptism, the Christian is immersed into a new value system and given a counter-cultural ideology."<sup>107</sup> Steele's work supported my Bible study to equip the NGR with godly guidance so that NGR can better execute their vocational duties, and develop character, as they overcome or endure vocational

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<sup>106</sup> Biermann, *Case for Character*, 21.

<sup>107</sup> Walter Steele, "A Theological Dialogue with and Evaluation of Erik H. Erikson's Theory of Identity Development in Light of Pauline Baptismal Theology in Romans and Some Implications for Pastoral Care" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2017), 298, <https://scholar.csl.edu/phd/40>.

challenges. His works emphasized the “pastoral care work of assisting Christians in actualizing that identity in the various states of life,” while using the Rite of Holy Baptism in pastoral care.<sup>108</sup>

Steele’s focus, and literature cited in his Ph.D. dissertation, have been effective for emphasizing baptismal identity as NGR struggle with vocational burdens and decisions. Steele undertook his dissertation because he served as a chaplain in the Armed Forces, as he acknowledged: “Those of us who have forever been changed by war need a solid foundation for an enduring identity. It is toward providing an explanation of this foundation that this dissertation is directed.”<sup>109</sup> Steele gave pastoral care suggestions in Chapter Five, which were very applicable to my MAP since his suggestions anchored vocational service in the baptismally conferred identity in Christ. Baptismal identity does not change “since it is not based on the imperfection of a person’s work in initiative, industry, or even in vocation.”<sup>110</sup> It gives identity built on the rock of Christ’s righteousness. This unchanging, perfect righteousness is the solid basis from which Christians then actualize their righteous identity. This was a vital emphasis in the Bible study I prepared for NGR.

#### Rick Marrs

Rick Marrs helped my project because my chaplain work includes formal pastoral counseling sessions, and informal conversations that become impromptu counseling and soul-care talks. I have not had the extensive training that Dr. Marrs has in psychological counseling, so I find his expertise in that field significant, especially since he combined it with his emphasis on a Christ-centered approach to counseling. Although my project is not focused on counseling, the Bible study intersects with the counseling soul-care chaplains give. I have high regard for the

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<sup>108</sup> Steele, “Dialogue and Evaluation,” iv.

<sup>109</sup> Steele, “Dialogue and Evaluation,” iii. Steele served as a Navy chaplain.

<sup>110</sup> Steele, “Dialogue and Evaluation,” 266.

entire book, and especially leveraged chapters seven and eight, for their focus on the theology of the Word and Luther's pastoral care. It is helpful to remember that the Word is performative without being manipulative. God's Word, as Marrs wrote, "creates and recreates. It changes people's hearts and minds, especially when the Gospel 'for you' aspect of that Word is emphasized." The 'for you' aspect of the Word, Marrs noted, needs to be emphasized for NGR as they face hardships from "the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh."<sup>111</sup>

Marrs highlighted the intersection of the two realms and Luther's two kinds of righteousness. As he carefully attended to the reality of the needs people have in their horizontal relationships with fellow humans and the world (First Article reality), Marrs considered the needs in the vertical relationship with God restored through Christ (Second Article reality). Alluding to the Kantian tendency to divide the empirical and metaphysical, Marrs concluded: "In many soul care situations, both vertical and horizontal treatment modalities will be called for. The empirical and metaphysical are not as easily divided as Kant led us to believe."<sup>112</sup>

The section in chapter seven, "How Does the Word Function, According to Luther?" gives a helpful summary of Luther's theology of God's Word and how it functions in our life. I include his summary bullet points here, as a preview of what he offered in that chapter:

- The Word creates and recreates.
- The Word establishes the relationships of conversation between God and His human creatures.
- The Word elicits faith.
- The Word simultaneously reveals God and hides God (a paradox).
- God's Word kills and makes alive.

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<sup>111</sup> Rick W. Marrs, *Making Christian Counseling More Christ Centered* (Bloomington: Westbow, 2019), 95.

<sup>112</sup> Marrs, *Christian Counseling*, 98.

- God’s Word of Gospel emphasizes His promise to us.<sup>113</sup>

Each bullet is expanded in the chapter. The second bullet emphasizes that relationship excludes manipulation. As God desires a relationship with human creatures, God does not push us around the way He may manipulate mountains and seas, but God uses His Word in relationships as we are re-born as children who trust God with our hearts and heads, our emotions and reason.

When Marris addressed the theology of the Word of God, as it intersects with counseling, he noted the “postmodern narrative therapy” which has been used within the last few decades. “In secular narrative therapy, there are not absolute truths or ultimate narrative (Yarhouse and Sells, 2008).” Marris went on to contrast “secular narrative therapy” with the ultimate narrative that is centered in Christ: “Christian soul care givers do know that God’s Word in Jesus is the source of truth and ultimate narrative for them and their counselees.”<sup>114</sup> As an example of narrative, Marris cited Nathan confronting King David about his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12). He also noted that the New Testament authors often used narratives from the Old Testament to give examples of how to live and serve. For any narrative used in counseling and Bible study, Marris gave this caution to ensure that counseling and teaching remains Christ centered: “Soul care givers who do use scriptural narratives in their work with counselees are encouraged to do so with a Gospel focus.”<sup>115</sup> While recognizing that some portions of the Bible, especially wisdom literature, has a how-to quality, Marris gave this advice to counselors which is applicable for all preachers and teachers of the Word in counseling session, classroom, and pulpit:

When soul care gives us God’s Word explicitly, they should strive to not turn it into a how-to book for living (as that becomes a Law-oriented work in which guilt can be

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<sup>113</sup> Marris, *Christian Counseling*, 100.

<sup>114</sup> Marris, *Christian Counseling*, 107.

<sup>115</sup> Marris, *Christian Counseling*, 107.

heaped upon with little Gospel) but as a book for soul care, encouraging others to grow in the Word for their comfort and encouragement in Christ and His saving work for them.<sup>116</sup>

Marrs offered many valuable Christ-centered counseling insights and techniques. While pastoral counseling is not the focus of my MAP, Marrs helped me prepare Bible study materials suitable for equipping NGR. Marrs also aided my ability to provide a condensed communication of distinctive Lutheran emphases, such as an appreciation for *anfechtung*<sup>117</sup> (externally imposed or self-imposed), law and gospel, confession and absolution, and the theology of the cross as these relate to soul-care application. Marrs improved my ability to carry the message, translate, and illustrate for NGR the truth found in passages such as Rom. 8:16–17, 22–23. Consider this citation on the theology of glory versus the theology of the cross, in reference to Rom. 8:22–23.

Too many Christians believe a theology of glory in which God will eventually clear their lives of problems and end their suffering. Too many hear this theology of glory and its brother, the prosperity Gospel, preached in too many Sunday-morning sermons. The theology of the cross, one of Luther’s great theological rediscoveries, shows us that we will continue to struggle with groaning and suffering in this earthly life, yet God has shown His love for us in Jesus, and in that we can be confident.<sup>118</sup>

That advice certainly helped me prepare my Bible study for NGR.

Marrs also improved my listening sensitivity for expressions of shame and guilt in conversations, so that I was better prepared to address that as it came up during Bible class discussion. “Shame and guilt are different. Shame is more existential, more of a sense of who I

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<sup>116</sup> Marrs, *Christian Counseling*, 107.

<sup>117</sup> Marrs, *Christian Counseling*, 26. *Anfechtung* is difficult to translate, but Marrs explained the depth of the term in this quote from page 26. “It is often translated as temptation, trial, suffering, or affliction. Counseling synonyms for it could include anxiety, sorrow, worry, angst, and torment. *Anfechtung* connotes that we are fragile creatures, struggling with angst that is both earthly and spiritual/existential. We can be assaulted from without, and that assault can come at our body, our psyche, or our spirit. Luther believed that the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh were constantly assaulting us, leaving us with a consuming fear for life and salvation.”

<sup>118</sup> Marrs, *Christian Counseling*, 126.

am, how I am weak, how I am a failure. Guilt is more behavioral, of what I have done wrong.”<sup>119</sup> Marris noted that our modern culture may not have a very fine-tuned sense of guilt, but our modern culture can readily admit and feel shame. “Anyone who comes expressing that they feel humiliated, deficient, incompetent, unfit, despairing, insignificant, worthless, embarrassed, dumb, foolish, self-conscious, insulted, dejected, dishonored, disgraced, or disgusting are expressing a sense of shame.”<sup>120</sup> Marris alerted me to the telltale signs of guilt and shame that may be expressed by the NGR whom I counsel, teach, and support through the provision of word and sacrament in the Divine Service. He gave examples of metaphors from Scripture and specific passages that captured that sense of shame and guilt, as well as “antishame” metaphors that help address shame and guilt with suitable messages of the gospel for appropriate soul-care.<sup>121</sup>

I could cite a few more references from Marris, that supported the work I do with and for NGR, but I will limit myself to one last citation. Drawing upon the analogy of medicine working even when patients do not notice it, Marris used the command in Phil. 4:6: “do not be anxious about anything,” and emphasized that Paul coupled that with the indicative of Phil. 4:7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Marris noted the power of God’s peace at work:

It is simply a matter of fact, of reality, that the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension (human, angelic, demonic, or otherwise) will be guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, even when we don’t feel like that is happening. Just as some medications are working in the background even when we don’t feel better soon after they are taken, we can be confident that God’s peace, based in the Gospel of Christ, is guarding our hearts and minds in the background as well.... It seems

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<sup>119</sup> Marris, *Christian Counseling*, 152.

<sup>120</sup> Marris, *Christian Counseling*, 152–53.

<sup>121</sup> Marris, *Christian Counseling*, 153.

mysterious, even paradoxical that someone can be anxious and still have a sense of peace, but the Gospel of Christ is often paradoxical for us.<sup>122</sup>

This is how the ruling activity of God works in our life. We plant the Word, and rely upon God's peace to guard us, even though we do not know how it works. But it works, as Jesus assured us in Mark 4:26–29: “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

This confidence in the Word expressed in countless applicable examples, and the work Marrs offered to make counseling more Christ-centered, made his work a supportive companion for the project I have undertaken for NGR.

#### Gustaf Wingren

Wingren continues to be a respected resource for his exploration of vocation and the range of material he cited from Martin Luther on the topic of vocation. Wingren aids a clear and thorough articulation of how vocation applies to the lived experiences of Christians who are also NGR. His familiarity with the breadth of Martin Luther's lectures and writing has led to key insights from the reformer that are listed in the following pages. In his introduction, Wingren targeted this duality in Luther's writings about vocation.

Sometimes life in vocation appears as subjection to a predetermined and fixed reality; but at other times man, through faith and love, bursts through the external and stands free and recreative over against the given. Certainly just this almost lighthearted feature in Luther's ethics lies behind his belief in God as he who is ever creating anew. The duality of stability and mobility gives its peculiar color to Luther's view of creation. ... both God and the devil are ever present. The devil uses a static vocation for his purpose, and God replies with free new creation. The devil uses man's

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<sup>122</sup> Marrs, *Christian Counseling*, 158.

freedom to promote anarchy, and God replies by setting compelling barriers against freedom.<sup>123</sup>

I think this duality is helpful for assisting Christians to see the tension that exists in vocation as we operate between freedom and constraint and live within godly mobility and stability.

Wingren improved my ability to appreciate and explain the cross and suffering in the life of a Christian in a gospel-centered way. During trials and suffering, Christians need not speak with certainty where none exists. Where did the cross and suffering come from? God or the devil? The Christian does not need a certain answer where certainty is hidden, but Christians can and must respond to cross and suffering in repentant faith, relying upon the certainty of Christ clearly revealed from the altar and pulpit. Christ revealed through the means of grace has poured out the Holy Spirit to strengthen Christians in their baptismal identity, equipping and encouraging them to live out their priesthood identity as they declare the praises of God (through vocational service) who called them out of darkness into His light.

Wingren emphasized the certainty of baptismal identity during uncertainty in life. A faithful response to vocational challenges does not follow a fixed rule or programmed standard operating procedure (SOP). Wingren noted: “The sign of a right ethics is not found in a certain fixed outward behavior, but in the ability to meet, in calmness and faith, whatever may come.”<sup>124</sup> He connected this perspective to Luther’s *Treatise on the Sacrament of Baptism* from 1519. The following connection between vocation (station in life) is taken from Luther’s *Treatise on the Sacrament of Baptism*, published in 1519:

God has given to every saint a special grace by which to live according to his baptism. But baptism and its significance he has set as a common standard for all men, so that every man is to examine himself according to his station in life, to find

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<sup>123</sup> Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), xii.

<sup>124</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 181.

what is the best way for him to fulfil the work and purpose of his baptism, that is, to slay sin and to die.<sup>125</sup>

Wingren was reticent about identifying the source of the cross and tribulation. The burdens Christians carry, and the sufferings endured may be inflicted by the devil who seeks to murder and destroy. But they could have also come from God's alien work of punishing and rebuking to drive us to the gospel which forgives and heals, gives faith and hope, as it restores life, peace, and joy. This strengthening, reviving, forgiving, and restoring is the proper work of the gospel. While we may not know exactly how the cross and troubles come into the Christian's life, we may be certain that the cross comes from an "invisible combat" which Wingren addressed:

God wishes man to be saved from the power of sin, and the devil wants man kept in it. Out of that invisible combat, which goes on even when man does not think of it, comes all the agony and anxiety that enter into human life. A creature must know suffering when two powers lay hold of it, struggling to 'win and possess it.' It is in the very nature of such a struggle that, in any particular case, man cannot say which of the two contenders laid a particular tribulation on him. Both are pulling at man at the same time. Therefore Luther says that man's cross and despair come from both God and the devil. In his *Commentary on Romans*, in 1515-16, Luther says emphatically that our hardships are God's discipline. Two years later, in his *Commentary on Hebrews*, he considered sufferings to be due to the fact that the Christian life is God's action and our passion *operatio Dei* and *passio nostra*. 'No one is purified unless by hardships and disturbances. The more the suffering and oppressions, the better the Christian. The whole life of a Christian is in faith, i.e. in cross and sufferings.'<sup>126</sup>

Christians often assume that anything unpleasant is the result of the devil, however Luther emphasized that Christian life will have cross and suffering, and the suffering we endure may very well come from God as He pulls us away from the forces of the devil. When our own passion mirrors the passion of Christ, this is God's work (*operatio Dei*) as well as our own suffering or passion (*passio nostra*). It is a normal response to pull away from trials and suffering

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<sup>125</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 181.

<sup>126</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 80. At the end of this citation, Wingren quoted from Luther's *Commentary on Hebrews*.

rather than embrace the pain. We should look for ways to mitigate hardship through reasonable, godly means. Through it all God calls us to trust that He forces light and momentary troubles to accomplish eternal glory for us (2 Cor. 4:16–18). In this struggle between God and the devil, I repeat what Luther wrote in his *Commentary on Hebrews*: “The whole life of a Christian is in faith, i.e. in cross and sufferings.”<sup>127</sup>

This cross and suffering drives the Christian to pray. As Wingren said, “God lays the cross on the old man, whom he would slay and raise from the dead. In such times of cross and desperation man must pray and cry out. Through prayer and praise faith grows ‘and comes to itself,’ so that in strength it can go forth again in new works.”<sup>128</sup> This prayer and praise is crucial for Christians as they endure the burdens and cross that come with vocation. Wingren noted that doing God’s work in our vocation will make Christians targets in spiritual warfare. In this warfare, Christians must rely upon God as their defense, which prompts them to turn to God in prayer as Luther emphasized in this excerpt from his “Treatise on Good Works”:

As soon as the evil spirit encounters such faith, honor and service to God, he rages and begins his persecution. He attacks our body, goods, honor and life. He brings upon us sickness, poverty, shame and death, which God inflicts upon us and ordains for us in this way. Thus faith is tried severely, like gold in the fire. It is a great thing to keep so firm a trust in God as to look upon him as the most gracious Father, though he appears in so terrible a semblance of wrath, as he inflicts upon us death, shame, ill health, and poverty.... Then suffering urges faith to call upon God's name and to praise him in such suffering.... Faith grows precisely by such prayer and praise to God, and thereby recovers and strengthens itself. Thus faith flows forth in works, and returns to itself through works, as the sun rises and sets, and again returns to its rising.<sup>129</sup>

Wingren cited this lengthy quote from Luther’s “Treatise on Good Works,” to illustrate how Luther focused on prayer as the turning point. As we turn to God in prayer, the burdens that we

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<sup>127</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 80.

<sup>128</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 118.

<sup>129</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 118–19.

bear and the cross we carry due to vocational duty become light, so faith urges Christians to call upon God in prayer and praise. We pray to God because we serve as cooperators with God.

Wingren noted Luther's emphasis on the dignity of vocation; we serve as cooperators with God. As cooperators with God, we are privileged to do God's work as God calls us to care for creation, push back against the forces of evil, and love our neighbor. Those who serve in the NGR are called to protect those who strive for whatever is noble, good, excellent, beautiful, praiseworthy, or true. The cooperation with God, in relation to the two kingdoms, happens in the realm of earthly matters but not spiritual matters. Before God (*coram Deo*), in the spiritual realm, man is a passive receiver of the gifts Christ gives by grace through faith as the gospel declares us righteous and forgiven, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Before our neighbor, in the earthly realm (*coram mundo*), man is active in works of love as a cooperator with God.

It is in that vocational responsibility as cooperators with God that we are reminded to avoid using vocation for our own purposes. God prepared vocations for the good of others, and God called us to love our neighbor through vocation. As far as the specific form that love takes, there will be great flexibility and freedom in how that is applied. Wingren emphasized: "No particular form of conduct is fixed in advance as holy. A person has to wait and see what others need; and do just that in a particular situation. Another time something quite different may be necessary."<sup>130</sup> Regardless of how the application of love differs, love for neighbor remains the focus of vocational service. If we are to see success in vocational duties executed, success will not be defined by a human measure, but by God's measure of love. So we consider: Is our vocation serving as a channel for God's love to flow to earth? Do we execute our vocation as the means God chooses to share his blessings with others? Do we, in sinful pride, use vocation for our own

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<sup>130</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 178.

advantages and purpose? Wingren emphasized that focus on love in this following excerpt:

In his *Kirchenpostille* we find the concept of a Christian as a conduit or channel, which receives from above, from God, through faith, ‘and then gives forth below’ to others, through love. Luther makes it clear that God’s own love reaches out to others through Christians as channels. God is present on earth with his goodness when a Christian directs his service downward to others. God dwells in heaven, but now he is near and working on earth with man as his co-operator. In The Large Catechism it is said that all creatures (‘parents and all in authority’ are specially mentioned) are God’s hands, channels and means through which he gives us all things.<sup>131</sup>

Serving as God’s hands, channels, and means should cause reverence for vocation. As Luther said in his commentary on Genesis (1535–45), “He who is in the seat of authority is, as it were, an incarnate God.”<sup>132</sup> All the more reason to begin our work with prayer.

There are times when it is necessary to make a change in occupation. That can bring anxiety due to unknown risks and uncertain future, so we need to commend ourselves to the grace and power of God. This is true for selecting a school, choosing a spouse, making a career change, as well as more frequent routine decisions. When we make decision, we do the best we can with the resources we have, the guidance others offer, and then commend ourselves to God. In that regard, the following quote from Luther’s 1532–33 exposition of Ps. 127 is helpful, as it emphasizes God’s calling when the results that come from our vocational duty are uncertain.

The Holy Spirit alone is the Teacher who instructs and admonishes that we should cast ourselves completely into the arms of divine majesty and trust him, and in his name marry, care for a family, govern the state, enact laws, etc. If such things turn out successfully, it is well. If they are not successful, it is still well; because it is his will that when, having been called by God, you have entered into a state or an order of society, you continue and persevere therein anyway, calling on him.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 126.

<sup>132</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 127.

<sup>133</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 207.

When personal efforts at work do not seem to succeed, God invites Christians to trust His promise to be with them in Christ and remember God called them into their vocations. Christians must endure the cross with vocations. Christians call on God in trouble, confident that God hears and cares for them. Luther gave this confident note in his sermon on Exodus, published in 1524: “God will be there with his help so that, by divine grace and help, those may be consoled and gladdened who in their vocations have to endure all kinds of danger and difficulty.”<sup>134</sup>

Wingren noted that faithfulness in vocation requires us to stay alert to the time and place “where God’s actions break through.”<sup>135</sup> Outwardly (*coram mundo*) we can find that there is freedom in vocation, freedom in daily decisions, and future planning. Yet Christians learn (*coram Deo*) that plans and decisions are bound to God’s will. We have freedom in our outward activity, but we are always masks for God’s creative work in the world. This knowledge of God’s ability to “break through” leads us to plan without placing too much trust in our plans. Being faithful does not require us to accurately predict the future or boast that our vision is inerrant. We must learn, as Wingren noted in comments based on Eccles. 3:1–17, and Eccles. 9:11, that “we cannot control matters by our own decisions. Man is not to rack his brain about the future but live in the hour that has come. That is the same as living in faith, receptive to God, who is present now and has something he will do now.”<sup>136</sup>

Wingren provided much more from Luther on the topic of vocation. The material cited above shows the main emphases that contributed to the preparation of the Bible study for NGR: the emphasis on the focus of love in vocation, the recognition that the results of vocation are in God’s hands, as are the cross and suffering we endure. God uses cross and suffering in vocation

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<sup>134</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 208.

<sup>135</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 213.

<sup>136</sup> Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 214.

to drive us to prayer and praise. Although we do not know the source of the crosses we carry—whether self-inflicted, a messenger of Satan, or given by God—our baptismal identity keeps us grounded, helping us see our tribulations in the light of the salvation we have in Christ Jesus.

#### Summary of Review: Theological Literature

Christian Smith's description of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) provided a useful map for the geography of popular theology in the USA. Smith exposed popular theological notions that we naturally gravitate toward because we all have a rebellious sinful flesh. Christian Smith helped me identify the theological danger zones, which helped emphasize the importance of a solid Christo-centric approach to handling vocational challenges.

James K. A. Smith called out the way empty narratives leave so many floundering in futility. He sharpened my senses for how secular liturgies shape us. He did more than that. He also inspired me to confront the empty life and selfishly defined goals, and counter it with life to the full as defined by, revealed by, and given by Christ Jesus.

The nature of a MAP is to define and solve a problem. Hunter helped me be modest about solutions, while making a difference with "faithful presence." Focusing on solutions for problems can lead to negation, merely opposing what is wrong, lamenting losses, and losing hope. In that regard, Hunter's *Change the World* has helped focus on promoting a theology of faithful presence. "A theology of faithful presence calls Christians to enact the shalom of God in the circumstances in which God has placed them and to actively seek it on behalf of others."<sup>137</sup>

I turned to Lutheran theologians to help me address the unique concerns, challenges, and burdens NGR encounter. Biermann's creedal framework helped visualize how the three kinds of

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<sup>137</sup> Hunter, *Change the World*, 278.

righteousness each have their proper place in God's world. Biermann's focus on virtue ethics, character, and the proper distinction between life lived *coram Deo* and *coram mundo* were anchored to a gospel-empowered theology solidly centered in Christ Jesus. *A Case for Character* assisted greatly for practical application of theology in a short Bible study.

Walter Steele helped me consider creative courses for baptismal emphases to flow through my Bible study, to further equip and anchor the NGR for overcoming and enduring vocational challenges, so they could continue to overflow with sacrificial love for others.

Rick Marrs gave practical guidance for Christ-centered counseling and pastoral care. He approached the tools of psychological counseling with a healthy balance of respect for the field of psychology, while promoting counseling anchored to Christ, counseling backed by Christ-centered theology. I recognize my own limits with psychological counseling. As such, I am indebted to his knowledge of this field, his extensive practice as a counselor, and the insights he shared toward the goal of helping pastoral counselors offer more Christ-centered counseling. The examples he provided and the resources he skillfully cited have all helped me develop a Bible study to support NGR with their vocational hardships.

Wingren has been respected for many years for his overview of what Luther taught about Christian vocation. Luther approached vocational cross and suffering in a gospel-centered way and kept an emphasis on the certainty of baptismal identity, especially when the vicissitudes of vocation lead to uncertainty. Although Luther was reticent about identifying the source of the cross—from God or the devil—he was confident that God used the cross to turn Christians to God in praise and prayer. While Christians carry out their vocational duties, with love for others as the purpose of their vocational duties, Luther encouraged Christians to commend themselves and their service to God especially when the future or results of service seem uncertain.

## **Conclusion**

While substantial psychological and sociological studies have identified unique stressors and challenges which NGR face through their services, these stressors and challenges have not had sufficient study from the Christian theological perspective of sanctification, or significant inquiry into how these stressors and challenges impact vocation. I have not been able to find Bible studies written to address the unique vocational burdens which our NGR face, especially as it relates to the Christian concepts of bearing vocational burdens where those burdens cannot be removed, should not be removed, and cannot be mitigated. The review of recent literature in the realm of psychology and sociology, as well as a review of theological literature, helped me develop and deliver a Bible study for NGR. What I have discovered has prompted me to develop course materials, specifically a topical Bible study with a focus on the doctrine of vocation. This Bible study and the course evaluation are discussed more thoroughly in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. As for the Bible study itself, I offered it with the hope that it would equip NGR to better deal with their unique vocational challenges. I hope that this Bible study may benefit other chaplains as they adopt the study as written or use my study as a springboard to develop their own resources for the pastoral care of NGR who face their unique vocational burdens and challenges.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In the first three chapters, I laid out the reason for pursuing this project. Chapter One emphasized the chaplain's responsibility to care for the spiritual strength of NGR. It also emphasized that NGR serve in the dual role of civilian and warrior. With that dual role NGR have unique vocational characteristics and face specific vocational burdens as they alternate between civilian and military duties. I designed my MAP to refine the focus of chaplain care for NGR. I applied focused pastoral care through a Bible study written to help address those unique burdens. Chapter Two outlined the theological foundation I used for Bible study materials to equip NGR. That foundation guided a Bible study to help NGR understand their vocational duties and challenges better, identify areas for growth in spiritual stamina and endurance, and faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges. In Chapter Three, I outlined my interaction with authors in fields of Psychology, Sociology, and Christian Theology. The study of this literature helped me to create a Bible study to help NGR approach vocational challenges. Within the context of Bible study, I could give pastoral care, helping NGR deal with vocational challenges. This chapter outlines the design and methodology for my MAP.

My research focused on routine hardships of NGR. It was my original intent to use research from literature analysis and interviews. The interviews would have helped me learn from NGR volunteers about their real-life struggles. I planned to use data from analyzed interview transcripts to address hardships in the context of a Bible study, thus supporting spiritual needs of NGR. The Navy's IRB process, discussed later in Chapter Four, was too cumbersome for the limits of my study. Due to those limits, I was not able to include the interviews in my research.

I shifted the methodology of my research to draw on my own personal knowledge of the

blessings and burdens NGR encounter in military and civilian duties. I also used findings from the review of research literature. I used that information to design a five-session Bible study<sup>1</sup> as a tool of pastoral care focused on helping NGR handle the vocational burdens and blessings of NGR service. Input and informal evaluation from participants in the first and second offerings of the course guided me as I edited the course hand out and adjusted my teaching.

After participants completed all five lessons of the Bible study, they could take an end of course survey. I finalized the survey content and design before the first session of the Bible study started. I activated the end of course survey after the first session started. I made no changes to the survey. Additional details about my research design, methodology, assumptions and implementation follow.

### **Research Design**

#### **Impact Due to Navy IRB Process**

After I received approval to proceed with my proposed MAP, I submitted my application to Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Concordia, St. Louis (CSL), following the application and instructions provided by the IRB at CSL. After I obtained CSL IRB approval, I began the process of submitting my IRB application to the United States Navy (USN).

The Navy IRB process was not easy to access. I asked a fellow LCMS Navy Chaplain, Carl Muehler, who completed his DMin with CSL about the process. He shared notes with me on how the process had worked for him in 2018. In 2018, the Clinical Investigation Department (CID), at Portsmouth Naval Hospital (PNH) handled IRB reviews for Navy chaplains. The IRB gave this determination: “Your project titled, ‘NMCP.2018.0120: Overcoming Barriers: Helping Navy

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<sup>1</sup> The Table of Contents and first lesson of my MAP Bible study is found in appendix one. The full 40-page Bible study booklet was submitted with this MAP as a separate document.

Chaplains understand the why of self-care and implementing it' does not require IRB review. Navy policy states that these types of projects are exempt from IRB review."<sup>2</sup>

I hoped to avoid the full Navy IRB process, based on Carl Muehler's project and the nature of my project. After an initial inquiry with CID at PNH, I learned regulations changed since 2018. PNH directed me to the CID at Naval Medical Center San Diego.<sup>3</sup> I started an online application with them. What began as an initial seven-page application became 52 pages.

Within the 52 pages were forms that indicated if I would collect human tissue samples, blood samples, and personal data from medical records, etc. The forms were clearly designed for clinical research at Navy medical centers, not the pastoral care a chaplain gives via Bible study. I worked through the IRB process, translated bureaucratic forms to the best of my ability, and submitted my IRB protocol for my research. Ultimately the Navy IRB did not approve my protocol (preferred Navy term for research proposal). After discussing the protocol with the Navy IRB, I received a rejection notice on June 21, 2021.

Before my exchange with the Navy IRB, I planned for my project to use a demographic survey to verify potential participants met the criteria of the study. Those who passed the screening would have been invited to participate in 1) 90-minute interview, 2) four or five Bible Study sessions of 45 to 60 minutes in length, and finally 3) a post Bible Study survey.

I originally designed my study to begin with an interview of participants. I planned to use the 90-minute interview to gather qualitative data through uniform open-ended questions that all participants would answer. I would then analyze the data to prepare a Bible study focused on the

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<sup>2</sup> Memo to LCDR Carl Muehler, Chaplain Corps, US Navy, from Deputy, Clinical Investigation Department, "Letter of Waiver of IRB Review for Course Related Activity," August 20, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The Navy Chaplain Corps does not have its own IRB for chaplains. Unless chaplains are doing research at a military college, the default IRB for chaplains is run through the Navy medical community. The location of the IRB is based on geographical location of the chaplain doing the research. The IRB closest to the chaplain gets assigned the responsibility.

vocational challenges NGR face. If I followed the path suggested by the Navy IRB<sup>4</sup>, I would have added months if not years to my research project. Since the Navy IRB did not approve my research protocol, and approval through the Navy IRB process would have taken months if not years, I proposed adjusting the design of my project by removing research interviews from my research design. I recognize that conducting this research without conducting the pre-course study interview has limited the access to the experiences of NGR from their own words and in their own reflection on personal experiences.

I adapted my research design to include the Bible study, followed by a post-course evaluation survey, which also collected basic demographic information. I shared this revised research design with the CSL IRB chair. On June 7, 2021, I discussed the new research approach and the end of course survey with the chair of the CSL IRB, and gained conditional approval provided the Navy Survey Program office approved my survey. On July 1, 2021, Mr. David Smith, the deputy for the Navy Survey Program office, gave approval for my survey. In order to take the survey, I asked participants to complete five Bible Study sessions of 45 to 60 minutes in length. On the fifth Bible study session, I invited participants to complete the course evaluation survey. Appendix 4 contains this invitation.

### Population Sampling

The Bible study aimed to give solid pastoral care for NGR, so preferred participants were NGR. I need to emphasize that participants were preferred to be NGR. That was not a requirement to participate in the Bible study and survey. It was not a set of criteria used to

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<sup>4</sup> The Navy's IRB, for research conducted by chaplains outside of DoD postgraduate schools, is run through the Navy medical community. This IRB system applies research standards which—in this author's opinion—are not well designed for the phenomenological research I originally proposed. It is better designed for research on human subjects which includes using data from the Navy's medical data base, studying biological samples from research participants, and conducting surveys which ask for personally identifiable information about sensitive health aspects.

exclude any participant. Research participants consisted of reserve and active duty service members, between the ages of 18 and mandatory retirement age of 62.<sup>5</sup> Those who chose to complete the end of course Bible study survey had to attend the Bible study, and currently serve in the military. I welcomed all military personnel (active duty and NGR) to participate in this study and end of course survey. I advertised the study in chapel announcements and Public Service Announcements (PSA) sent out by Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti (CLDJ) Public Affairs Office. Announcements welcomed all DoD personnel at CLDJ to participate in the Bible study.

I recruited participants from those who responded to Camp PSAs, as well as those who participated in chapel services and Bible studies at CLDJ. Participation in the Bible study was voluntary; any participant's willingness could change at any time during the study. Those who started the study were not obligated to complete it. Flight schedules, mission assignments, shifting work schedules, even emergency trips back to the States pulled participants away. Due to operational needs, I knew participants could withdraw from the study at any time. I shared that with participants and stated that assumption when explaining the context of conducting ethical research with research participants. With the emphasis on voluntary participation, I still encouraged participants to finish the project if possible. I offered personal meetings for those who missed sessions. One participant met with me to finish the five-session course. I emphasized that I hoped NGR would benefit from the Bible study sessions, and the post-Bible study course evaluation would help me improve the study for future participants.

To recognize and address anticipated survey errors, I offer an extensive quote from Dillman, Smyth, and Christian. They identify these four errors defined as follows:

1. *Coverage Error* occurs when the list from which sample members are drawn does not accurately represent the population on the characteristic(s) one wants to estimate

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<sup>5</sup> "Age Waiver," United States Navy Human Resources, <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Career-Management/Retirement/Officer-Retirements/Age-Waiver/>.

with the survey data (whether a voter preference, a demographic characteristic, or something else). A high-quality sample survey requires that every member of the population has a known, nonzero probability of being sampled, meaning they have to be accurately represented on the list from which the sample will be drawn. Coverage error is the difference between the estimate produced when the list is inaccurate and what would have been produced with an accurate list.

2. *Sampling Error* is the difference between the estimate produced when only a sample of units on the frame is surveyed and the estimate produced when every unit on the list is surveyed. Sampling error exists anytime we decide to survey only some, rather than all, members of the sample frame.

3. *Nonresponse Error* is the difference between the estimate produced when only some of the sampled units respond compared to when all of them respond. It occurs when those who do not respond are different from those who do respond in a way that influences the estimate.

4. *Measurement Error* is the difference between the estimate produced and the true value because respondents gave inaccurate answers to survey questions. It occurs when respondents are unable or unwilling to provide accurate answers, which can be due to poor question design, survey mode effects, interviewer and respondent behavior, or data collection mistakes.<sup>6</sup>

To overcome *Coverage Error*, I extended the invitation to participate in the Bible study as broadly as possible. I used the CLDJ PSA system to invite all military at CLDJ to attend, whether they participated in chapel events or not. Chapel staff advertised my Bible study on billboard postings, by verbal reminders, and through printed handouts. The closed-circuit television channel in our dining facility also advertised the class. I could not and did not mandate attendance or exclude anyone. Only volunteers participated.

For those who agreed to participate in the research, I provided a written consent form to review at the start of the Bible study, to comply with ethical human research requirements. All participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the consent form. Those who signed the form indicated they wanted to participate in both the Bible study and the post-course survey.

I asked all who took the post-course survey to give basic demographic data. This data

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<sup>6</sup> Don A. Dillman, Jolene D. Smyth, and Leah Melani Christian, *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 4th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2014), 3–4.

verified participants were eligible by age and military service. Their voluntary participation in the Bible study and the course survey also verified that they were suitable participants.<sup>7</sup>

*Sampling Error* is an unavoidable error that I tried to mitigate. I first considered limiting study participants to NGR members only, in order to reduce *Sampling Error*. I also considered limiting participants to The Naval Reserve only. Since the Navy reserve population is a much smaller group than all NGR, it would have reduced the *Sampling Error*.<sup>8</sup> Due to CLDJ PSA policy and ethical guidance from the Navy, I did not limit the group sampled. As a result, Bible study and survey participants made a very small fraction of all NGR.

I considered a possible control to mitigate *Nonresponse Error*. I planned to track the number of respondents very satisfied with their experience in the NGR, and those who are very dissatisfied. I intended to include both those who had a negative attitude toward NGR service and those who had a positive attitude. Then my analysis of survey results would have tracked whether responses indicated negative attitudes were under-represented, or positive attitudes were under-represented. I would have collected satisfied/dissatisfied data by an entrance survey.

After my research method changed due to Navy IRB obstacles, I did not use an entrance interview, and only used a post-course evaluation survey. I did not measure the attitude (positive or negative) of respondents prior to participation in the Bible study. The end of course survey included questions, which may indicate the level of personal hope, understanding and ability of participants. Questions 5, 7, 9, and 11 from the “Understanding, Preparation, TTP, Ability”

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<sup>7</sup> Eligibility was determined by whether the participant was currently 18 years old or older, currently serving in the Armed Forces, and willing to voluntarily participate in a Bible study that invited participants to reflect on Christian beliefs through a Bible-guided conversation.

<sup>8</sup> Commander Naval Reserve Forces Command publishes a monthly, “By the Numbers” summary of all Naval Reserve SELRES (Select Reserve) and FTS (Full Time Support). As of August 2020, there are 59,288 serving in the Navy Reserve. By contrast, there are 336,000 serving in the Army National Guard 336,000; and 107,700 serving in The Air National Guard; data source: Statista. “U.S. National Guard Members FY 2021.” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/207392/national-guard-members-in-the-usa/>.

section of the end of course survey may indicate the sampling of participants completing the survey, relative to personal sense of preparation, hope, and ability.<sup>9</sup>

Assuming response depends upon contact and cooperation,<sup>10</sup> I made multiple contact attempts to invite participants. These attempts varied in timing, delivery method and mode. I also designed an end of course survey that was easy to read, easy to access online, and easy to finish.

To counter *Measurement Error*, I wrote survey questions to increase likelihood that respondents gave accurate answers. My MAP Advisor and the CSL IRB chair reviewed the final content of my end of course survey. For accuracy of results, I received help from Mr. David Smith, with the Navy Survey Program Manager's office. He gave basic training to use the MaxGov survey tool. He reviewed my online draft before I published the survey. The MaxGov survey platform has statistics generating tools, which I used for the aggregated survey results.

I designed the online survey with minimal screens (or tabs). This reduced load time and response time for participants. All survey questions were voluntary. Answer options were easy for respondents to select. At any time in the survey, if a participant left a response blank, the participant could simply continue; no questions were mandatory. Chapter Five notes the results of my attempts to reduce the nonresponse and measure the error that results from nonresponse.

I aimed to have a minimum of ten participate in the study. I offered the course five times, and had 24 unique participants, with a total attendance of 51. I asked participants to complete the course evaluation survey at the last Bible study session. I gave a paper invitation, with a Privacy Act Statement to invite participants to take the survey. I inserted the invitation in Appendix 4. I designed the course evaluation survey for participants to offer feedback on the course and give

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<sup>9</sup> See Table 3 for the specific questions. Analysis provided in Chapter Five.

<sup>10</sup> Dillman, et al., *Surveys: Tailored Design*, 6.

suggestions for improvements. I used the course evaluation, found in Appendix 2 to improve the Bible study. I used the course evaluation survey every time I conducted the Bible study.

### Implementation

I wrote a Bible study for this project to address daily stressors, hardships, challenges and suffering unique to NGR which I identified by literature survey and my personal experience. The Bible Study addressed these unique stressors from the perspective of Christian vocation. I designed the study to improve the understanding that participants have of vocation, and to equip them to handle stressors unique to their vocation as NGR with sense of hope and optimism.

I used my own experiences and the literature survey to help me select appropriate biblical and theological material for this study. The Bible study met in person, as COVID-19 health protocol restrictions changed by January 2022. I planned to make video recordings available for those whose various duties would not permit them to attend every session. That video recording plan did not work. The air conditioning system in the chapel prevented me from making a useable recording with the equipment available. Due to that limitation, I offered make-up sessions for individuals, and repeated the course four times. I gave out supporting Bible study notes, in hard copy, at each class session. Those handouts included a book card to summarize the main points of emphasis in the five lessons, and the double-sided two realms chart printed on cardstock. Appendix 1 includes these handouts.

I began advertising the Bible study on January 26, 2022, eighteen days after arriving at CLDJ. I used standard chapel oral and written announcements to announce the Bible class. Appendix 6 gives the content of the advertisements for the study. I distributed the consent documents—approved by the CSL IRB—at the first Bible study session. I walked through the contents with participants and gave them time to decide if they wanted to participate. They did

not have to sign up at that time but could bring it back at another time.<sup>11</sup> Participants were able to ask for clarification about the consent document. I assured those who signed and dated the form that I would guard the confidentiality of each participant. I kept the signed consent forms in a locked cabinet. I was the sole custodian for the combination to that locked cabinet. This MAP contains no personally identifiable information from participants.

During the first two series, I provided participants with a simple feedback form. I used feedback from Bible study participants to make changes to the Bible study curriculum. More detail about that feedback is located under the Methodological Approach in this chapter.

When participants reached the end of the Bible study, I gave them an invitation to take the course evaluation survey. Appendix 4 has the full text of the invitation to the course evaluation survey, including the unique URL address.<sup>12</sup> The survey was anonymous. It requested basic demographic data, but it did not request personally identifiable information.<sup>13</sup> None of the questions on the survey required a response, so participants could skip the demographic questions if they chose to.

I delivered the post-course evaluation survey through the Navy sanctioned service provider: <https://surveys.max.gov>. The course evaluation survey had basic demographic questions, closed ended responses (Yes/No), course ratings on a scale of 1–10, and Likert scale responses, which I wrote to record before and after conditions for the participants. Questions ranged from personal understanding, preparation for challenges, ability to balance competing

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<sup>11</sup> Informed consent document is in Appendix Three.

<sup>12</sup> URL for the Post-study Survey Response for NGR, “Navigating the Blessings and Burdens of Civilian-Military Vocations,” <https://surveys.max.gov/838858?lang=en>, Survey: 838858.

<sup>13</sup> Participants were asked to answer whether they currently serve in the military, the number of years served in the military, which branch or branches of the military, and how many years were served in the National Guard or Reserve. Participants were also asked to provide rank, and primary area of service. That was the extent of demographic information collected.

vocational needs, and knowledge of tactics, techniques, and procedures. The course evaluation survey ended with two open-ended questions requesting additional comments about the course. I published the text for the course evaluation survey in Appendix 2.

The MAX.gov survey database provided a quick statistics report, which aggregated all the data collected through the survey tool and published it in a 34-page report. The raw data from this report is included in Appendix 5. Due to the length of my mobilization, I offered the Bible study course five times. I used feedback participants gave in conversation, feedback forms, and the survey to make course changes, which I hope, improved the course for participants.

### **Methodological Approach**

I used “The Practical Theological Framework” to study the problems within my unique context of ministry, from a structure faithful to Lutheran theology. This framework, developed for the Department of Practical Theology at CSL, has four pillars: (1) Attending to Self and the World, (2) Interpreting First Article Wisdom, (3) Discerning Theological Wisdom, and (4) Implementing Godly Guidance and Leadership. These four pillars work together to provide a practical application of godly guidance and leadership. This godly guidance and leadership centers on where Christians live at the intersection of the created world and the church. The law governs our life in the created world (*coram mundo*), and we observe this life through powers of reason, experimentation, and observation. The grace of God governs life in the spiritual realm (*coram Deo*). In this realm of grace, we live by faith in the crucified and risen Christ who promises to come again to bring about the final restoration of all creation at the resurrection of the body. Until we step into life everlasting with our raised and restored immortal bodies, we live at the intersection of both realms, *coram mundo* and *coram Deo*. We can understand life at this intersection better through “The Practical Theological Framework.” The application of this

framework is carried out from the centering wisdom of Christ crucified. I used the working draft of “The Theological Framework,” during my project work, and included a few points from this document that are helpful to better understand my approach to research.<sup>14</sup>

Pillar One, Attending to Self and the World: I strove to be aware of my thoughts and actions within my context of ministry. I did this through informal and systematic processes. I defined the problem addressed in my MAP by reflecting on my own struggles in NGR. These struggles included my own experience with balancing competing demands from civilian and military duties. I also observed and listened to NGR recount their own struggles related to NGR. That influenced how I organized the Bible study, including the discussion questions. During the first and second installation of the Bible class, I observed that I tried to cover too much content in a period of 45 minutes to an hour, so I adjusted the content. I also noted that my problem-focus made me biased to finding struggles, hardships, and burdens. Discussion questions tended in a negative direction. During the first two offerings of the study, I consistently gave out feedback forms for every lesson that I taught. The participant feedback was valuable. Responses on these forms reminded me to include discussion questions that focused on the joys, blessings, and benefits of military service and NGR service specifically. Participant comments helped emphasize the positive life-changing benefits and blessings of military service, even while we addressed vocational burdens, suffering, and hardship. Being open to the participants’ questions, comments, and suggestions for improving the course helped expand my perspective, expose my negative bias, and challenge my assumptions. Throughout the project, my goal was to be aware of what affected me as I openly admitted biases, assumptions, and different perspectives that

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Rockenbach, “The Practical Theological Framework” (working draft for the Department of Practical Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis).

influenced my study. On the third offering of the course, I stopped handing out the feedback forms with every lesson. I did this to avoid pausing conversations happening during the study. Since another class met in the same place right after my course, we could not linger over conversation, and stay around to fill out feedback forms. Table 5, in Chapter Five presents the aggregated feedback from the in-class feedback forms.

Pillar Two, Interpreting First Article Wisdom: I used the pillars of First Article Wisdom (*coram mundo*) and Theological Wisdom (*coram Deo*) to help identify unique burdens and challenges NGR encounter, and the unique benefits they have. Through First Article Wisdom, I reflected on observations of vocational burdens and blessings of NGR service from my own experiences, and experiences relayed to me by others in the military. I expanded my own perspective and analysis of the vocational blessings and burdens of NGR through psychological and sociological literature review. I noted how professionals “attend to things in creation that are not specifically described in scripture.”<sup>15</sup> This sums up what I learned from the observation and analysis of professionals. NGR have unique vocational characteristics and burdens due to tension between civilian and military lives, lack of social support from active duty peers, struggle to keep strong civilian social connections, and strained familial relations (cf. Crabtree et al.). NGR suffer from a higher frequency of PTSD<sup>16</sup> (cf. Pyzyk), higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicidal actions (Lane et al.), and higher prevalence of alcohol use disorders and increased rates of depression (Cohen et al.). The part-time nature of military service for NGR can be a source of social stress, especially as they shift from military identity and mission back to civilian routines (Anderson and Goodman). A sense of identity loss is also common to NGR as they leave

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<sup>15</sup> Rockenbach, “Practical Theological Framework,” 8.

<sup>16</sup> Crabtree, et al., Lane et al., Griffith, Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier noted higher rates of PTSD among NGR.

military routines and return to civilian duties. I laid this out in Chapter Three.

Pillar Three, Discerning Theological Wisdom: I used Theological Wisdom (*coram Deo*) to help me “discern how scripture and the doctrines of the church speak into the situation.”<sup>17</sup> In the Bible study, we approached the burdens and blessings of NGR service from the solid ground of the Christian’s status before God in Christ. We noted the gift of the call from God, as God calls us to faith, and calls us to serve in our vocations. I emphasized our gracious identity as the righteous, justified saints in Christ Jesus. From this footing, I moved into vocational duties, challenges, and blessings of NGR service. Justification gave the foundation to approach vocational experiences. I repeatedly returned to baptismal identity and sainthood status as we considered crosses in life, and difficulties faced executing military and civilian duties. When I explored suffering and character formation (cf. Rom. 5:1–5), the state of grace and peace through faith in Christ Jesus provided firm footing. I repeatedly used historical, practical, and exegetical theology in our discussions of the burdens and blessings of NGR. On a practical note, I distributed a double-sided, two-realm chart, which I printed on card stock to stay focused on First Article Wisdom (*coram mundo*) and Theological Wisdom (*coram Deo*) during the study. I handed out this chart at the start of the Bible study. After the third course offering, I took all five individual lessons, and combined them into one printed booklet along with supplementary notes on vocation and the two realms at the back of the booklet.

Pillar Four, Implementing Godly Guidance and Wisdom: Every time I facilitated discussion in the Bible study, I used the first three pillars, while trying to implement godly guidance and wisdom. I did not use the four pillars of The Practical Theological Framework in a linear fashion, with each task completed in succession. I constantly applied these four pillars as I

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<sup>17</sup> Rockenbach, “Practical Theological Framework,” 7.

paid attention to the world and myself. I kept the goal of developing practical theology focused on the cross of Christ. I considered the value of First Article wisdom without treating that wisdom as an ultimate authority with a divine status.<sup>18</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

For my research methodology, I chose the phenomenological approach of qualitative research because this methodology focuses on data drawn from the “lived experiences of participants and the meaning they make of that experience.”<sup>19</sup> The course evaluation survey may cross over into the area of quantitative research. Some of the data may be quantitative data. Most of the data provided through that survey still falls within phenomenological content of qualitative data. I know hardships from my own NGR experience. I expected course evaluation data to expand my perspective and help me understand better the wider lived experience of NGR.

I focused on the problem of unique vocational trials NGR experience within their dual roles in military and civilian sectors. I reviewed research work from psychology and sociology. The literature survey helped identify areas where NGR need spiritual stamina and endurance. Data from this survey helped build a Bible study, which assisted NGR to develop character needed to endure the challenges, afflictions, and suffering that characterize their vocational experiences.

In my opinion, I could have improved the project with a pre-study interview of participants. I had hoped to include that interview. I excluded the interview from the study due to the limits of the Navy IRB process, which I discussed earlier. The pre-Bible study interview is outlined in the footnote.<sup>20</sup> I did include a pre-course knowledge check, which I gave to all participants on their

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<sup>18</sup> Rockenbach, “Practical Theological Framework,” 12.

<sup>19</sup> Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2019), 16.

<sup>20</sup> I originally planned to conduct a pre Bible study interview of all participants, using simple, open-ended qualitative questions for the initial interviews with participants. I planned to conduct these interviews before the

first day of attending the Bible study. This pre-test or knowledge check is included in Appendix 7. It requested very basic demographic information. After the Bible study, I asked participants to complete a course evaluation survey, distributed through <https://surveys.max.gov>. I designed the survey to clarify if the Bible study helped participants to tackle vocational challenges.

The course evaluation survey asked participants 25 closed-ended questions, and two open-ended questions. Participants also answered six basic demographic questions. The first five demographic questions consisted of the following:

Do you currently serve in the military? *Answer choice was Yes or No.*

How many years have you served in the military? *Answer choice was a year range.*

Of your years of military service, how many have been in National Guard or Reserve?

*Answer choice was a year range.*

Which branch of the DoD (or branches) have you served in? *Answer choice given.*

What is your current rank? *The choice of ranks was provided (E-1 through E-9; O-1 through O-9; W-1 through W-5)*

The sixth demographic response asked participants to choose one vocational duty seen as their primary military role/job. The survey invited participants to select one. The next table lists the choices. All respondents had the same standard choices for a consistent response.

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Bible study so that I could address primary themes discovered through the interviews. The interviews were designed to last up to 90 minutes. I planned to interview 5 to 9 participants for my research. The limit could have been 10 or higher, but I chose the limit of 9 due to my past experience of gathering Bible study groups at Naval Operational Support Centers, and in overseas duty stations. The work tempo makes it very difficult to gather significant numbers (at least 10) of participants. I had planned to use the interviews to focus on the experience that NGR have within their vocational responsibilities.

I developed five open-ended questions to help me get to the heart of the research problem, obtain data from my participants, and hopefully help me uncover some helpful advice, solutions, and directions for me to pursue in my applied project. My proposed five open-ended questions were: (1) What are some of the benefits you have enjoyed through Reserve service? (2) What have been some of the bigger challenges for you in your Reserve service? (follow up: "What was that like for you? How were you able to work through that challenge?") (3) How do you see these challenges through the lens of the Christian faith? (4) What resources, from you religious upbringing, personal/group Bible study, worship, or religious fellowship helped you work through those challenges? (5) How do you balance your vocational duties since you have both civilian and military responsibilities?

Table 1. Respondent choices vocational duty, primary military role/job.

a. Administrator	b. Computer tech	c. Volunteer	d. Police/corrections
e. Clergy/pastor	f. Social worker	g. Psychologist	h. Chaplain
i. Counselor	j. Nurse	k. Lawyer	l. RP/chaplain's assistant
m. Educator	n. Physician	o. Pilot	p. Human resources
q. Special warfare	r. Maintenance	s. Construction	t. Hospitality
u. Logistics	v. Engineer	w. Planning	x. Other (specify)

*Source:* Post-study Survey Response, written by the author of this MAP.

The survey asked participants 24 closed-ended questions. The first set had four course-rating questions for participants to rate the course on a scale of 1 to 10. Table 2 lists the questions and the values attached to the ratings of 1 to 10. I translated the numerical values to increase the likelihood of capturing an accurate response.

The second set of closed-ended responses asked participants to respond to 12 statements. Six statements focused on their responses after the course, and six focused on responses before the course. I wrote the responses on a Likert scale. I designed the survey to show all statements and response, from this set, in on one tab, and not multiple tabs. Respondents could easily refer

Table 2. Four course rating questions on Likert scale.

<b>On a scale of 1 to 10, please write the number that best describes your response to the question.</b>	
1. How would you rate this course?	<i>(1 = did not like it at all .... 10 = like a lot)</i>
2. Would you recommend this course to others?	<i>(1 = definitely no ... 10 = definitely yes)</i>
3. This course has practical use in my personal life.	<i>(1 = definitely no... 10 = definitely yes)</i>
4. This course has practical use in my work life?	<i>(1 = definitely no ... 10 = definitely yes)</i>

*Source:* Post-study Survey Response, written by the author of this MAP.

to the preceding question, when giving their before and after responses. Table 3 lists the statements and response options, with the after and before alternating.

Table 3. Twelve statements prompting response to course on Likert scale.

Please select one response to each statement, choosing from the five possible responses.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community.</li> <li>2. Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been.</li> <li>3. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not.</li> <li>4. Before taking the course, my answer to # 3 would have been.</li> <li>5. I feel prepared to handle hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope.</li> <li>6. Before taking the course, my answer to #5 would have been.</li> <li>7. I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character.</li> <li>8. Before taking the course, my answer to #7 would have been.</li> <li>9. I feel that I possess tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with vocational hardships.</li> <li>10. Before taking the course, my answer to #9 would have been.</li> <li>11. I feel able to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations.</li> <li>12. Before taking the course, my answer to #11 would have been.</li> </ol>					

*Source:* Post-study Survey Response, written by the author of this MAP.

The third set of closed-ended responses had eight statements that asked for a Yes or No response.

See the eight statements and responses listed in table 4.

Table 4. Eight statements about course with Yes or No responses options.

Please select your response, Yes or No, to the following statements.	Yes	No
1. I attended all five sessions of the course in person.		
2. I participated in the course by attending in person and watching the video recording of the course when not able to attend in person. [This help text appears with number 2: "If you answered YES to question 1, select "No Answer" for question 2. If you answered NO to question 1, choose the accurate response (Yes or No)."]		
3. The term vocation was clearly defined in the first session of the Bible study.		
4. The term vocation was defined as a call God gives to all Christians for various stations of life in which they serve, not just clergy and others who serve in church offices.		
5. I participated in a Bible study on the topic of "vocations" prior to this study.		
6. This course on vocations made use of many Bible passages as the basis for course teachings.		
7. This course on vocations made use of practical examples of vocations in the Guard and Reserve.		
8. This course on vocations used quotations related to the topic from a variety of authors.		

Source: Post-study Survey Response, written by the author of this MAP.

The course evaluation survey ended with two open-ended responses. The open-ended response gave respondents the option to provide additional comments on the course, or clarify any responses given. The first open-ended response asked, "Please write any additional comments you may have about this Bible study course or clarify any of your responses." To encourage thoughtful responses, I included this prompt: "Your comments will help to improve the course. Please take your time to respond. To help formulate a response, consider these questions: What worked well and should be repeated in future courses? What did not work well and should be improved in future courses?" The first open-ended response focused on course improvements for the Bible study. I used questions to prompt a response. I put these clarifying questions at the bottom of the screen. "Comments may address method of presentation, course content, instructor

delivery, or anything else you consider helpful for improving the course. To help stimulate comments, try answering these questions: What worked well and should be repeated in future courses? What did not work well and should be improved in future course?”

The second open-ended response invited feedback with this request: “If you have questions or topics about vocation that you would like to see addressed in future courses, please list them here. Your response will help determine questions and topics that need to be covered in future courses. Thank you for taking time to respond.”

After participants finished the survey, they saw a message that said, “Thank you for your time in filling out this voluntary response and thank you for your service!”

I administered the course evaluation survey to help improve the quality of the Bible study. I designed the Bible study as a resource to help NGR deal with the vocational challenges that they encounter in their service. Chapter Three provided the theological review I used to create a study faithful to orthodox Christian teaching, and faithful to the Lutheran theological heritage. This chapter laid out the method I followed to improve the content and delivery of the study.

### **Assumptions, Limitations and Role of Researcher**

At the start, I emphasized that my research focused on Christian pastoral care for NGR. I limited my focus to vocational challenges encountered by NGR, as they balance their multiple vocations in the military and civilian sectors, serving in offices and performing duties for which they serve out of love (whether paid, volunteer). This study centered around a five-session Bible study which was written for the purpose of providing Christian education to address the theological foundation for understanding, appreciating, and appropriating the biblical teaching of Christian vocation and how that applies to the vocational challenges and responsibilities of NGR. I offered this study to provide positive impact on Spiritual Readiness. The Navy Chaplain Corps

provides an extensive definition for Spiritual Readiness, which I cite here:

3. Spiritual Readiness in the Sea Services. Spiritual Readiness is the strength of spirit that enables the warfighter to accomplish the mission with honor. Spiritual Readiness is developed through the pursuit of meaning, purpose, values, and sacrificial service. For many, it is inspired by their connection to the sacred and to a community of faith.

a. Spiritually Ready Warfighters pursue meaning, purpose, values, and sacrificial service; cultivate resources and relationships to prepare their spirit for hardships; develop a strong personal identity and purpose with a moral and ethical foundation; often have a connection to the sacred and a community of faith; do not engage in destructive behaviors; understand and accept the burdens of service; and live life well and are prepared to face death.

b. Spiritual Readiness can be developed in commands where: commanders openly encourage individual Spiritual Readiness; there is access to a chaplain who provides faith-based activities; the RMT is trained, equipped, and resourced appropriately to the task; and RMTs create a tailored CRP to meet warfighter needs which includes Religious Ministry and may involve a variety of enablers from other enterprises.

c. Claimant resources which may help develop Spiritual Readiness include: Warrior Toughness; Expanded Operational Stress Control (E-OSC); Spiritual Fitness; Human Performance; and Marine Mindset. CREDOs activities are also available to support Spiritual Readiness.<sup>21</sup>

As I conducted research for my MAP, I assumed that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. I assumed the Bible is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. I did not attempt to mount an apologetic for the efficacy of the Word of God, but simply credited the Bible with that authority as part of my orthodox Christian confession.

I have had my own sufferings and hardship that accompany service as an officer in NGR, and I assumed that most who serve in the NGR have had similar experiences; some have had much worse hardships to endure than I have. Spirit-produced faith gave me the ability to see the benefit God produces through the suffering I endured. That same faith makes me trust God to use the cross and suffering of my fellow NGR for their good and the good of others.

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<sup>21</sup> Chief of Chaplains Instruction 5351.2, Professional Naval Chaplaincy Leader Development, under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy, March 22, 2022. Enclosure 9. <https://www.secnav.navy.mil/doni/CHIEF%20OF%20CHAPLAINS%20INSTRUCTIONS/5351.1.pdf>. The acronym RMT stands for Religious Ministry Team. CRP stands for Command Religious Program. CREDO stands for Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation.

I did not set a limit to the number of participants in the Bible study. All participants who were willing to participate in the Bible study series, and then complete post Bible study course evaluation survey, were able to participate. I assumed that those who participated in the study would benefit from the material, and the data they offered through their response to the course evaluation survey would be of value for this study, even future studies. I also assumed that personal reflections brought up during the Bible study would benefit all participants.

I assumed that the course evaluation survey would gain the most accurate responses possible if it was anonymous and if I made it available immediately after the Bible study. With that in mind, I made the survey completely anonymous. I made the survey available to participants upon the conclusion of the study. I gave email and personal message reminders to participants to take the course evaluation survey.

My duty location at CLDJ limited participants to personnel serving at CLDJ. I advertised for participants through chapel service announcements, bulletins, announcement sheets and email distribution.<sup>22</sup>

### **Implementation Time Line**

Submitted MAP Proposal Draft to Advisor	February 12, 2021
Submitted MAP Proposal Draft to IRB Chair	February 17, 2021
Submitted MAP Proposal to Dissertation Secretary	February 22, 2021
Submitted MAP Proposal to CSL IRB	March 23, 2021
Interview with MAP Committee	March 31, 2021
CSL IRB Approved Subject to Navy IRB	April 5, 2021

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix Six for the Public Service Announcements (PSAs), sent to all personnel on the Camp Lemonnier PSA distribution list. PSAs are brief, given the widest possible distribution audience, and limited in detail.

Submitted Application to Navy IRB	April 6, 2021
Completed Navy Required CITI Courses	April 10, 2021
Started IRB Process with NHCP <sup>23</sup>	April 13, 2021
Protocol NHCP.2021.0035 Submitted	April 27, 2021
Received Initial Legal Review NHCP IRB	May 19, 2021
Responded to Legal Review NHCP IRB	May 20, 2021
Changed MAP Terminology <sup>24</sup>	May 20, 2021
NMCSD IRB Hearing <sup>25</sup>	June 2, 2021
IRB Decision: Study Not Approved	June 2, 2021
Discussed Course Evaluation Survey <sup>26</sup>	June 7, 2021
with IRB Chair at CSL	
Preliminary Approval Granted from CSL	June 7, 2021
Approved for Course Evaluation Survey	July 1, 2021
with Navy Survey Program Manager/Deputy <sup>27</sup>	
Approved to Proceed with Research for MAP	August 16, 2021
Approval Granted by IRB Chair at CSL	

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<sup>23</sup> NHCP stands for Navy Hospital Camp Pendleton. This IRB had jurisdiction over my protocol (IRB application) due to my service at Camp Pendleton from December 16, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Removed “Citizen Warrior” and replaced it with National Guard and Reserve (NGR). The legal review expressed concern that “Citizen Warrior” seemed to be used by a hate group website.

<sup>25</sup> NMCSD stands for Naval Medical Hospital San Diego. The IRB Committee at this hospital served as the final decision authority for my IRB protocol (application).

<sup>26</sup> Conducting research with the interview of participants requires a Navy IRB approval. A “Course Evaluation Survey” does not require Navy IRB approval. “Training course evaluation surveys are generally exempt as long as the survey deals with the course content or course presentation. Course impact evaluations may also be exempt. Contact the Navy Survey Program Manager/Deputy with specifics for review of the questions and a final determination,” source for quote is: <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/About-MyNavy-HR/Commands/Navy-Personnel-Command/Organization/BUPERS/Survey-Policy/>.

<sup>27</sup> Received verbal approval for conducting a course evaluation survey from David Smith with the Navy Survey Program Manager’s office. On July 1, 2021, David Smith also provided information on how to register for a survey application tool at <https://surveys.max.gov/admin>. This is the website approved for the purpose of conducting surveys taken by military personnel serving at a U.S. Navy installation.

Five-Week Study Advertised by PSA at CLDJ	January 26, 2022
First Session of Five-Week Study Started	February 3, 2022
Second Session of Five-Week Study Started	March 17, 2022
Five-Week Study Advertised by PSA at CLDJ	April 27, 2022
Third Session of Five-Week Study Started	April 28, 2022
Fourth Session of Five-Week Study Started	June 1, 2022
Five-Week Study Advertised by PSA at CLDJ	July 28, 2022
Fifth Session of Five-Week Study Started	August 11, 2022
Submitted penultimate MAP to CSL	September 2, 2022
Dissertation Secretary	

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I shared the project design and methodology I followed for my MAP. I noted initial plans to interview participants. I also noted how the Navy IRB system and my time limits prevented the interviews. I outlined the revised project design with the Bible study, and post-study survey. In Chapter Five, I will show how I obtained data from the post-course survey, how I analyzed the data, and suggested changes based upon that data.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA

I designed my MAP to create a Bible study for NGR to help them handle the blessings and burdens of NGR service. Chapter One established the research problem. Chapter Two explored the theological foundation that guided Bible study development. Chapter Three reviewed my project against recent research. It also reviewed fields of theology, psychology and sociology for material to help tackle the unique vocational burdens that NGR face in a godly manner. The literature review helped me design a Bible study for NGR. Chapter Four outlined the project design, research approach, and research methodology with reflection on my assumptions and limitations, and the timeline for implementing this MAP. Chapter Five presents and evaluates the data gained from this study. The Bible study at CLDJ was the practical application of my Major Applied Project (MAP). I taught the study at CLDJ Enduring Freedom Chapel, in five sessions, from February 2022 through September 2022. Prior to the Bible study itself, participants were asked to complete an anonymous pre-study knowledge check (PKC). After completing the five-class Bible study, participants could take the post-study survey response (PSR).

This Chapter captures how I gathered and analyzed the data, what I expected to find, followed by the aggregated findings. I analyzed the findings for suggested shifts in style, content, and study topics. I considered how those aggregated findings relate to the theological foundation of this study, the research question, and address the problem identified in Chapter One.

#### **Data Analysis**

Those who participated in this study volunteered to complete a five-session Bible study and the PSR. Bible study participation as well as participation in the PSR were completely voluntary. The total attendance for all sessions of the Bible study was 51. Of those, 24 unique individuals

participated in at least one of the five lessons, 7 completed all five lessons, and 5 participants took the post-study survey response (PSR). The small number of those who completed the PSR opens the study to a significant sampling error, given that 23 of the 24 unique participants completed the PKC, but only 5 completed the PSR.

The survey response size is not adequate for generalized conclusions. The data from the survey can serve as a screening, to indicate trends and common feedback, which suggest that the Bible study is worth offering again. It may help to continue testing the Bible study, via the post-study survey response (PSR), to verify that the Bible study is in fact a product suitable as an answer to the research question.<sup>1</sup>

I downloaded the survey results from the MAX.gov site in a PDF report.<sup>2</sup> An Excel version of the results was also available. Quick statistic results gave the percentage completion for all responses in the survey, and identified any questions left blank. None of the questions on the survey were mandatory; survey respondents could leave any response blank and still finish the survey. The survey gave full text response option for two open-ended questions.

#### Question Set One: Demographics

All respondents served in the military, 4 of 5 were NGR, 4 of 5 were officers, and 1 was enlisted. The combined years of experience from the survey participants was 76 years. Respondents were from the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy, and Air Force Reserve; 4 of 5 were NGR. The primary occupation of respondents are as follows: Construction, Engineer, Pilot, Civil Affairs, and Executive Officer. I designed the MAP Bible study to give focused

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<sup>1</sup> Research question for this MAP: What Bible study material can I create to equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges, and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance is needed, so that they faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges?

<sup>2</sup> Complete survey results are in Appendix Five.

chaplain care for NGR. I wrote the Bible to help NGR identify areas for growth in spiritual stamina and endurance, and faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges unique to NGR. Since 4 of the 5 respondents were NGR, the survey results offer input representative of NGR.

### Question Set Two: Personal Rating of the Course

In Question Set Two, participants answered four questions on a scale of 1–10 (Likert scale), to show the affective response participants had to the course. All survey respondents liked the course.<sup>3</sup> The analysis of the responses to the four questions follows.

In response to B1Q1, “How would you rate this course?” all respondents liked the course.<sup>4</sup> In B1Q2, respondents were asked, “Would you recommend this course to others?” All would recommend the course to others.<sup>5</sup> For B1Q3, respondents evaluated this statement, “This course has practical use in my personal life.” All agreed it was practical for personal life.<sup>6</sup> In B1Q4, respondents evaluated this statement, “This course has practical use in my work or professional life.” All agreed it had practical use for work or the professional life.<sup>7</sup>

### Question Set Three: After and Before the Bible Study

The third set of questions gave 12 options for participants to give closed-ended responses to statements.<sup>8</sup> Response options were on a Likert scale with a neutral response, or a “bipolar

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<sup>3</sup> I used a “bipolar ordinal scale” for questions B1Q1 to B1Q4. This measured responses from “did not like” to “like”. The zero point of this scale was the choice of 5 or 6. Below 5 showed the respondent chose “did not like.” Above 6 showed the respondent chose “like.” Consult Dillman, et al., *Surveys: Tailored Design*, 151.

<sup>4</sup> Response to B1Q1: 2 of 5 rated the study an 8, 3 of 5 rated it a 9. Data would have been better if it included responses from those who started but did not complete all five lessons. I did not attempt to gather that data.

<sup>5</sup> Response to B1Q2: 1 of 5 rated the likelihood with an 8, 2 with a 9, and 2 rated a 10.

<sup>6</sup> Response to B1Q3: 1 of 5 rated the course an 8, 1 rated it 9, and 3 rated it 10.

<sup>7</sup> Response to B1Q4: 1 of 5 rated the response with an 8, 1 with a 9, and 3 rated it a 10.

<sup>8</sup> MAP Chapter Four, Table 3, p. 159.

ordinal scale”. The zero point, or neutral response on the scale, showed where responses shifted from negative to positive, from “disagree” to “agree”. The standard response options to all 12 statements in this set was strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

I analyzed responses to statements SQ01–SQ04,<sup>9</sup> to assess the Bible study course, specifically, if it improved cognitive understanding. I contrasted personal cognitive assessment after the course with personal cognitive assessment from the pre-study knowledge check. Due to the anonymous nature of the pre-study knowledge check (PKC)<sup>10</sup> and the post-study survey response (PSR), I could not compare individual responses from the PKC with the PSR. I could only compare aggregate results from the PKC with aggregate results from the PSR.

The PKC had 23 unique respondents. PKC2 asked participants to choose the better definition for vocations in a Christian context. They had two options. Option ‘A’ limited vocations to church service: “Any calling God gives a Christian to serve in the church as a pastor, chaplain, church musician, church teacher, or other calling to serve in church work.” Option ‘B’ had a broader definition: “Any calling God gives a Christian to serve his or her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community, for volunteer as well as pay.” Prior to the Bible study, 35% (8 out of 23) chose the narrower definition of vocations (option ‘A’), whereas 70% (16 out of 23) selected the broader definition of vocations (option ‘B’).<sup>11</sup>

PSR statements SQ001 and SQ002 assessed the same cognitive understanding of the

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<sup>9</sup> MAP Chapter Four, Table 3, p. 159. 1. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. 2. Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been. 3. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not. 4. Before taking the course, my answer to #3 would have been.

<sup>10</sup> The pre-study knowledge check (PKC) is printed in Appendix 7. Questions from the PKC will be listed as PKC1, PKC2, PKC3, etc.

<sup>11</sup> One respondent skewed the results, when taking the pre-study course, by selecting both answers A and B for question number two.

definition of vocation as PKC2.<sup>12</sup> All agreed with the broader definition of vocations: “I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community.”<sup>13</sup> Prior to the Bible study 4 agreed to the broader definition. 1 was neutral. The comparison of the PKC and the PSR would have been stronger had I used the same Likert scale for both the PKC and the PSR. Instead of a Likert scale response, the PKC offered participants a choice between a narrow definition (church work) and a broader definition.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, an analysis of the responses to PSR SQ001 and SQ002 show the cognitive understanding of the definition of vocations improved after the Bible study.

PSR statements SQ003 and SQ004<sup>15</sup> checked cognitive understanding after the Bible study contrasted with understanding before the Bible study. PKC3 corresponds with SQ003 and SQ004 on the PSR. The PSR used the five-option Likert scale.<sup>16</sup> PKC3 asked for a Yes or No response to the statement, “Vocations include all the callings God gives a Christian to serve others, paid or not paid.” This checked the cognitive grasp of the definition of vocation. In the PKC, 96.7% (22 of 23) agreed with that statement. PSR SQ003 checked if the course taught or reinforced the cognitive understanding that vocations cover all ways God calls Christians to serve, not only those for which we get paid. For PSR SQ003, 80% (4 of 5) agreed with statement 3; 20% chose Neither Agree nor Disagree. Based on response to PSR SQ004, prior to the study only 60%

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<sup>12</sup> SQ001: I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. SQ002: Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been.

<sup>13</sup> SQ001 Response: 1 chose “Somewhat Agree” and 4 chose “Strongly Agree.”

<sup>14</sup> PKC2 directions and options: Choose the better definition for vocations in Christian context: a. Any calling God gives a Christian to serve in the church as a pastor, chaplain, church musician, church teacher, or other calling to serve in church work. b. Any calling God gives a Christian to serve his or her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community, for volunteer as well as pay.

<sup>15</sup> SQ003: I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not. SQ004: Before taking the course, my answer to #3 would have been.

<sup>16</sup> SQ003 response options were A1 Strongly Disagree, A2 Somewhat Disagree, A3 Neither Agree nor Disagree, A4 Somewhat Agree, A5 Strongly Agree.

agreed with the stated definition of vocation.<sup>17</sup> The PSR results can be contrasted with PKC, but it would have been stronger had I used the same Likert scale for both. The PSR responses suggest the Bible study improved the understanding that vocations include all forms of service offered to others, “whether paid for that service or not” with the move from 60% to 80%. But the PKC showed 95% agreed that vocations include all forms of service offered to others, “whether paid for that service or not.” More data needs to be gathered on the PSR before any meaningful conclusion can be made about the impact made by the Bible study.

PSR statements SQ005 to SQ008 measure if the course prepared participants to handle vocational hardships with a sense of hope, and to endure and expect vocational hardships to help produce good character. I analyzed SQ005 and SQ006 to determine whether participants thought the course increased ability to approach vocational hardships with a sense of hope. I analyzed responses for SQ007 and SQ008 to test if the course helped participants recognize that character development is an important goal within our vocational responsibilities in this impact area.

All respondents agreed with the PSR SQ005: “I feel prepared to handle hardship in my vocations with a sense of hope.”<sup>18</sup> Agreement was stronger after the course.<sup>19</sup> This shows an increased sense of hope after the course. I contrasted responses to SQ005 and SQ006 on the PSR with responses to PKC7: “How prepared do you feel to handle hardship in your vocations with a sense of hope or optimism?”<sup>20</sup> Responses to PKC7, measuring preparedness before the Bible study, give an initial indication that only 52% felt prepared or very prepared.<sup>21</sup> After the course,

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<sup>17</sup> SQ004 responses: 1 Somewhat Disagree, 1 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 1 Somewhat Agree, 2 Strongly Agree.

<sup>18</sup> SQ005 responses: 20 % (1 of 5) chose “Somewhat Agree” and 80% (4 of 5) selected “Strongly Agree.”

<sup>19</sup> SQ006 responses: 60% (3 of 5) chose “Somewhat Agree” and 40% (2 of 5) chose “Strongly Agree.”

<sup>20</sup> PKC question 7 had these Likert scale choices: a. Not at all prepared, b. Somewhat prepared, c. Neutral, d. Prepared, e. Very prepared.

<sup>21</sup> Responses to PKC question 7: 14% (3 of 21) said they were “Somewhat prepared,” and 29% (6 of 21) were

all felt prepared. Comparison of the PKC and the PSR statements would have been stronger if options were worded the same on the PKC as the PSR. Responses to PSR SQ005 and SQ006, if viewed as an initial data screening, suggest that the Bible study may have improved the ability of the participants to approach vocational hardships with a sense of hope. This needs to be tested by continuing to offer the Bible study, as well as the PKC and PSR.

All respondents agreed with PSR SQ007: “I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character.” After taking the course, 1 of 5 selected “Somewhat Agree” and 4 of 5 selected “Strongly Agree.” Prior to taking the course, all respondents agreed with SQ007. Before the study, 3 of 5 selected “Somewhat Agree” and 2 of 5 selected “Strongly Agree.” I contrasted responses to PSR SQ007, SQ008, with PKC8: “How prepared do you feel to endure vocational hardships with the expectation that it will help produce good character?”<sup>22</sup> In response to PKC8, 17% (4 of 23) said they were “Somewhat prepared,” and 17% (4 of 23) were “Neutral.” Shifting to the positive end of the Likert scale, 39% (9 of 23) felt “Prepared” and 26% (6 of 23) felt “Very prepared.” The comparison of PKC and PSR was strong since I used a Likert scale for both. This shows an increased sense of preparedness to endure hardships in vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character.

I analyzed responses to PSR SQ009 and SQ010 to determine if the course built up tactics, techniques, and procedures useful for dealing with vocational hardships. All respondents agreed with PSR SQ009: “I feel that I possess tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with

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“Neutral.” Shifting to the positive end of the Likert scale, 33% (7 of 21) felt “Prepared” and 24% (5 of 21) felt “Very prepared.”

<sup>22</sup> The response options for PKC question 8 had these Likert scale choices: a. Not at all prepared, b. Somewhat prepared, c. Neutral, d. Prepared, e. Very prepared.

vocational hardships.”<sup>23</sup> Before the course, 60% agreed.<sup>24</sup> Data from SQ009 and SQ010 was difficult to contrast with the response to PKC9: “Have you *learned* any tactics, techniques, and procedures to deal with vocational hardships?” Asking participants if they have *learned* “tactics, techniques, and procedures,” is different from asking if they *feel* that they “*possess* tactics, techniques, and procedures.” Additionally, responses for PKC9 were Yes or No. Responses for PSR SQ009 and SQ010 were on a 5-option Likert scale. With questions worded differently, and response options worded differently from PKC to PSR, it was difficult to comment on significance of the PKC relative to PSR.<sup>25</sup> In the future, the wording of these questions and the response options should be the same before stronger conclusions can be made. The PKC and PSR questions and response options should have been the same. It was a failure for which there is no excuse. I suggest the PKC and PSR be used as a concrete example for future D.Min. It clearly demonstrates how failure to be meticulous in pre-study and post-study survey language, can lead to survey error. There is not any justification for inconsistent wording of questions and response options.

I analyzed PSR SQ011 and SQ012 to learn if participants thought the Bible study helped them achieve a sense of balance with the demands of their military-civilian vocational duties. All respondents agreed with SQ011: “I feel able to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations.”<sup>26</sup> Prior to the course, 4 agreed and 1 chose “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” This shows increased confidence to balance demands of military-civilian vocations. I compared responses to

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<sup>23</sup> Responses to SQ009: 2 of 5 selected “Somewhat Agree” and 3 of 5 selected “Strongly Agree.”

<sup>24</sup> Responses to SQ010: 2 were at the zero point of the bipolar scale, “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” Of the 3 that agreed, 1 selected “Somewhat Agree” and 2 selected “Strongly Agree.”

<sup>25</sup> The PKC indicated that 74% (17 of 23) chose yes and 26% (6 of 23) chose no, in answer to PKC question: “Have you learned any tactics, techniques, and procedures to deal with vocational hardships?”

<sup>26</sup> SQ011 statement response: 40% of respondents (2 of 5) selected “Somewhat Agree” and 60% of respondents (3 of 5) selected “Strongly Agree.”

PSR SQ011 and SQ012 with responses to PKC11: “Do you feel able to balance the demands of your military-civilian vocations?”<sup>27</sup> The comparison was strong since I used a Likert scale for both PKC and PSR. Responses indicate increased sense of preparedness to endure hardships in vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character.

#### Question Set Four: Yes or No Response

In the fourth set of questions on the PSR<sup>28</sup>, participants were asked to give a Yes or No response to a series of nine nominal closed-ended statements. I checked responses to PSR D1Q1 and D1Q2 to determine if participants attended the Bible study in-person, or through in-person and recorded Bible study sessions. I included D1Q1 and D1Q2 because I planned to offer a video recording of sessions for those who missed in-person attendance. Practical limitations, and lack of useful video equipment prevented recording classes.<sup>29</sup> Due to lack of recorded sessions, I gave participants an option to meet with me by appointment to cover missed lesson material. One did.

I analyzed data for PSR D1Q3 and D1Q4 to assess how effectively the Bible study defined the term vocation. All agreed with D1Q3, “The term vocation was clearly defined in the first

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<sup>27</sup> The response options for PKC question 11 had these Likert scale choices: a. Not at all able to balance, b. Somewhat able to balance, c. Neutral, d. Able to balance, e. Very able to balance. In response to PKC 11, 26% (6 of 23) said they were “Somewhat able to balance,” and 25% (6 of 23) were “Neutral.” Shifting to the positive end of the Likert scale, 39% (9 of 23) felt “Able to balance” and 8.7% (2 of 23) felt “Very able to balance.”

<sup>28</sup> D1Q1. I attended all five sessions of the course in person. D1Q2. I participated in the course by attending in person and watching the video recording of the course when not able to attend in person. D1Q3. The term vocation was clearly defined in the first session of the Bible study. D1Q4. The term vocation was defined as a call God gives to all Christians for various stations of line in which they serve, not just clergy and others who serve in church offices. D1Q5. I participated in a Bible study on the topic of “vocations” prior to this study. D1Q6. This course on vocations made use of many Bible passages as the basis for course teachings. D1Q7. This course on vocations made use of practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve. D1Q8. This course on vocations used quotations related to the topic from a variety of authors. D1Q9. This course on vocations emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership.

<sup>29</sup> The first attempt at recording show that recording equipment did not have enough memory to record a 60 minute session. Additional equipment could have been purchased, but it would have taken months before equipment arrived. Due to those limits, I chose not to record any sessions. Although it meant people could not watch sessions they missed, it did guarantee that all participation in the course was in person.

session of the Bible study.” Eighty percent (4 of 5) of respondents agreed with D1Q4, “The term vocation was defined as a call God gives to all Christians for various stations of life in which they serve, not just clergy and others who serve in church offices.”<sup>30</sup>

I analyzed responses to D1Q5 to see if participants attended Bible studies on “vocations” prior to this study. Only 1 of 5 participants took part in a Bible study on the topic of “vocations” prior to this study. PKC4 addressed the same matter with a slightly different question, “Have you participated in a study on vocations prior to this Bible study?” The response to PKC4 indicated that only 7 out of 21 (30%) had attended a study on vocations prior to this Bible study.

Responses to PSR D1Q5 and PKC4 reinforced the need for this Bible study.<sup>31</sup>

I looked at responses to D1Q6, D1Q7, and D1Q8 to measure participant evaluation of the course content. These statements related to the inclusion of Bible passages as basis for the course, practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve, and quotations from various offers on the topic of vocations. All participants agreed the course (1) used many Bible passages as the basis for the course teaching, (2) offered practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve, and (3) quoted from a variety of authors. Participant ID 7 clarified his agreement in open-ended response one.

One of the questions asked about multiple authors. I think I responded ‘yes’; however, I want to clarify that the quotes were all from authors of books from the Bible. I almost said no because the quotes were all biblical; however, I realized they were technically different authors. I would re-word that question to help the survey respondent understand the nature of the question.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This response should be analyzed against question set 3, SQ001: “I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community.” As noted in earlier analysis, all respondents to SQ001 agreed. 1 chose “Somewhat Agree,” 4 chose “Strongly Agree.” The single “Somewhat Agree” response may be consistent with 4 of 5 responding yes to statement 4, in question set 4.

<sup>31</sup> PSR D1Q5 results represent 56 years of military experience. PKC 4 results represent 274 years of military experience (174 years of active duty and 100 years of NGR).

<sup>32</sup> Respondent ID 7, from Summary for E1Q1, Quick statistics, Survey 838858 ‘NGR Vocations Course, End of Course Survey,’ page 33 of 34.

This participant did not notice quotations from other authors, although handouts used with the course show quotes used from a variety of authors.

Finally, I used the response to statement D1Q9 to determine how participants evaluated the character emphasis of the course. All agreed that the course emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership.

#### Question Set Five: Two Open-Ended Responses

In the fourth and final set of participant responses, course participants concluded their course evaluation by responding to two open-ended response directions, listed below:

1. Please write any additional comments you may have about this Bible study course or clarify any of your responses.
2. If you have questions about vocation or topics about vocation that you would like to see addressed in future courses, please list these here.

All survey responses were optional. I provided prompts to help participants formulate a response.<sup>33</sup> I printed this statement prior to the invitation to the first open-ended response: “Your comments will help to improve the course. Please take your time to respond.” I included this statement with the second open-ended prompt: “Your response will help determine questions and topics that need to be covered in future courses. Thank you for taking time to respond.”

The quick statistics printed the responses to the open-ended questions and coded each respondent with an odd number: ID1, ID3, ID5, ID7, ID9. It did not associate names or personally identifiable information respondents. After an initial read the of the printed survey

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<sup>33</sup> “To help formulate response, consider these questions: What worked well and should be repeated in future courses? What did not work well and should be improved in future courses?” At the end of the text box, used for typing the response, I inserted this statement to help respondents offer any additional comment that would apply. “Comments may address method of presentation, course content, instructor delivery, or anything else you consider helpful for improving the course. To help stimulate comments, try answering these questions: What worked well and should be repeated in future courses? What did not work well and should be improved in future course?”

results, I transferred responses to the open-ended questions into Excel files for analysis.

### Open-Ended Response One

The first open-ended statement requested information about the Bible study and clarification about survey responses. Appendix 5 contains the responses. I used an Excel file to analyze the data (Appendix 8). Column A listed raw responses from respondents with an odd number automatically assigned to each response. Column B had summary quotes from the responses, key ideas, and themes that captured each response. Column C had theological translation of responses, as needed, and themes. Column D summarized practical suggestions respondents offered for presentation methods, course content, and instructor delivery.

### Open-Ended Response Two

The second open-ended statement asked for questions or topics about vocation that respondents would like to see in future courses. The responses (Appendix 5) were organized through an Excel file to analyze the data (Appendix 8). I inserted raw responses in column A, with the odd number automatically assigned to each survey response. I used column B for summary quotes and key words from each response. Column C listed questions or topics for future study. Column D noted actions taken or planned.

Participants suggested the study be expanded to include the following. 1) Give guidance for post-military vocational decisions. 2) Include material teaching about spiritual gifts. 3) Give additional material on “How to discern and hear the Voice of God,” which the respondent suggested is critical for vocational guidance. 4) Give additional time to teaching the two realms, including a) historical examples of how others used those “notions” in the past, and b) give background on where the two-realm teaching came from.

In response to item 4), I created an “addendum” within the Bible study booklet, entitled

“More about Vocation” and “More about Two Realms,” with material drawn from *The Lutheran Difference: An Explanation & Comparison of Christian Beliefs*.<sup>34</sup> Suggestion 1) would be worth pursuing, as an additional course to help those in military vocations prepare for transition into civilian vocations. Suggestions 2) and 3) may have merit for additional study, but that would require additional theological foundation for that added study material.

#### Analysis of the open-ended responses.

I analyzed qualitative input, from open-ended questions on the survey to find themes each participant raised. After I identified these themes, I summarized themes in a way that was true to each participant’s words. I translated expressions into theological language, if needed. I did not find it necessary to offer much in terms of theological translation. I mostly offered summary of theological statements included in the responses.

After completing that analysis for each participant, I looked for primary themes, namely themes commonly found in the data from all participants. I found no primary themes. I identified a few secondary themes, themes common to multiple participants. I noted all responses with specific theological content, as it engaged with the content of the Bible study. I also noted suggestions for course additions, practical improvements to layout and design of lesson handouts, teaching methodology, and suggested additional study topics.

#### How Survey Error Controls Were Attempted

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian identified four survey errors: Coverage, Sampling, Nonresponse, and Measurement.<sup>35</sup> I quoted the definitions for these errors in Chapter Four, pages

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<sup>34</sup> Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed., *The Lutheran Difference: An Explanation & Comparison of Christian Beliefs* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Dillman, et al., *Surveys: Tailored Design*, 3–4.

144–145. I briefly outline my attempt to control those survey errors in the following paragraphs.

For *Coverage Error*, I invited anyone at CLDJ to attend the study. I promoted the Bible study verbally at chapel services. I promoted the study through written handouts given out to all who attended chapel services. I posted the course summary on the Chapel bulletin board, with a basic description of the course. In addition, I used the Public Service Announcement (PSA) system to distribute the invitation as broadly as possible. The demographic had this self-limiting characteristic: only those personnel who live and serve at CLDJ were eligible to attend. Only those who received the PSA about the Bible study and then read the PSAs would learn about the Bible study. With this mass notification, and verbal announcements I attempted to draw participants from the broadest possible sampling of NGR at CLDJ.

*Sampling Error* was unavoidable since I could not survey all National Guard and Reserve members. Instead of surveying all NGR, my survey was limited to NGR who served at CLDJ during my tour of duty. I considered mitigating sampling error by limiting the survey to the Navy Reserve at CLDJ,<sup>36</sup> but rejected this option; it would have limited participation in the Bible class. Any attempts to make generalized conclusions from the survey data need to recognize the limited population of the NGR that took this survey. Additionally, only the most motivated Bible study participants finished the course and took the survey. 24 unique individuals participated in at least one Bible study session. I invited Bible study participants to take the PSR after they participated in all five sessions or arranged to make up the final missed session in a private session with me.

Mitigating *Nonresponse Error* was difficult. It was challenging to get people to start the

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<sup>36</sup> Commander Naval Reserve Forces Command publishes a monthly, “By the Numbers” summary of all Naval Reserve SELRES (Select Reserve) and FTS (Full Time Support). As of August 2020, there are 59,288 serving in the Navy Reserve. By contrast, there are 336,000 serving in the Army National Guard 336,000; and 107,700 serving in The Air National Guard; data source: Statista. “U.S. National Guard Members FY 2021,” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/207392/national-guard-members-in-the-usa/>.

study, finish all five sessions, and voluntarily complete the survey. Recognizing that response depends upon contact and cooperation,<sup>37</sup> I made multiple contact attempts to invite participants to attend the Bible study. These attempts varied the timing, delivery method, and mode of invitation delivery. I also produced what I considered a respondent-friendly pre-study knowledge check, as well as respondent-friendly course evaluation survey to make it as easy as possible for respondents to complete the survey. I referred to various survey designs strategies, as laid out by Dillman, Smyth and Christian to reduce the nonresponse, as well as measure the error that results from nonresponse. David Smith—with the Navy Survey Program Manager office—helped me improve the survey design to make the survey user-friendly.

To mitigate *Measurement Error*, I wrote survey questions to increase the likelihood of respondents giving accurate answers. In the interest of accuracy of results, I asked for guidance from other experienced researchers in my Doctor of Ministry field to design the survey well. Working with the survey limitations within the Navy, my survey was limited to the website platform operated under Navy administrative control at MAX.gov. The website was easy to access for the respondents at Camp Lemonnier since all have access to free public WiFi, purchased private WiFi, as well as on office computers connected to government internet. Those who used a work computer to complete the survey could do so during office hours, or after office hours, since the course being evaluated was an official work product of a Navy chaplain.

### **Expected Findings**

I expected that my MAP research would confirm that a Bible study can serve as an effective tool for chaplains to equip military in general, and NGR specifically, to better handle

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<sup>37</sup> Dillman, et al., *Surveys: Tailored Design*, 6.

the burdens and blessings of military-civilian duties of NGR. I expected the study would help NGR to improve cognitive understanding of vocation, baptismal identity, the theology of the cross, two realms doctrine and prayer. This teaching would foster a sense of hope to handle vocational hardships. The study would encourage NGR to adopt a shift of perspective by which they could see vocational hardships as an opportunity for character growth. The Bible study would encourage connections among participants, and foster Spirit-guided conversations in which tactics, techniques, and procedures would be shared that are helpful to manage vocational hardships. Finally, I expected the Bible study would enhance the ability of participants to better balance the demands of military-civilian vocations.

My MAP project was designed to confirm or correct my assumption about what removes, alleviates, or reframes the suffering endured: (1) First Article resources are available to alleviate or remove the hardships NGR face. I also describe these resources as tactics, techniques, and procedures. (2) Social support from family, friends, and neighbors brings relief and support to NGR during difficult days. In the military context, I translate this as the importance of connections for growth as leaders. (3) Many NGR, who are Christian, find encouragement and equipping through the Divine Service, Bible study, prayer, and the encouragement of Christian fellowship. That is the benefit of offering this project's focused Bible study. (4) NGR, who are Christian, often alleviate the spiritual pain of hardship by seeing its redemptive place and purpose through the larger narrative of Holy Scripture. Part of that larger place and purpose is to produce endurance, patience, character and the ability to see our struggles through a lens of hope as God's grace and love enable.

In my literature review, I expected research would identify problems unique to NGR, as well as solutions others tried, and calls for further focused research and resource development. I

had hoped to find what was written by chaplains to address vocational challenges and unique sufferings of NGR.<sup>38</sup> I assumed participants in my study would have some familiarity with the doctrine of vocation but did not expect they would be familiar with the teaching of the two realms as it relates to vocation. I anticipated that few if any would have taken a course specifically focused on the vocational burdens and challenges which NGR specifically face.

I intended to use my review of research and theological literature to make a Bible study to address challenges and sufferings that NGR endure. This study aimed to help with unique burdens NGR experience and equip NGR to overcome and endure their vocational crosses while they built godly character. I gave the study for NGR participants hoping it would address their unique burdens, and help them overcome vocational crosses, and build godly character.

I wrote the course evaluation survey to check my expectations, hopes and assumptions. The survey tested if the study improved the cognitive understanding of vocation relative to civilian-military duties. I also hoped that respondents would draw from their wisdom and experience to offer ways to improve course content and method of delivery, by open-ended responses.

I administered the end of course survey to improve the quality of the Bible study. I wanted the study to achieve educational goals and objectives, as it gave a Biblical study representative of orthodox Christian teaching, faithful to the Lutheran theological heritage. I designed the Bible study as a resource to help NGR deal with vocational challenges they encounter. I used the responses from the course evaluation to improve the study. I share my findings below.

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<sup>38</sup> The study material may still be out there. Additional research would have to be done, that specifically targets chaplains to survey the materials they have written. My research through library data base tools, and Google scholar did not turn up anything. The systematic steps I took, to find that material, could also be reviewed, revised and improved. That would require more training in that area.

## **Aggregated Findings**

The responses from the PSR, and responses collected from lesson feedback forms (given out during the weekly study) provided feedback that suggested changes in style, content, and topics for future Bible studies shared with NGR. Part of my analysis includes changes I made or plan to make to the Bible study content and presentation techniques, as prompted by responses. When responses suggested changes to theological content, I noted the suggestions, but did not give a theological analysis for the suggested changes unless I adopted those suggestions. Finally, I also used the aggregated survey results to reflect on my original research question and problem from Chapter One. This last part of the analysis helped me test the merit of my research question, and whether I addressed the problem through the Bible study. First, I contrasted survey data against the research problem, and then I contrasted the data with my research question.

### **Findings Contrasted with Research Problem**

Chapter One presented my research problem.<sup>39</sup> Did the Bible study address the problem, based on the aggregated findings from respondents? All respondents received a survey invitation (Appendix 4). The invitation reminded participants that the Bible study was “designed to help National Guard and Reserve (NGR) navigate the blessings and burdens of their civilian-military vocations.” It also reminded them that the course material was written to “equip NGR to better

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<sup>39</sup> In Chapter One, I stated the problem as follows. NGR have unique vocational hardships that challenge their spiritual stamina. Human and spiritual forces cause NGR suffering as they carry out their vocations with trust in God and love for others. While experiencing this suffering, whatever form it takes, it is vital for NGR to understand and trust that God uses suffering for our good, even to develop character. The dual nature of NGR responsibilities—civilian and military responsibilities—can cause significant stress that builds from hardships common to NGR routines. These hardships if not removed, mitigated, or given greater meaning from a larger spiritual narrative can cause significant suffering. To help alleviate that suffering it is important to help NGR see suffering within the context of a purposeful narrative. Chaplains can help NGR see that purposeful narrative, and the place that suffering and hardship have through Bible study focused on addressing the hardships of vocation as well as highlighting the blessings experienced in vocational service. Through this spiritual support which chaplains are called to provide, they provide NGR with spiritual protection and defense.

understand their vocational duties and challenges (both civilian and military) and identify those areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance (resilience) is needed.” With that reminder, and with the study content in recent memory, respondents took the PSR.

Question Set 2, from the PSR, collected course ratings through four questions and statements answered on a scale of 1 to 10.<sup>40</sup> B1Q1 asked, “How would you rate this course?” All respondents stated that they liked it.<sup>41</sup> B1Q2 asked, “Would you recommend this course to other?” All respondents would recommend it.<sup>42</sup> This checked affective response to the content, and if they would recommend it to others. The response was positive, but it does not prove respondents liked the course because it addressed problems stated in Chapter One. Respondents were asked if they thought the course was practical for personal (B1Q3) and professional (B1Q4) life. In response to B1Q3, “The course has practical use in my personal life,” all agreed it was practical.<sup>43</sup> In response to B1Q4, “This course has practical use in my work or professional life,” all agreed it was practical.<sup>44</sup> This shows participants found the study to be practical. It does not prove respondents tied the practicality of the course to problems stated in Chapter One.

Question Set 3, from the PSR, gave a series of statements intended to measure whether the Bible study helped participants grow and improve relative to the problems NGR face, the problems in Chapter One.<sup>45</sup> Responses to SQ001–SQ004, measured if the Bible study improved cognitive understanding. I used responses to SQ005–SQ008, to evaluate the course, specifically if the course prepared participants to handle vocational hardships with hope, and endure

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<sup>40</sup> The question in set 2 are identified as B1Q1, B1Q2, B1Q3, B1Q4.

<sup>41</sup> B1Q1 response options: 1 = did not like it at all and 10 = I liked it a lot. 2 rated it an 8, and 3 rated it a 9.

<sup>42</sup> B1Q2 response options: 1 = definitely no and 10 = definitely yes. 1 rated it an 8, 2 a 9, and 2 rated it a 10.

<sup>43</sup> B1Q3 response options: 1 = definitely no and 10 = definitely yes. 1 rated it an 8, 1 a 9, and 3 rated it a 10.

<sup>44</sup> B1Q4 response options: 1 = definitely no and 10 = definitely yes. 1 rated it an 8, 1 a 9, and 3 rated it a 10.

<sup>45</sup> Questions in Set 3 were numbered SQ001, SQ002, SQ003, and so on, through SQ012.

vocational hardships with expectation that hardships, under God’s economy, produce good character. I analyzed responses to SQ009–SQ010, to see if the course built up tactics, techniques, and procedures for the participants as they dealt with vocational hardships. Responses to SQ011–SQ012, were analyzed to determine if participants thought the Bible study helped them achieve a sense of balance with the demands of their military-civilian vocational duties. All responses in this group were given on a five-point scale, from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.<sup>46</sup>

Statements SQ001–SQ004,<sup>47</sup> helped measure improved cognitive understanding. Statement SQ001 asked respondents to disagree or agree with this understanding, “I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community.” Agreement with this statement may link with my research problem. In the research problem, I asserted that a sense of meaning and purpose for suffering can help alleviate vocational hardships and burdens. With a proper understanding that vocations are callings from God comes an implied sense of purpose. This implied sense of purpose, due to God issuing the callings, contributes to a greater sense of meaning and purpose. This sense of meaning and purpose can alleviate suffering from vocational hardships and burdens.

For SQ003, respondents stated if they disagreed or agreed with this statement, “I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not.” Four strongly agreed. One chose “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” Responses to SQ004 measured understanding prior to the study. Three agreed with the statement, one disagreed, and one neither agreed nor disagreed. This shows the course clarified the

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<sup>46</sup> Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree

<sup>47</sup> SQ001. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. SQ002. Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been. SQ003. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not. SQ004. Before taking the course, my answer to #3 would have been.

understanding that vocations include all areas of service paid or not. Does this relate to my research problem? Tangentially if at all. If there is a connection to my research problem, it may be related to sufferings and hardships. It is my theological conclusion that NGR need to see these within a larger spiritual narrative to see the purpose for suffering, even recognizing that it can be used for growth of character. For that understanding to happen, NGR need to recognize all their vocations as part of the larger spiritual narrative of how God orders, designs, directs all things for their good even using suffering to produce character and hope.

As I identified the problem I sought to address through my MAP, I indicated ways in which the problems could be removed or mitigated. In the midst of suffering, it is vital for NGR to understand and trust that God uses suffering to develop character; suffering is not pointless. I noted that significant stress can build from hardships common to NGR routines. These hardships if not removed, mitigated, or given greater meaning from a larger spiritual narrative can cause significant suffering. Suffering leads to destructive physical and spiritual results if not alleviated or set within the context of a purposeful narrative. Responses to SQ005—SQ008 helped me test if the Bible study addressed these facets of my research problem by helping NGR see a larger spiritual narrative in which the purpose, plan, design, and blessing of God is seen under the cross and in the midst of suffering. Responses to SQ005–SQ008,<sup>48</sup> were used to measure participant evaluation of the course, specifically if the course prepared participants to handle vocational hardships with hope, and endure vocational hardships with expectation that hardships, under God’s economy, produce good character. In response to SQ005, “I feel prepared to handle

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<sup>48</sup> SQ005: I feel prepared to handle hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope. SQ006: Before taking the course, my answer to #5 would have been. SQ007: I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character. SQ008: Before taking the course, my answer to #7 would have been.

hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope,” all agreed.<sup>49</sup> SQ006 measured level of preparation prior to the Bible study. Responses to SQ006 compared with SQ005 indicated that the Bible study provided growth; all agreed with SQ006, but 3 chose Somewhat Agree. Whereas the response to SQ005 (measuring post Bible study response) shows that 4 chose Strongly Agree. This suggests that the Bible study improved how prepared participants were to handle vocational hardships with a sense of hope. In response to SQ007, “I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character,” all agreed. Responses from SQ008 (measuring conditions before taking the course) indicates that the Bible study provided growth. All agreed with SQ008, but 3 chose Somewhat Agree. Whereas the response to SQ007 (measuring post Bible study response) shows that 4 chose Strongly Agree. The responses suggest a strong association between Bible study completion and improved personal ability to endure vocational hardships. This ability to endure vocational hardships is improved by understanding that sufferings help produce good character.

Responses to SQ009–SQ010 measured if the Bible study helped participants build up tactics, techniques, and procedures useful for dealing with vocational hardships. All respondents agreed with SQ009: “I feel that I possess tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with vocational hardships.”<sup>50</sup> As I explained my research problem, I emphasized that chaplains have a duty to provide spiritual defense and support for NGR. I wrote the Bible study to help provide that defense (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). Tactics, techniques, and procedures are forms of practical wisdom. This is First Article wisdom, as well as Second and Third Article wisdom, as

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<sup>49</sup> SQ005 responses: 1 for Somewhat Agree, and 4 for Strongly Agree.

<sup>50</sup> SQ009 responses: 2 of 5 selected “Somewhat Agree” and 3 of 5 selected “Strongly Agree.” Prior to taking the course, as SQ010 responses show, 3 agreed with statement 9, and 2 were at the zero point of the bipolar scale, “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” Of the 3 that agreed, 1 chose “Somewhat Agree” and 2 chose “Strongly Agree.”

applied to the problems which NGR encounter. Responses to SQ009 and SQ010 suggest the Bible study helped NGR address the problems they encounter by improving their grasp and ability to apply practical wisdom to their vocational hardships.

Responses to SQ011 and SQ012 indicated whether participants thought the Bible study helped them achieve a sense of balance with the demands of their military-civilian vocational duties. All agreed with SQ011: “I feel able to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations.”<sup>51</sup> Prior to taking the course, 4 respondents agreed with SQ011.<sup>52</sup> This shows increased confidence in being able to balance the demands of military-civilian vocations. It could be asserted that the Bible study helped increase the grasp of practical wisdom, and ability to apply that wisdom to competing demands on the limited time, energy, and resources of NGR. The response may even point to increased sense of temperance following the Bible study. The Bible study encouraged temperance as it directed a healthy reflection on vocational demands along with a consideration for the strengths God gives in the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26). In addition, the Bible study also focused on the benefit of humility before God in prayer, which allows us the opportunity to unload the anxiety that piles up due to vocational duties.<sup>53</sup>

The connection between the positive changes as measured by Question Set 3 may be little more than correlation between respondents and the Bible study. I recognize that. If I could redesign the post-study response survey (PSR), I would add another set of

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<sup>51</sup> For SQ011, 2 of 5 selected “Somewhat Agree” and 3 of 5 selected “Strongly Agree.”

<sup>52</sup> For SQ012, 1 of 5 selected “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” 3 selected “Somewhat Agree,” and 1 chose “Strongly Agree.” This shows positive movement from before the Bible study to after the Bible study. 1 was at the zero point of the bipolar scale, with “Neither Agree nor Disagree.”

<sup>53</sup> Temperance is defined as “Strengths that protect against excess; examples include forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-control (Pigliucci, 2017 borrowed from Peterson & Seligman, 2004).” This was cited in the student notes for the Navy Chaplain Corps Professional Development Training Conference 2022. Handout binder, Day 2, “Meditations and Stoa Moments,” 11.

questions immediately following Question Set 3. This added set of questions would mirror the questions used in Set 3. Responses would be on the same five-point scale.<sup>54</sup> The statements and questions would differ from Set 3 by the addition of phrases such as, “This course helped me,” or “clarified ...,” “prepared me ...,” or “introduced me ...” Some possible revisions to statements 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, are given in the footnote.<sup>55</sup> This proposed question set may better measure the impact of the Bible study. While responses to Question Set 3 are helpful, the responses indicate implied impact of the Bible study, and correlation. Future studies could add questions (see footnote 57) to demonstrate how the Bible study directly led to responses.

Question Set 4 gave respondents nine statements to which they could respond with a Yes or No. As with the entire survey, all answers were voluntary. The results recorded one no-response. It is difficult to note any solid connection between the responses and the research problem, but a few connections are suggested. The first two questions measured personal attendance but has little connection to the research problem.<sup>56</sup> Questions D1Q3 and D1Q4 addressed the definition of vocation. A proper definition of vocations helps participants see their vocations within the larger setting of God’s plan, purpose, and

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<sup>54</sup> Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree

<sup>55</sup> Proposed set of questions with Likert scale answers: 1. This Bible study *clarified my understanding* of vocations to be the callings God gives a Christ to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. 2. This Bible study *clarified my understanding* of vocations to be the callings God gives a Christ to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not. 3. This Bible study *prepared me* to handle hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope. 4. This Bible study *prepared me* to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character. 5. This Bible study *introduced me* to tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with vocational hardships. 6. This Bible study *helped me* to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations.

<sup>56</sup> All responses were Yes, or No. D1Q1, “I attended all five sessions of the course in person.” D1Q2, “I participated in the course by attending in person and watching the video recording of the course when not able to attend in person.” It was already noted that video recordings did not take place due to equipment limits, and time limits related to purchasing better equipment to record the class.

blessings offered through vocations. An accurate definition of vocation is necessary to address the research problem. Results show that all agreed that the term of vocation was clearly defined in the very first class.<sup>57</sup> The majority agreed that vocations are *all* stations of service for *all Christians* and *not only* clergy and other church officials. Only one person participated in a Bible study on the topic of vocations prior to this study.<sup>58</sup> The pre-study knowledge check (PKC) also asked if participants had taken a study on vocations, prior to this study. Most had not.<sup>59</sup> This is related to my assumption that there are not many extent Bible study resources that address the common stressors associated with NGR vocational duties. All respondents agreed that many Bible passages were used for the course teachings, and that the course on vocations made use or practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve.<sup>60</sup> This highlights the need for Bible study resources to address the problems at the root of my study. It also shows that the Bible study addressed those problems with practical examples from NGR vocations. All agreed that the course used quotations related to the topic from a variety of authors. All agreed that the course emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership.<sup>61</sup> This emphasis on character and connections related to the need for NGR to see vocational

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<sup>57</sup> D1Q3, “The term vocation was clearly defined in the first session of the Bible study.” As the handout shows, it was printed on the first sessions, and all following sessions. This was important for quick and clear reference, and due to the attendance patterns. Participants entered the course at staggered start; some started with lesson one, others began with two, three, four and five.

<sup>58</sup> 1 responded Yes, and 4 responded No to D1Q5, “I participated in a Bible study on the topic of “vocations” prior to this study.

<sup>59</sup> Out of 23 respondents, 7 said YES, they had taken a Bible study on vocations prior to the course I offered, while 16 said NO.

<sup>60</sup> D1Q6, “This course on vocations made use of many Bible passages as the basis for course teachings.” D1Q7, “This course on vocations made use of practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve.”

<sup>61</sup> D1Q8, “This course on vocations used quotations related to the topic from a variety of authors.” D1Q9, “This course on vocations emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership.”

hardships within the larger purpose God has for building character. I emphasized connections with God and other Christians within the study to help NGR handle hardship and suffering with prayer and a sense of hope for what God can do through suffering to provide growth in character.

Question Set 5 gave respondents two open-ended questions.<sup>62</sup> Participants valued the teaching on the left hand and right-hand realms. Respondent ID7 stated, “I wish there was more time spent talking about the left and the right-hand realms.” The same (ID7) said, “I think more on the right- and left-hand realms, where those notions have been used in the past, and where those notions came from would be beneficial.” I taught on the two realms as doctrinal foundation to examine vocational duties, experiences, and our proper actions and attitudes within each realm. This teaching supports a larger spiritual narrative to help participants make sense of vocational hardship and suffering.<sup>63</sup> ID7 suggested that the group “would have profited more from just discussion without a time restriction.” This response shows preference for more time dedicated to discussion over lecture. Whether it relates to the research problem is highly speculative, and not clear.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Open-ended Prompts 1 and 2: 1. Please write any additional comments you may have about this Bible study course or clarify any of your responses. 2. If you have questions about vocation or topics about vocation that you would like to see addressed in future courses, please list these here.

<sup>63</sup> I suggest that the interest in the two-realm doctrine is because it provided a larger, purposeful narrative, which helped to understand and mitigate vocational hardships and sufferings identified in the research problem. If that suggested conclusion is accurate, then it appears that the Bible study was helpful for providing a measure of spiritual protection and defense against vocational hardships and suffering.

<sup>64</sup> The preference for more time for discussion could suggest or imply that the participant found discussion helpful because it reinforced purposeful narrative and improve understanding for how God uses suffering to build character. That is speculative. Perhaps this response valued the encouragement of mutual conversation among Christians as a form of protective defense against the problems NGR face in vocational duties. The response may also show a value for the connections that are established and reinforced among Christians through conversations that happen within a Bible study setting. I state those possibilities, while recognizing that these possible interpretations of the response are highly subjective and hard to prove.

One of the strongest, specific responses, as it relates to the Bible study content and the research problem comes from the next statement. In this statement, respondent ID1, offered what “worked well” in the Bible study, “The emphasize [sic] that everything we do is a calling or vocation that God has placed us in for whatever reason. Everything we should do is to his glory. No matter the success or failure of the situation you are in, God has placed you in it for a reason.” Failure can certainly be associated with vocational hardships and suffering, and success may go with vocational blessing. In blessing and suffering, the respondent recognized that “God has placed you in it for a reason.” This response addressed my research problem and the potential solutions and mitigation, that came from teaching that God uses suffering to develop character. The need for a larger spiritual narrative to mitigate suffering and hardship also seems present in the statement, “God has placed you in it for a reason.”

Before I examine how the survey data contrasted with my research question, let me summarize how findings contrasted with the identified research problem. The Bible study was needed, as most had not taken a course on vocations prior to this study, and none had taken a course focused on the military-civilian vocations of NGR. This highlights the need for the Bible study to address the problems at the center of my MAP. Participants affirmed that the course emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership. The research problem stated that “it is vital for NGR to understand and trust that God uses suffering for our good, even to develop character.” The emphasis on character, and growth in character, was a significant part of the study. Character growth was studied within the context of suffering and vocational hardships and crosses, to assure participants that God has a purpose for the pain of trials and sufferings. One of those purposes is growth in godly character. To the extent that the study

emphasized the importance of character, that ties to the research problem. As for the emphasis on connections, this was emphasized in lesson 4, which emphasized growth in character through our faith-connection with God and our fellow Christians. Our faith-connection with God gives comfort, strength, protection and encouragement. Connections with other Christians spur us on toward the growth in character that is needed when handling vocational burdens and hardships. Through this emphasis, the study helped NGR see suffering within the context of purposeful narrative, as connections with God and other Christians facilitates growth in godly character.

All respondents recommended the course and found practical use in it. The Bible study improved their cognitive understanding of vocations and improved the sense of hope for participants when facing vocational challenges. This growth gave a platform to address the research problem even if it did not directly attack the problem. A strong association exists between Bible study completion and improved ability to see that vocational sufferings help build character. The Bible study also helped NGR address vocational problems, and balance specific vocational burdens with practical wisdom. The connection between the Bible study and these improvements is correlation. An additional set of questions could be asked to better determine the direct impact that the Bible study had, versus the correlation and strong association. Although some of the responses may not seem tied directly to the problem which the MAP sought to address, the responses show that the Bible study helped improve a basic understanding of vocations, and provided the theological basis needed to address vocational sufferings with hope.

### Findings Contrasted with Research Question

I looked at my research question from Chapter One<sup>65</sup> and compared it against the responses

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<sup>65</sup> MAP Research Question: What Bible study material can I create to equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges, and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance is needed, so that they faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges?

from the post-study survey response (PSR). I used an Excel file to organize the responses from the survey, as I compared responses against my research question. The Bible study submitted with this MAP constitutes my answer to the research question. I also wrote leader notes for each lesson. These leader notes are in rough form, not submitted with my MAP, but with editing, other leaders could use those notes to help them share the Bible study with others.

Question Set 1 dealt with demographics and did not apply directly to the research question, other than verifying that NGR participated in the study and took the survey. Questions Set 2 had four questions for course rating. The responses to B1Q1, B1Q2 offer no findings related to my research question. Responses to B1Q3 and B1Q4<sup>66</sup> related to my research question. All respondents agreed that the Bible study had practical use for personal life (B1Q3). Since they found the course to be practical, I can assume that the course improved understanding of how to deal with vocational challenges within their military-civilian duties. All respondents agreed that the study had practical use for professional life (B1Q4). Based on this response I assumed that the Bible study gave respondents ways to understand vocational duties and challenges, and provided means to grow in order to overcome or endure vocational challenges.

The responses to Question Set 3 also shed light on how effective I was in answering the research question with the Bible study I developed. I aimed to improve the Biblical understanding of vocations. Did the Bible study do that? Based on responses to SQ001 and SQ002, it did.<sup>67</sup> Along the same lines, the responses to SQ003 and SQ004<sup>68</sup> indicate that the

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<sup>66</sup> B1Q3, B1Q4: 3. The course has practical use in my personal life. 4. This course has practical use in my work or professional life?

<sup>67</sup> SQ001 and SQ002 1. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. 2. Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been. *Responses for SQ001*: 1 Somewhat Agree, 4 Strongly Agree. *Responses for SQ002*: 1 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 Somewhat Agree, 2 Strongly Agree.

<sup>68</sup> SQ003 and SQ004: 3. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not. 4. Before taking the course, my answer to #3 would have been.

Bible study improved ability to understand definitions of vocations. That included the truth that vocations include service done for one's neighbor, whether paid for that service or not paid. I also aimed to use the Bible study to help participants overcome or endure vocational challenges.

Through the Bible study I offered, I aimed to help participants endure vocational hardships through growth in character. Based on responses to SQ005 and SQ006,<sup>69</sup> the study seems to have helped participants to grow in their ability to endure vocational hardships with hope. Handling hardships with hope relates to the character development needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges. Responses to SQ007 and SQ008<sup>70</sup> also show that the Bible study helped participants recognize that growth in good character is one of the outcomes to expect from suffering vocational hardships. This response shows that the Bible study material helped equip NGR to develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges.

The responses to SQ009 and SQ010<sup>71</sup> show that the course promoted growth in practical wisdom so participants were better able to overcome or endure vocational challenges by acquiring tactics, techniques, and procedures. Practical wisdom is a character trait needed for serving well under vocational difficulties. Practical wisdom includes cognitive abilities such as acquiring knowledge, developing creativity, curiosity, judgment, and perspective. The Bible study facilitated the growth of practical wisdom.

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*Responses for SQ003:* 1 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 Strongly Agree. *Responses for SQ004:* 1 Somewhat Agree, 1 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 1 Somewhat Agree, 2 Strongly Agree.

<sup>69</sup> SQ005 and SQ006: 5. I feel prepared to handle hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope. 6. Before taking the course, my answer to #5 would have been. *Responses for SQ005:* 1 Somewhat Agree, 4 Strongly Agree. *Responses for SQ006:* 3 Somewhat Agree, 2 Strongly Agree.

<sup>70</sup> SQ007 and SQ008: 7. I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character. 8. Before taking the course, my answer to #7 would have been. *Responses for SQ007:* 1 Somewhat Agree, 4 Strongly Agree. *Responses for SQ008:* 3 Somewhat Agree, 2 Agree.

<sup>71</sup> SQ009 and SQ010: 9. I feel that I possess tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with vocational hardships. 10. Before taking the course, my answer to #9 would have been. *Responses for SQ009:* 2 Somewhat Agree, 3 Strongly Agree. *Responses for SQ010:* 2 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 1 Somewhat Agree, 2 Strongly Agree.

Finally, the responses to SQ011 and SQ012<sup>72</sup> show that the study helped encourage character growth needed to overcome and endure vocational challenges. It takes temperance to balance vocational demands. There will always be more demands placed upon NGR than there is time, energy, or resources to address. Under the strain, it is too easy to respond with unjust anger towards others, so NGR need patience, compassion, and forgiveness. Family and friends, colleagues and supervisors can make unfair demands of NGR, so forgiveness and understanding is necessary, while seeking to balance growing burdens. Some burdens we endure and some hardships we encounter are too heavy for any individual. At the very least, we need to rely on others to help us bear the burden. Where there are no human-produced solutions, we need humility to admit this before God, take our anxieties to God in prayer, and rely upon God to use the cross and suffering for our good, and the good others. All of these examples of temperance relate to the ability to balance the demands of NGR vocations. The responses to SQ009, SQ010, SQ011, and SQ012 indicate that the Bible study had some positive benefit for character development, especially in the category of temperance.

Responses to Question Set 4 indicate that my Bible study answered the need to provide better understanding of vocations by clearly defining vocations. The responses to D1Q3 and D1Q4<sup>73</sup> show that the Bible study clearly defined vocations. By providing a Bible study focusing on vocations, I provided something that had been lacking for 80% of respondents.<sup>74</sup> The fact that

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<sup>72</sup> SQ011 and SQ012: 11. I feel able to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations. 12. 10. Before taking the course, my answer to #11 would have been. *Responses for SQ011*: 2 Somewhat Agree, 3 Strongly Agree. *Responses for SQ012*: 1 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 3 Somewhat Agree, 1 Strongly Agree.

<sup>73</sup> D1Q3 and D1Q4: 3. The term vocation was clearly defined in the first session of the Bible study. 4. The term vocation was defined as a call God gives to all Christians for various stations of life in which they serve, not just clergy and others who serve in church offices. All said Yes to D1Q3. 4 said Yes to D1Q4, and 1 No.

<sup>74</sup> D1Q5: I participated in a Bible study on the topic of “vocations” prior to this study. Only 1 out of 5 had taken such a study prior to the NGR Bible study I offered, based on the PSR response. Based on the pre-study knowledge check (PKC), only 33% or 7 out of 23 had taken a Bible study on vocation. Slightly better, but still low.

all respondents agreed that the study made use of many Bible passages shows that this was not merely a philosophical discussion, but a study with Biblical foundation as the Bible study handout submitted with this MAP will also attest. The final observation from Question Set 4, as it relates to the research question, is based on the responses to D1Q7.<sup>75</sup> I aimed for the Bible study to help participants better understand vocational duties and challenges. That requires practical examples taken from NGR vocations. Examples came from leader and participants during discussion. These examples helped identify areas for growth, and the need to develop character. The examples gave crucial context for understanding and wisdom needed to recognize personal areas where growth in stamina and endurance is needed, as well as growth in character to overcome and endure vocational challenges.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, as it relates to contrasting the PSR and PKC data against the implied goals of my research question, the responses to Question Set 5 in the PSR suggests several ways in which the Bible study may have achieved the aims identified in the Research Question.<sup>77</sup> One PSR response showed that the course emphasized a better understanding of vocational duties and challenges; the response from ID1, responding to what the course did well stated: “The emphasize [sic] that everything we do is a calling or vocation that God has placed us in for whatever reason.” The response shows the study emphasized a Biblical understanding of vocational duties and

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<sup>75</sup> D1Q7: This course on vocations made use of practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve. All responded with Yes.

<sup>76</sup> While this is not directly drawn from the PKC or PSR, I need to emphasize again, because my problem focus (research problem) and focus on vocational challenges and burdens biased me toward negative examples. I am grateful to God for the way in which the Holy Spirit guided our conversation in Bible study, so that we not only shared our challenges, but highlight our vocational blessings. Putting the spotlight on blessings that God gives in the midst of hardships and suffering helps create perseverance under suffering, and character growth, as we hope for short-term and eternal blessings and rewards from God.

<sup>77</sup> Research Question: What Bible study material can I create to equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges, and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance is needed, so that they faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges?

challenges. It does not prove the Bible study created the understanding, as the participant may have had that prior to the study. It does at least show that the study reinforced that teaching.

My research question aimed for Bible study material that would help NGR faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges. The next response, also from ID1, indicates humility before God when vocational duties are difficult, “everything we do is a calling or vocation that God has placed us in for whatever reason.” The expression “for whatever reason,” hints at the trust we need, the trust in God to use good times and challenges for a purpose, “for whatever reason.” This trust and confidence demonstrate character traits vital to overcome or endure vocational challenges. To the extent that the Bible study taught this understanding, and provided this understanding was missing prior to the Bible study, then the response shows that the study met the aim of the research question. It is difficult to prove that beyond noting the strong correlation between the statement and the Bible study. The participant may have had this understanding prior to the Bible study. It does at least show that the study reinforced that teaching.

Respondent ID5 offered this: “It should be emphasized what a calling is and that one's callings may vary in and out of various seasons. We are not to hold too tightly to any calling or position because God takes us from glory to glory, therefore, He continues to call us to various callings and positions to fulfill our purpose in Christ.” This response does not say whether the study emphasized what a calling is and that one's callings may vary. The use of *should* in the response statement implies that the course did not emphasize what a calling is. If this statement were made in an interview, I would have asked some follow up questions to clarify what the respondent meant by that statement.

Respondent ID5 also suggested: “Perhaps, the study should include a sub-study of Spiritual

Gifts. Maybe this topic could be helpful in further understanding one's vocations. Another topic to consider would be how to discern and hear the Voice of God because that is both critical and essential to guidance and direction in life.” These suggestions for future study do not give me any ability to conclude whether this participant thought that the study addressed the research question or not. I only know that the respondent suggests additional theological topics for discussion and application.

Respondent ID7 asked for more information on the two realms. “I wish there was more time spent talking about the left and the right hand realms. I will further investigate those notions though—I had actually never heard of them prior to this study.” Respondent ID7—who wanted less time on lecture, and more time on discussion—wanted more lecture time on the two realms. The two realms doctrine piqued this respondent’s interest. Based on this response, I would conclude that some better understanding of vocational duties and challenges was achieved, through the two-realm teaching (“the left and the right hand realms”). More was desired, but some growth occurred. It seems worthwhile to suggest a follow up course on the two realms applied to vocational duties of NGR.

I contrasted the aggregated findings from the PSR and PKC with my research problem and research question. This analysis led me to conclude that I created Bible study material that helped equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges and identify areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance are needed, so that they faithfully develop character needed to overcome or endure vocational challenges.

#### Suggested Changes in Style

Participants suggested making changes in the style of delivery and facilitation of discussion as I discussed in the data analysis earlier in this chapter. Respondent ID3 suggested, “A notepad

or journal type spiral bound handout could allow for a compact and convenient place for notes and thoughts.” As a result, I replaced the single lesson handouts, with a booklet that had all five lessons printed out. This booklet offered some blank space for notes to jot down ideas. I also tried to print out selections from the Bible to avoid too much back and forth page turning. My first versions of the handout consisted of one page for the Bible study outline, along with questions, and quotations. The second page had Bible passages printed out.

Respondent ID7 suggested that I include more time for discussion and try to cover less content material during the class so that we had more time for discussion.<sup>78</sup> ID7 also encouraged discussion to continue past the allotted hour for the class. That was not possible since another class met in the same space right after our Bible study ended.

During the first two times I offered the Bible Study, I provided lesson feedback forms with six open-ended response question. I used these forms to gather input which was useful for refining the content and delivery of the form. I listed the questions and participant responses to those questions in Table 5 below. Participant responses are coded to track the individual through all questions, without any personal identification. Some of the responses echo the responses given on to the PSR open-ended statements.

Table 5. Lesson feedback questions and responses.

Question	Responses by participants, unique responses coded
1. What worked well in this lesson and should be repeated in future courses?	A1: Bible References, Using the Bible to Explain the Bible. B1: I appreciated having the Scriptures all ready printed out and the lesson plan guiding our study. B3: engagement, well documented, logical flow. C1: Good Open-ended questions. C2: Use of Scripture to support points. D1: Too much content for time; discourages discussion. D2: Confused by flipping back and forth to

<sup>78</sup> Respondent 7, Open-Ended Response: “The discussions were usually limited in time and it felt as though the lesson plan needed moved along artificially to hit all of the lesson objectives. I know that is the nature of a lesson plan—but there were times that the (extremely) small group would have profited more from just discussion without a time restriction.”

	questions, and Scripture page. B3: Lecturesque Format May lose some listeners.
2. What did not work well and should be improved in future courses?	
3. Was there anything about the method of presentation, course content, or instructor delivery that should be improved in future course offerings?	A1: Very nice Job. B1: I think it would be good to have more questions to facilitate more conversation? B3: Encourage open-ended questions to engage members. C1: Hear better w/out the AC. D1: Reduced, simplified; have amplifying material to fill time if needed, but aim for more discussion in 45 minutes
4a. What questions about vocation did this session raise for you?	B2: Relevance to God's purpose for us. We do our vocation through him. B3: Good points, no questions. C1: Value—Good Process C2: I hadn't thought about my vocation as an NGR member before.
4b. Were those questions answered?	C1: Yes
5. What additional topics about vocation would you like to see addressed in future courses?	A1: Active Duty Focus, B2: Calling, when in doubt, to trust? B3: I'll think about it. C1: Leading children and Mentoring Troops

*Source:* Lesson feedback response written by the author of this MAP.

### Suggested Changes in Content

Participants also suggested changes to the theological content. My summary of this suggestion follows: 1) take more time on teaching how vocations change as God calls us to various callings and positions to fulfill our purpose in Christ. 2) Include a sub-study on spiritual gifts, and 3) offer material on how to discern and hear the voice of God for direction and guidance in life. The full response is in Appendix 5, Respondent ID5.

Table 5 records the weekly feedback questionnaire and responses. Responses to question 4a are worth noting, especially B2 and C2. B2: “Relevance to God's purpose for us. We do our vocation through him.” And C2: “I hadn't thought about my vocation as an NGR member before.” These statements affirm the content I chose for this Bible study.

Table 5 also lists one enigmatic response to 4a. “What questions about vocation did this session raise for you?” C1 replied: “Value—Good Process.” Question 4b. asked a paired follow-up question to 4a: Were those questions answered? To which C1 replied: “Yes.” I cannot state conclusively what was meant by “Value—Good Process.” I noted that response after class. One

participant struggled with a discussion question. We were talking about the cross that comes with vocations. On page 2 of the handout, I offered this question: “What is the VALUE of the cross you carry in your vocations today?” One participant struggled especially with the all-caps term VALUE. I saw the confused expression on his face, in response to the intentionally ambiguous question, used to encourage discussion. I knew it was not clear, so I added these follow-up questions in my leader notes: “How do you understand it [the cross]? How do you perceive it [the cross]? How do you define it [the cross]? What are you FEELING, THINKING, when you are carrying a cross?” These follow up questions explored an immediate, reflexive response to a cross. When a person touches a hot stove, the person pulls back reflexively, avoids the pain, and complains about the burn. There seems to be no value in that. Then I asked the class how our FAITH informed evaluation of the cross changes our perception. How do you perceive the cross naturally? How do you perceive the cross when informed by FAITH in Christ crucified and risen? We can, looking back 2,000 years, see the value of what Christ did for us on the cross. I asserted that the vocational crosses God gives to us have value and purpose for others and ourselves. I cannot say if this is what respondent C1 had in mind. During the class, someone was perplexed about the idea of our cross having a value, and the process of discussion helped him appreciate the value hidden under the cross we carry. I observed that breakthrough understanding take place in one person that night. Perhaps C1 had the breakthrough.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented and analyzed the data from the pre-study knowledge check (PKC) and the post-study survey response (PSR). I reviewed how I attempted to control survey errors. Based on the aggregated data, I also noted suggested changes to style, content, as well as future topics to be considered. Chapter Six provides the summary and conclusion for this MAP.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This final chapter summarizes the outcome of my Major Applied Project (MAP), offers my personal reflections on the project, and recaps the impact the Bible study had on participants at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti (CLDJ), based on feedback from the pre-study knowledge check (PKC) and post-study survey response (PSR). It also briefly considers possible broader ministry impact if the Bible study is used by other chaplains and lay leaders. This chapter also reflects on the way the MAP process impacted me personally and professionally as a chaplain. Finally, it recommends further uses of the Bible study, and additional research others may pursue.

#### **Project Impact**

##### **Local Impact at CLDJ**

Chapter Five gave the detailed analysis that serves as the basis for the conclusions in this Chapter. Chapter Six gives a recap of my conclusions from that analysis. 24 unique individuals participated in at least one class of the five-session Bible study that I offered at CLDJ in 2022. Even if participants did not complete the course, the data they offered in the PKC let me know that there was a need for a Bible study to address the vocation challenges of NGR. The course had practical benefit for participants, personally and professionally. It improved their cognitive understanding of the Biblical teaching of vocation and improved their ability to apply that to the unique vocational challenges in military service in general, and the NGR specifically.

I observed a strong association between participation in the Bible study and an improved ability of participants to approach vocational challenges with a sense of hope. This is not conclusive fact that the Bible study alone brought about that improvement, but it is more than conjecture, as the results from the PKC and PSR show. The survey results also showed an

increase among participants being open to the expectation that one benefit of vocational hardships is growth in good character. This increase came after taking the Bible study. Based on response from participants, it seems that the Bible study improved their recognition of practical wisdom available to mitigate and endure vocational hardships. Participation in the Bible study was associated with an increased confidence in the ability to balance the demands of civilian-military vocations. As with all the results from the PSR and PKC, this is less conclusive than a verifiable fact, but more than conjecture on my part. I could argue that the Bible study helped participants recognize and reinforce the understanding that growth in good character can be achieved through the endurance of vocational challenges and hardships. Within the growth of character, the study seemed to highlight and encourage growth in temperance and practical wisdom. All respondents agreed that the Bible study made use of many Bible passages, indicating that my study was more than a philosophical discourse but a theological study.

Both the PKC and the PSR indicate that few participants had taken a Bible course on vocations prior to this study. This fits with my assumption that not many Bible study resources are offered or being used to address vocations in relation to the unique blessings and burdens of NGR vocations.

I was encouraged that participants valued the teaching on the two realms. I think the two realms teaching was a critical component to the study, as it helped NGR makes sense of vocational hardships and sufferings. The two realms teaching was realistic about the role of suffering, while it inspired hope in the grace God gives in suffering to sustain us and help us grow because of our relationship with God by grace through faith in Christ.

Presumably, for all the reasons summarized above, and analyzed in more detail in Chapter Five, all participants agreed that they would recommend the Bible study to others.

## Potential for Broader Impacts

Participants response to the Bible study suggest a strong association between improved understanding of vocation, and participation in the Bible study. It also shows a strong association between Bible study participation and an increased sense of hope, as well as an increased expectation that God can use hardships and suffering for improved character growth. While the participants who completed the PSR is a very small sampling, the PSR results as they stand encourage broader application of the Bible study. As the study is used by others, I would also encourage a similar PKC and PSR to help measure the impact of the study. I am confident that the collection of additional survey data will support the strong connection between Bible study participation and the benefits I outlined above.

While I wrote the Bible study for a military audience—specifically National Guard and Reserve (NGR)—the Bible study may also be applicable for the church at large, especially for congregations with members from the military community. One participant suggested that I should publish the study with leader notes. I may do that. I started to edit my leader notes while teaching the course and continued the editing process after the MAP was submitted. The leader notes along with the class handouts would permit lay leaders as well as other chaplains to facilitate this study for the benefit of others. I am glad to share the study with other chaplains to use in their ministry to NGR. I would also consider making the study available to lay leaders, but the leader notes would need more editing before they are ready for others to use.

## **Personal Impact**

This study has been rewarding. The research process, administered through Concordia Seminary St. Louis (CSL) was easy to follow and encouraging. I enjoyed the course work and found the workload for requirements laid out by the CSL IRB to be clear, concise, logical, and

easy to complete with reasonable investment of time. I cannot say that about the Navy IRB process. I do not think that the Navy has a process suitable for the type of research work which chaplains pursue for pastoral care. Pushing a chaplain through the IRB process managed by the Navy's Bureau of Medicine is not a good fit. My main regret, in the entire process, is that the Navy's IRB method did not permit me to conduct pre-Bible study interviews. I would recommend that the Navy Chief of Chaplains consider other options for chaplains as they submit a proposal for research. I am grateful that I was able to use the post-course survey tool administered through MAX.gov, which allowed me to finish my research and applied project.

The most rewarding part of this project was writing and delivering the Bible study, then refining the material and delivering it again. I enjoyed leading the Bible study sessions. Time spent with others in the study of God's Word was encouraging. Special bonds grew out of the time shared with others in Bible study. This MAP has helped me grow in my knowledge of the doctrine of vocation, and the practical application of vocation to the lives of NGR. I have grown through the feedback received from participants, through pre-course knowledge checks, individual lesson feedback, as well as the end of course survey. Responses from participants pushed me to keep growing in my presentation, teaching and discussion facilitation. While I gained experience in the use of survey tools, I have much to learn about data analysis.

During the delivery of the Bible study, it was challenging to maintain regular participation. I offered the study numerous times for maximum participation. Attendance through all five sessions was hard to maintain. This was impacted by changing flight schedules, operating demands, ships coming into port, and participants returning home due to medical emergencies. One participant had to leave CLDJ for an emergency medical situation in his immediate family.

I am grateful that I had an opportunity to lead this Bible study and improve the Bible study

based upon thoughtful feedback from the course evaluation survey responses. I have benefitted from using this study in my own chaplain ministry. Based on the PKC and PSR, this Bible study filled a gap, by addressing vocation and two realms teaching. Based on both PKC, weekly feedback forms, and the PSR, those who participated in the study also benefitted. I am glad to share the study with other chaplains to use in their ministry to NGR. The Bible study and the entire research project may also be a resource useful for the church at large, especially for congregations with members from the reserve community.

### **Recommendations**

#### Further Applications

It would have been beneficial to ask more open-ended questions about the experiences that NGR have, but the post-course survey had to be focused on the Bible study and not the participants. I would encourage the use of more open-ended questions in future applications of this material. As for the target audience of the Bible study, I would recommend a broader application for all military in general. For the sake of the unique needs of the NGR, I would still focus discussion questions and application with the unique needs of NGR in mind. It was a challenge to sustain participation for five weeks. There is no single best time for Bible study. Future offerings should consider offering the study along with food at a recreation area, where participants could share in a meal before or during the study. No matter when the class meets, military operations will always pull people away. It is not only the tyranny of military operations that impacted the study participation. It is always important to consider the interest and theological affinity of individual participants. That is a major factor, which I did not assess through any feedback tool. For future studies, it would be worth considering some type of exit survey for those who start but do not finish the course. Careful thought would need to be given to

such a survey. It should be as thorough as the PSR.

If I publish the course for others to use, it may help to publish it with an improved title. I retained this title “Handling the Blessings & Burdens of Military Life” for consistency. It was also closely linked to my MAP research project title. An improved title may stimulate interest and encourage participation. Perhaps a better title would be something along this line, “Total Honor: Warriors Find and Fulfill Purpose in the Military and on the Homefront.”

Promoting Bible study among military members can be very time-consuming. Aside from the course preparation, delivery, and administration surrounding the study it requires a considerable investment of time building personal connections. Regrettably, due to other duties pressed on me early in my tour, that is one area where I was lacking. The built-in rapport that a pastor has with his people in a civilian parish is lacking for the chaplain, especially those assigned as Individual Augmentee.<sup>1</sup> The pastor in a civilian parish has built trust and rapport with his people through weekly preaching in the divine service, frequent pastoral visits, teaching catechism for youth and adults, and fellowship at other congregation events. These opportunities are not built-in for the chaplain. When I entered the parish ministry in 1995, the common advice given to young pastors was not to do anything new for the first year. Get to know your people first. Generally, that is good advice. That advice does not fit well with a nine-month deployment. I went to Djibouti as an Individual Augmentee. I did not arrive in Djibouti with 200, 500, or 1,000 people whom I knew well after months and years of shared training experience. That can

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<sup>1</sup> “IA Guidance,” United States Navy Human Resources, <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Career-Management/Detailing/Augmentation/IA-Guidance/>. An IA or Individual Augmentee is defined as any member in receipt of individual deployment orders issued by Navy Personnel Command (PERS-46), Career Management Department (PERS-4), to include IA Manpower Management (IAMM), Global War on Terrorism Support Assignments (GSA), Overseas Contingency Operations Support Assignment (OSA), and Mobilized Reserve Component Personnel (RC MOB) not mobilized as part of an established commissioned reserve component unit, and Health Services Augment Personnel (HSAP).

be the case with National Guard chaplains. One of the National Guard chaplains at Camp Lemonnier came with about 1,200 soldiers whom he had gotten to know well over months of training. The personal connections resulted in increased attendance at his Bible studies.

There can be no shortcut to the social connection between chaplain and military personnel. Unless a crisis binds the chaplain together with many in a short amount of time, rapport is built through frequent positive interactions with personnel. For those who seek to build participation in religious education, I suggest offering this course and others like it, after some rapport has been built up. I think it would have been beneficial to delay the start of my Bible study until after two to three months into the deployment. Those first two or three months could have been used in making visits among the workspaces on camp, getting to know service members better.

While reviewing the course content, and considering whether more lessons are needed, or different material should be covered, I concluded that the five main lessons can stand as they are. If any additions are made, I would suggest an introductory lesson, that would give an opportunity for participants to have a free-ranging discussion of blessings and burdens of life in the military in general and the NGR specifically. That may help the teacher with the delivery of the five main lessons. After the basic five-week course has ended, an offer could be made for additional study and discussion of two realms theology for those interested. One study builds on another.

The Bible study does not need to focus solely on NGR, but it should be delivered with intentional focus on the NGR, without excluding active duty. The material is suitable for active duty or NGR. If any adjustments are required, I would offer guidance in the proposed leader guide to alert the leader to unique vocational challenges that the NGR have. These unique challenges could be distilled from the material included in Chapter One.

The Bible study submitted with this MAP, as a separate document, shows the Bible study

outline I used for teaching the course. During the first three sessions of the Bible study, I offered single lesson handouts. I recommend printing all the lessons in a booklet fashion, including space in the margins for jotting down notes. I also created supplementary leader notes which are in rough format, and not a final form. In order to encourage wider use of the Bible study materials, I need to edit my leader notes for others to use. Chapter Two, which provided the biblical and theological foundation for my study, could be used as part of the notes for leaders.

### Additional Research

It was very difficult to get participants to fill out the survey. This was due in large part to those who started the Bible study but did not finish it. Routine duties and extracurricular activities in my deployed environment made it very difficult to obtain sustained participation in the Bible study. Additional research should develop strategies for increasing participation in the study, and post-course survey response.

I started my project intent on addressing the unique blessings and burdens NGR experienced in their dual military-civilian vocations. Not all Bible study participants were NGR. Based on the PKC, roughly half were NGR and half were active duty. If any researcher draws on my material for future research, I recommend offering a Bible study for the broadest possible military audience, while being alert to the different blessings and challenges experienced by reserve versus active duty. The discussion and reflection portion, as well as key selected quotes from theologians, members of the military, and sociologists and psychologists can be useful to help the facilitator be alert to unique needs of NGR that should be considered.

I think there would be value in conducting an interview of military members, prior to taking the Bible study. I addressed the nature of this interview in Chapter Four. In my opinion, conducting these interviews has merit, but the Navy IRB process is such that I would not

recommend it for Navy Reserve chaplains. I am not familiar with the IRB process in other branches of the military, but in the Navy, there is not sufficient time or resources available for a Navy Reserve chaplain to start and finish the research. Even for active duty Navy chaplains, I would recommend meeting with a representative from one of the Navy IRB Clinical Investigation Departments associated with the Naval Hospital system, before considering the benefit and practicality of conducting interviews for the sake of collecting research data.

### **Conclusion**

Working as a Navy chaplain in the reserves has been rewarding and challenging, even though some of my experiences have been highly frustrating. My wife and daughters have given me tremendous loving support, respect, and admiration along the way. Their support has been a tremendous benefit and encouragement. I can see ways in which my family have benefited from my service in the reserves. I have benefitted from fine friendships and encouraging role models I have met during my military service. My military service has stretched me, and helped me grow physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. I trust I have brought benefit to others from my friendship, pastoral care, and leadership I offered.

Serving people with Christ's gifts in Word and Sacrament has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my ministry. This has been especially satisfying when NGR were far removed from their "home church" in the States, and they were even more willing to make sacrifices to receive Word and Sacrament ministry in overseas locations. This ministry that I offered was not without sacrifice. I did not always get the balance right between the time the Navy needed me and the time my family needed me. I did not always get it right when trying to balance parish ministry and reserve duties with family life. For that, I count on God's grace and

forgiveness in Christ and hope to see how sufferings endured can have beneficial purpose within the economy of God's grace in Christ (Rom. 8:16–17; 28–29).

This written record of my research, the Bible study, course evaluation survey, and the analysis of the survey results will hopefully benefit others and serve them as they endure vocational challenges unique to NGR. I offer my paper, Bible study, and survey as a tool for others. Perhaps another researcher, dedicated to military chaplaincy, could use this work as a launching point for additional studies. This paper suggests avenues to pursue, and procedures that could help. I will use what I have learned in the process to continue providing godly guidance and leadership to my fellow NGR who struggle with the unique burdens of their vocational service in the civilian and military realms. With another nine to eleven years of service in the reserve community or active duty community, I hope to make good use of my research work. As circumstances permit, I will leverage my research and experience to give more informed pastoral chaplain care for NGR.

I also hope that my research and applied project will benefit other chaplains and pastors who care for NGR who receive God's gifts through the means of grace within the context of pastoral care. This project has expanded my understanding of NGR as well as the military life in general. I hope that my improved understanding helped give NGR a Bible study tailored to the unique vocational challenges and blessings that the men and women of the National Guard and reserves experience as they serve. I offered the study to help them grow in righteousness, strengthen their trust in God, even finding peace with how God uses suffering to produce patience, perseverance, and hope as God causes us to grow in godly character. Whatever true benefit and edification the course gave to others, God alone deserves the praise. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

# APPENDIX ONE

## MAP Study Table of Contents, Lesson 1, & Two Realms Chart

Notes: *Full Study Submitted as Separate Document with the MAP*

### Handling the Blessings and Burdens of Military Life



“..there is no doubt that the military profession is in itself a legitimate and godly calling” ~ Martin Luther, *LW* 46, 100

#### Bible Study for National Guard and Reserves

##### Five Part Series

01 – Called to Serve: Christian Vocation	Page 2
02 – Called to Serve: Vocational Identity	Page 7
03 – Called to Serve: Purpose for the Pain	Page 13
04 – Called to Serve: Grow in Character	Page 17
05 – Called to Serve: Work Hard, Pray Hard	Page 21
More on Vocation and the Two Realms	Page 25

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Prepared by  
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Colossians 3:23-24 <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

### Handling the Blessings & Burdens of Military Life

#### Lesson 1 Called to Serve: Christian Vocation

##### A. Consider Your Status before God

###### 1. Your status before God. (Right Hand Realm, *Coram Deo*)

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9:** Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup> that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— <sup>6</sup> even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— <sup>7</sup> so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

##### Points of emphasis (*Coram Deo*)

Consider your status before God, by what God did for you

- You are IN Christ Jesus (1:2)
- You are set apart by God (1:2)
- You are SAINTS through faith in Christ (1:2)
- You CALL UPON the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:2)
- God gives you GRACE (1:3)
- God gives you PEACE (1:3)
- Consider God's GRACE given you in Christ Jesus (1:4)
- You have all you need (lack no gift) (1:5)
- Christ will come back to take you to glory (1:5)
- Christ will sustain you (1:8)
- God is faithful. He will NEVER let you down (1:9)

2. Status before God impacts life in the world.  
(Left Hand Realm, *Coram Mundo*)

- a. **Ephesians 2:10** For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- b. **1 John 3:23** And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. **1 John 4:19** We love because he first loved us.
- c. **Romans 12:1-2** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- d. **1 Corinthians 3:6-7** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth, so neither who who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **1 Corinthians 5-7** Sexual Purity, Avoid Lawsuits, Marriage & Divorce, Various Callings (Vocations), Engaged

Vocations are callings God gives a Christian to serve his or her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. Vocations include all services you are called to do, paid or not.

Insight on Reserve Duty "There is an old adage among drilling reservists that when your spouse, your civilian employer, and your Reserve bosses are about all equally angry at you, you've struck the right balance."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Timothy Aines, op-ed in *Military Times*, "With Afghanistan Withdrawal Set, a Reservist's War Comes to an End," published April 12, 2021

B. Consider How You Are Called to Serve:  
Christian Vocations

1. God Called You to Serve. **1 Corinthians 7:17-24**

<sup>17</sup> Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him [*calling; vocation*]. This is my rule in all the churches. <sup>18</sup> Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. <sup>19</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. <sup>20</sup> Each one should remain in the condition [*calling; vocation*] in which he was called. <sup>21</sup> Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) <sup>22</sup> For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. <sup>23</sup> You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. <sup>24</sup> So, brothers, in whatever condition [*calling; vocation*] each was called, there let him remain with God.

2. God is with you as you serve.

- **1 Corinthians 7:24** (see 1 Cor. 7:17-24 for context) "... there let him remain with God."
- **Deuteronomy 31:5** Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."
- Other passages: Psalm 139, Matthew 28:20, Psalm 127

**Joseph, for Example**

Genesis 39:2 "The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered"  
Genesis 39:21 "The LORD was with Joseph; he showed him kindness and granted him favor."  
Genesis 39:23 "The LORD was with Joseph..."  
Genesis 45:5 "it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."  
Genesis 45:8 "It was not you who sent me here, but God"

3. You serve with the LORD of creation.

- **Genesis 1:26-28** <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
- **1 Corinthians 10:31** <sup>31</sup> So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
- **Ephesians 6:7-8** <sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

**1 Cor. 7:17-20** "...let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, to which the Lord has called him. ... Each one should remain in the *calling* in which he was called."

**1 Pet. 2:9**

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Martin Luther: "God will be there with his help so that, by divine grace and help, those may be consoled and gladdened who in their vocations have to endure all kinds of danger and difficulty."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, *Sermons on Exodus*, 1524 Aurifaber, quoted by Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 208.

**For Discussion:**

- 1) How do you discern which vocations (assignments) God has given you?
- 2) What Bible selections remind you that God is with you as you serve?
- 3) What are some vocational burdens you have to deal with?
- 4) What are some vocational blessings you have found along with the burdens?
- 5) How do you balance your vocational duties since you have both civilian and military responsibilities?

End of Part I—Intentionally Left Blank

**Called to Serve**

**01 Christian Vocations**

- \* God called you: dignity of vocation
- \* God is with you: power of vocation
- \* Partner with Lord of creation

**Ps 127**

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

**1 Cor 7 17** Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.....  
**20** Each one should remain in the condition [vocation] in which he was called. ... **23** You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. **24** So, brothers, in whatever condition [vocation] each was called, there let him remain with God.



**02 Vocational Identity**

- \* Vocational Identity & Baptism
- \* Baptism now saves you (1 Pet 3)
- \* Baptism now shapes you (1 Col 3)
- \* Remember who you are
- \* Deepest calling is to follow Jesus

**Mk 1:11** "You are my beloved Son."

**Gal 3:26** You are all sons of God.

**Rm 8:16-17** The Spirit testifies ... that we are children of God.

**2 Cor. 4:17-18 17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Vocations are callings God gives a Christian to serve his or her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community. Vocations include all services you are called to do, paid or not.

**TWO REALMS, ONE RULER, ALL Things Under God**

**God's Two-Fold Rule in the World—Chart #1**

**20** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21)

<b>LEFT HAND REALM—Coram Mundo</b>	<b>RIGHT HAND REALM—Coram Deo</b>
<u>HIDDEN</u> God	<u>REVEALED</u> God
<u>FINITE</u> —will be gone in the end.	<u>INFINITE</u> — will be complete in the end.
<u>GOD'S MASKS</u> —Since God works in a HIDDEN way, humans are the masks behind whom God is at work. This is what is so important about the concept of VOCATION. God feeds the sick, comforts through lonely, educates the ignorant through the vocations of mother and father in the home. God feeds the world through the vocation of farmers, bakers, truck-drivers, grocers, etc. God heals the sick through the vocations nurses, physicians, counselors, etc.	<u>MEMBER of Christ's Body</u> — Scripture reveals to us, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Cor 12:24).  <b>Col 2:17</b> "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

**ALL ARE CITIZENS OF LEFT HAND, CHRISTIANS ARE DUAL CITIZENS**

<u>COOPERATOR DEI</u> —Humans are Gods' partners in creation continua, ongoing creation. This includes ruling over the earth and subduing it. It also includes dealing with thorns, thistles, and pain of child birth. That's why we have medical sciences, military sciences, and political sciences as part of the COOPERATOR DEI role.	<u>HEIRS to the KINGDOM</u> — Scripture reveals that we have an inheritance, the kingdom that Christ prepared for us as a gift.
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**GOVERNING PRINCIPLE**

<u>LAW</u> — Mosaic Law and Natural Law. Romans 2:15 "What the law requires is written on their hearts."	<u>GOSPEL</u> —The good news of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, who was crucified for us and our salvation, so that all who believe in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. This same Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, is risen!
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**GOVERNMENT BY**

<u>REASON</u> —Luther called reason the "empress of all things in this world." Although reason is still under sin, it can function well in matters of 'civic righteousness.' Man acts according to reason in the left-hand realm. Man is a partner with God in God's ongoing creation, as a Cooperator Dei. Faith is active in love. "One nation under God." The government is not God. Obedience to government is relative.	<u>GRACE, FAITH, LOVE</u> which is given, strengthened, and sealed through means of Grace (Gospel in Word and Sacrament). Man turns to the right-hand realm for inspiration and forgiveness. Humans are passive receivers, heirs of the kingdom. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. Obedience to God is absolute. <b>You are God, we praise you. Te Deum Laudamus.</b>
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**Rom. 13:1-4**, ways & means of Left. Use of force was instituted by God. Military service is love in action. "For what is just war but the punishment of evildoers and the maintenance of peace?" (Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved" LW 46, 98)

**Proverbs 21:31** The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.

God's Two-Fold Rule in the World—Chart # 2	
LEFT HAND REALM: Coram Mundo	RIGHT HAND REALM: Coram Deo
<u>HIDDEN God</u>	<u>REVEALED God</u>
<u>LAW</u> —This is the primary concern. Left hand realm runs on the law. This realm is very interested in crime and punishment. This realm can protect relative peace, but not perfect peace, since fallen human race is not capable of perfect peace.	<u>GOSPEL</u> —Right hand realm is all about Gospel; very interested in proclaiming what God has done for you, the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus. This message reconciles sinners with God. In Christ's forgiveness, reconciliation, we have perfect peace.
<u>Crime &amp; Punishment</u> —You do the crime, you pay the fine.	<u>Grace &amp; Pardon</u> — You don't deserve heaven, and you get it. You deserve punishment, but you are forgiven. This realm gives grace and pardon.
<u>WORK TOWARD Peace</u> —In the left hand realm, it is always a goal, but the goal is never achieved. We are always working toward that goal, only gaining limited, and imperfect peace.	<u>PERFECT PEACE Now</u> — Already have Peace. This is DECLARED to be ours NOW in Christ. We have complete peace with God. Philippians 4.
<u>SWORD</u> — This realm works with might, power, threat; it runs everything. In the left hand realm we fight evil with weapons, tanks, etc.	<u>WORD</u> —God works through the Word, weakness, humility. We fight evil via Absolution, Lord's Supper, and the Baptism of little children.
<u>PRESERVE AND PROTECT</u> —Responsible to preserve and protect creation; prevent the harmful destruction of animate and inanimate creation.	<u>REDEEM &amp; RESTORE</u> Put things back where they should be and how they should be.
<u>NATURAL LAW</u> —Rational, revealed in the heart.	<u>REVEALED FULLY</u> —Fully revealed in Christ
<u>NATURAL KNOWLEDGE</u> —There is a god.	<u>TRIUNE GOD</u> —How the true God is revealed.
<u>GOD RULES</u> through <u>STRUCTURES &amp; INSTITUTIONS</u> of the world to accomplish his purpose. THIS is the <u>Interest of the State</u> , broadly speaking. Also interest of individuals. .... This is God's Left Hand realm. It is precious, holy. Recognize that it is in a sinful, fallen state, but it is still God's Left Hand.	<u>GOD works</u> though <u>His Church</u> to deliver grace. Broadly speaking, this is the <u>Interest of the Church</u> . Also the interest of individuals. .... the Church is made of fallen individuals who are forgiven. It is a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, washed in the blood of the Lamb (Eph 5).
<u>JUSTICE</u> is the focus	<u>MERCY</u> is the focus.
<p><b>Military Service, Godly Calling</b> "...there is no doubt that the military profession is in itself a legitimate and godly calling" Martin Luther, LW 46, 100</p> <p><b>Warrior's Prayer</b> "Dear Lord, you see that I have to go to war, though I would rather not. I do not trust, however, in the justice of my cause, but in your grace and mercy, for I know that if I were to rely on the justness of my cause and were confident because of it, you would rightly let me fall as one whose fall was just, because I relied upon my being right and not upon your sheer grace and kindness." (Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved" LW 46, 123)</p> <p><b>Decision to stay where called to serve.</b> "I need ammunition, not a ride."</p>	

### Called to Serve

#### 03 Purpose for the Pain

- \* Christ calls us to carry a cross.
- \* Pain and suffering have a purpose.

**Lk 9:23** "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

**Rm 8:28-29** <sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

#### 04 Grow in Character

- \* Cultivate connections with God
- \* Cultivate connections with others
- \* Connections key to grow
- \* Grow in character with suffering
  - as context for growth
  - as catalyst for growth

**Rm 5:3-4** <sup>3</sup>... we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

**Rm 8:37** We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

**Pr 27:17** Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

**Jm 1:3** Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

#### 05 Work Hard, Pray Hard

- \* Vocation requires faith/trust in God.
- \* Stand firm in your calling.
- \* When attacks bring anxiety, pray.

**1 Pt 5:6-7** <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

**Ph 4:6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

"To be a Christian without praying is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." ~ Martin Luther

"Cross and despair come together in vocation, and drive a man to prayer." ~ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 119

NOTE about bookmark and chart: These two pages were designed to be printed back-to-back on cardstock. The bookmark was cut out separately from the Two-Realm chart. This handout was given to participants on the first day of the class and used throughout the five sessions.

## APPENDIX TWO

### Contents of the Course Evaluation survey

#### End of Course Survey for National Guard and Reserve

#### “Navigating the Blessings and Burdens of Civilian-Military Vocations”

Thank you for completing the course designed to help National Guard and Reserve (NGR) navigate the blessings and burdens of their civilian-military vocations. The study was written with the intent that the course materials would equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges (both civilian and military) and identify those areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance (resilience) is needed. The course was designed to help NGR identify growth areas where applied training, tactics and procedures (TTP) could remove or mitigate hardships, and develop character needed to overcome/endure vocational challenges that remain after TTP are applied.

You are welcome to improve the course material by submitting your course evaluation. This course evaluation is completely voluntary. If you choose to complete it, the minimal time invested will be about **10 minutes** from start to finish. If you choose to provide more extensive feedback in the open-ended response at the end of the evaluation, then the time to complete this evaluation will increase. This evaluation is voluntary. Thank you for your voluntary response and thank you for your service!

#### PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority to request this information is granted under 5 U.S.C. 301, Departmental Regulations; 10 U.S.C. 5031 and 5032. License to administer this survey is granted per OPNAVINST 5300.8C under RCS# NSP1737.1, expiration 1/13/24.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this survey is to collect course feedback from participants, in order to improve the training material provided to National Guard and Reserve (NGR) members. This training material is offered to better prepare NGR to understand military-civilian vocational challenges, and prepare to deal with those challenges in a positive, constructive fashion.

**ROUTINE USES:** The information provided in this survey will be analyzed and maintained by the author of the course to improve the content and delivery of the course for the maximum benefit of NGR as they address the challenges associated with civilian-military responsibilities.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All responses will be kept confidential. Personal identifiers such as grade and occupation will be used to evaluate trends and differences in subgroups. All data collected will be statistically summarized with the responses of others and will not be attributable to any single individual.

#### Group 1 – Demographics

1. Do you currently serve in the military? Answer choice was Yes or No.
2. How many years have you served in the military? Answer choice was a year range.
3. Of your years of military service, how many have been in National Guard or Reserve? Answer choice was a year range.
4. Which branch of the DoD (or branches) have you served in? Answer choice given.  
Army, Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps

Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Coast Guard, Coast Guard Reserve

5. What is your current rank? The choice of ranks was provided (E-1 through E-9; O-1 through O-9; W-1 through W-5)
6. Please choose the one job that most closely matches your job in the military.

a. Administrator	b. Computer tech	c. Volunteer	d. Police/corrections
e. Clergy/pastor	f. Social worker	g. Psychologist	h. Chaplain
i. Counselor	j. Nurse	k. Lawyer	l. RP/chaplain's assistant
m. Educator	n. Physician	o. Pilot	p. Human resources
q. Special warfare	r. Maintenance	s. Construction	t. Hospitality
u. Logistics	v. Engineer	w. Planning	x. Other (specify)

### Group 2 - Personal Rating of the Course

In this next section, you are asked to give your personal rating of the course. Note that 1 will be a very low rating, and 10 the highest possible rating.

**On a scale of 1 to 10, please write the number that best describes your response to the question.**

1. How would you rate this course? (1 = *did not like it at all* and 10 = *I liked it a lot*).
2. Would you recommend this course to others? (1 = *definitely no* and 10 = *definitely yes*)
3. This course has practical use in my **personal** life. (1 = *definitely no* and 10 = *definitely yes*)
4. This course has practical use in my **work or professional** life? (1 = *definitely no* and 10 = *definitely yes*)

### GROUP 3 – Understanding, Preparation, TTP, Ability

The next set of statements, and responses to the statements, are intended to check your **understanding** **AFTER** the course compared to **BEFORE** the course. You will also respond to statements about *how well prepared* you were **AFTER** the course in contrast to **BEFORE** the course. The statements conclude with your response to *the level of your ability* and your *personal possession* of training, tactics, and procedures **AFTER** the course versus **BEFORE** the course.

**Please select one response to each statement, choosing from the five possible responses.**

1. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community.
2. Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been.
3. I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not.
4. Before taking the course, my answer to #3 would have been.
5. I feel prepared to handle hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope.
6. Before taking the course, my answer to #5 would have been.
7. I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character.
8. Before taking the course, my answer to #7 would have been.
9. I feel that I possess tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with vocational

hardships.

10. Before taking the course, my answer to #9 would have been.
11. I feel able to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations.
12. Before taking the course, my answer to #11 would have been.

#### **Group 4 Yes and No Response**

Please select the appropriate response for each statement.

1. I attended all five sessions of the course in person.
2. I participated in the course by attending in person and watching the video recording of the course when not able to attend in person. (Options for 2: Yes, No, No Answer)  
*If you answered YES to question 1, select "No Answer" for question 2. If you answered NO to question 1, choose the accurate response (Yes or No).*
3. The term vocation was clearly defined in the first session of the Bible study.
4. The term vocation was defined as a call God gives to all Christians for various stations of life in which they serve, not just clergy and others who serve in church offices.
5. I participated in a Bible study on the topic of "vocations" prior to this study.
6. This course on vocations made use of many Bible passages as the basis for course teachings.
7. This course on vocations made use of practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve.
8. This course on vocations used quotations related to the topic from a variety of authors.
9. This course on vocations emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership.

#### **GROUP 5 OPEN ENDED**

**Open-Ended Response 1:** Please write any additional comments you may have about this Bible study course or clarify any of your responses.

*Your comments will help to improve the course. Please take your time to respond.*

*To help formulate response, consider these questions:*

What worked well and should be repeated in future courses?

What did not work well and should be improved in future courses?

**Open-Ended Response 2:** If you have questions or topics about vocation that you would like to see addressed in future courses, please list them here.

*If you have no additional questions, type in "none".*

*Your response will help determine questions and topics that need to be covered in future courses. Thank you for taking time to respond.*

Thank you for your time in filling out this voluntary response and thank you for your service!

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey.

## APPENDIX THREE

### Informed Consent Form

**Study Title:** Pastoral Care for National Guard and Reserve: Using Bible Study to Equip National Guard and Reserve to Navigate through the Blessings and Burdens of Civilian-Military Vocations

**Researcher:** David S. Schleusener

**Email Address and Telephone Number:** [schleusernerd@csel.edu](mailto:schleusernerd@csel.edu), Cell: (919) 302-8932 (cell is also WhatsApp)

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Joel Bierman

**Email Address:** [biermannj@csel.edu](mailto:biermannj@csel.edu)

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a chaplain in the U.S. Navy Reserve and a student at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri, in the Doctor of Ministry program (D.Min.). The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate in the research study. This form describes what you will have to do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not sign this form unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

#### WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study is being conducted by a chaplain who serves in the U.S. Navy Reserve. This study assumes that those who serve in our nation's Reserves force face unique challenges and burdens due to their need for balancing dual responsibilities in the civilian and military sectors. Due to the dual nature of these responsibilities, National Guard and Reserve members may experience significant stress building up. For the purposes of this study, the term National Guard and Reserve, also abbreviated as NGR has been adopted to describe those who are members of the seven Reserve components in the U.S. military as opposed to those who serve in the active duty military.

This study has been started under the assumption that routine hardships or stressors which NGR experience, if not removed, mitigated, or given greater meaning within a large sense of purpose can cause significant suffering. This suffering, if not alleviated or set within the context of a larger purpose or benefit, may lead to destructive results within the social, spiritual and physical experiences of NGR.

This study intends to learn more about the unique challenges of NGR by reviewing literature from the fields of psychology, sociology, and theology. The data gained from a literature review will be used to create Christian Bible study materials which can help equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges. The Bible study materials will also help NGR identify areas in their lives where growth in character will help build spiritual stamina and endurance needed.

## **WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THE STUDY?**

You are invited to be in the study because you are:

- You are a member of the National Guard and Reserve (NGR).
- You are currently serving in the Reserve force, between the ages of 18 and 62.
- You are currently in a paid drilling status in the Reserves, and not retired.
- You are willing to participate in a Bible study.
- You are willing to reflect upon your Christian beliefs within that Bible study.
- You are willing to participate in a Bible study to improve your ability to handle the unique challenges of NGR.

If you do not meet the description above, you may participate in the Bible study, but you will not be asked to take the course evaluation survey which was designed for those currently in the NGR.

## **HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?**

The research design aims for 10 Bible study participants, but the Bible study participation will not be limited to 10. The only limit will be based on voluntary interest in the study, and room capacity limits.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The researcher is a chaplain in the United States Navy Reserve.

## **WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?**

You do not have to pay to be in the study.

## **HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will need to contribute about 7.5 hours of your time. Those 7.5 hours, from beginning to end, are broken up as follows: 10 minutes for a brief demographic survey, 30 minutes for review and signature of this informed consent document, followed by 5 Bible study sessions which will last 45 to 60 minutes in each session. Bible study participation through in-person attendance is the ideal. Due to potential COVID-19 health protection constraints and other restraints due to military duties, some participants may need to view a video recording of a “live” Bible study session. The study will end with an online course evaluation survey hosted through <https://surveys.max.gov>. Completion of this course evaluation survey is estimated to take 10-15 minutes.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?**

If you decide to be in this study and if you sign this form, you will do the following things:

- Provide brief information about your National Guard and Reserve status, such as rank, area of service, years of service, and branch of military in which you served.
- Participate in 5 Bible study sessions which will be offered in person. (*Live sessions missed may be completed by viewing a video recording of the trainer presenting the Bible study. In-person participation in the Bible study is preferred when possible.*)
- Complete a survey about the Bible study you participated in, as part of this study.

While you are in the study, you will be expected to:

- Follow the instructions you are given.
- Tell the researcher if you want to stop being in the study at any time.

### **WILL I BE RECORDED?**

- The researcher will only record the Bible study sessions (with video and audio), to permit others to view the Bible study session, if they are not able to participate synchronously.
- Your voice may be heard on the recording, but great effort will be taken to only show the presenter leading the study, and not any of the participants.

### **WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?**

Being in this study will may provide you with intangible benefits associated with the spiritual discipline of Bible study. That may provide you with some form of spiritual resilience that is difficult to quantify or measure. The evaluation of the Bible study sessions which you provide may help researchers help others in the future.

### **ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?**

No study is completely risk-free. However, we do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable.

Since this study does focus on the challenges and hardships that Citizen Warriors face as part of their civilian and military duties, your participation in discussion during the Bible study may involve hearing uncomfortable experiences from others or recalling uncomfortable experiences which may be distressing.

Should you become distressed or uncomfortable, the researcher, David Schleusener, will provide you with counseling resources available to you and no cost who can assist you.

### **WILL I GET PAID?**

You will not receive any kind of pay for being in the study.

### **DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your voluntary participation is important to the completion of this research. If you volunteer to be part of this study, you are encouraged to participate in all elements of the study (brief demographic survey, Bible Study, post-Bible study interview). Your participation is voluntary, so you can decide not to be in the study, and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you if you change your mind and end your participation in the study. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher. The researcher will inform you about how you can obtain access to the Bible study materials, even if you choose to withdraw from the study.

The researcher can remove you from the study at any time. This could happen if:

- The researcher believes it is best for you to stop being in the study.
- You do not follow directions about the study.
- You no longer meet the inclusion criteria to participate.

## **WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

Any information you provide in this study that could identify you such as your name, age, or other personal information will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the signed copy of this informed consent document, and original documents generated during the study. Names, places, and personally identifiable information will be redacted from any published material. No one will be able to identify you from any written reports or publications published as part of this study.

The post course survey will not ask for any personally identifiable information, such as your name, age, gender or other personally identifiable information.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in his personal password protected computer and a locked cabinet at the researcher's private residence, and only the researcher, research supervisor, and professional transcription service will be able to review this information.

Even if you leave the study early, the researcher may still be able to use your data, if the researcher feels that it contributes to an understanding of the hardships that Citizen Warriors face, and how they respond to those hardships.

### **Limits of Privacy (Confidentiality)**

Generally speaking, the researcher can assure you that he will keep everything confidential you tell him or do for the study private. Yet there are times where the researcher cannot keep things private (confidential). The researcher cannot keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person might harm themselves or another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states and jurisdictions, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to hurt themselves or another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

## **WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call, send a message through WhatsApp, or email the researcher if you have any concerns or complaints. You should email the research at the address listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about anything related to this study. After receiving your email inquiry, the researcher will provide you with a phone number that works for your geographic location or set up an appointment to talk in-person about this study and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

**DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?**

By signed this form, you are stating the following:

- I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study.
- The researcher has talked with me about this study.
- The researcher has answered all my questions.
- I voluntarily agree to be in this study.
- I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will get a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

I attest that the participant named above had enough time to consider this information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

---

Printed Name of Researcher

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date

## APPENDIX FOUR

### INVITATION TO TAKE SURVEY

End of Course Survey for National Guard and Reserve

“Navigating the Blessings and Burdens of Civilian-Military Vocations”

**URL for the SURVEY:** <https://surveys.max.gov/838858?lang=en>

Survey (838858)

Thank you for completing the course designed to help National Guard and Reserve (NGR) navigate the blessings and burdens of their civilian-military vocations. The study was written with the intent that the course materials would equip NGR to better understand their vocational duties and challenges (both civilian and military) and identify those areas where growth in spiritual stamina and endurance (resilience) is needed. The course was designed to help NGR identify growth areas where applied training, tactics and procedures (TTP) could remove or mitigate hardships, and develop character needed to overcome/endure vocational challenges that remain after TTP are applied.

You are welcome to improve the course material by submitting your course evaluation. This course evaluation is completely voluntary. If you choose to complete it, the minimal time invested will be about **10 minutes** from start to finish. If you choose to provide more extensive feedback in the open-ended response at the end of the evaluation, then the time to complete this evaluation will increase. This evaluation is voluntary. Thank you for your voluntary response and thank you for your service!

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**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this survey is to collect course feedback from participants, in order to improve the training material provided to National Guard and Reserve (NGR) members. This training material is offered to better prepare NGR to understand military-civilian vocational challenges, and prepare to deal with those challenges in a positive, constructive fashion.

**ROUTINE USES:** The information provided in this survey will be analyzed and maintained by the author of the course to improve the content and delivery of the course for the maximum benefit of NGR as they address the challenges associated with civilian-military responsibilities.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All responses will be kept confidential. Personal identifiers such as grade and occupation will be used to evaluate trends and differences in subgroups. All data collected will be statistically summarized with the responses of others and will not be attributable to any single individual.

**PARTICIPATION:** Completion of this survey is entirely voluntary. Failure to respond to any of the questions will NOT result in any penalties except possible lack of representation of your views in the final results and outcomes. If you agree to participate, you may withdraw your participation in the survey at any time by simply exiting the survey. If you are not comfortable answering one of the survey questions, you are free to leave it blank.

## APPENDIX FIVE

### Raw Data from End of Course Survey Results

#### Quick statistics

Survey 838858 'NGR Vocations Course, End of Course Survey'

#### Results

Survey 838858

Number of records in this query:	5
Total records in survey:	5
Percentage of total:	100.00%

#### Summary for A1Q1

What is your current paygrade?

Answer	Count	Percentage
E1 (A1)	0	0.00%
E2 (A2)	0	0.00%
E3 (A3)	0	0.00%
E4 (A4)	1	20.00%
E5 (A5)	0	0.00%
E6 (A6)	0	0.00%
E7 (A7)	0	0.00%
E8 (A8)	0	0.00%
E9 (A9)	0	0.00%
O1 (A10)	0	0.00%
O2 (A11)	0	0.00%
O3 (A12)	1	20.00%
O4 (A13)	2	40.00%
O5 (A14)	1	20.00%
O6 (A15)	0	0.00%
O7 (A16)	0	0.00%
O8 (A17)	0	0.00%
O9 (A18)	0	0.00%
W1 (A19)	0	0.00%
W2 (A20)	0	0.00%
W3 (A21)	0	0.00%
W4 (A22)	0	0.00%
W5 (A23)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

## Summary for A1Q2

Do you currently serve in the military?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	5	100.00%
No (N)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

## Summary for A1Q3

How many years have you served in the military?

Answer	Count	Percentage
(A1)	0	0.00%
1 (A2)	0	0.00%
2 (A3)	0	0.00%
3 (A4)	1	20.00%
4 (A5)	0	0.00%
5 (A6)	0	0.00%
6 (A7)	0	0.00%
7 (A8)	0	0.00%
8 (A9)	0	0.00%
9 (A10)	0	0.00%
10 (A11)	1	20.00%
11 (A12)	0	0.00%
12 (A13)	0	0.00%
13 (A14)	0	0.00%
14 (A15)	0	0.00%
15 (A16)	0	0.00%
16 (A17)	0	0.00%
17 (A18)	0	0.00%
18 (A19)	0	0.00%
19 (A20)	0	0.00%
20 (A21)	2	40.00%
21 (A22)	0	0.00%
22 (A23)	0	0.00%
23 (A24)	1	20.00%
24 (A25)	0	0.00%
25 (A26)	0	0.00%
26 (A27)	0	0.00%
27 (A28)	0	0.00%
28 (A29)	0	0.00%
29 (A30)	0	0.00%
30 (A31)	0	0.00%
31 (A32)	0	0.00%
32 (A33)	0	0.00%
33 (A34)	0	0.00%
34 (A35)	0	0.00%
35 (A36)	0	0.00%
36 (A37)	0	0.00%
37 (A38)	0	0.00%
38 (A39)	0	0.00%
39 (A40)	0	0.00%
40 (A41)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

## Summary for A1Q4

Of your years of military service, how many have been in the National Guard or Reserves?

Answer	Count	Percentage
1 (A1)	0	0.00%
2 (A2)	0	0.00%
3 (A3)	1	20.00%
4 (A4)	1	20.00%
5 (A5)	0	0.00%
6 (A6)	0	0.00%
7 (A7)	0	0.00%
8 (A8)	0	0.00%
9 (A9)	0	0.00%
10 (A10)	0	0.00%
11 (A11)	0	0.00%
12 (A12)	0	0.00%
13 (A13)	0	0.00%
14 (A14)	0	0.00%
15 (A15)	0	0.00%
16 (A16)	0	0.00%
17 (A17)	0	0.00%
18 (A18)	0	0.00%
19 (A19)	0	0.00%
20 (A20)	2	40.00%
21 (A21)	0	0.00%
22 (A22)	0	0.00%
23 (A23)	0	0.00%
24 (A24)	0	0.00%
25 (A25)	0	0.00%
26 (A26)	0	0.00%
27 (A27)	0	0.00%
28 (A28)	0	0.00%
29 (A29)	0	0.00%
30 (A30)	0	0.00%
31 (A31)	0	0.00%
32 (A32)	0	0.00%
33 (A33)	0	0.00%
34 (A34)	0	0.00%
35 (A35)	0	0.00%
36 (A36)	0	0.00%
37 (A37)	0	0.00%
38 (A38)	0	0.00%
39 (A39)	0	0.00%
40 (A40)	0	0.00%
No answer	1	20.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

## Summary for A1Q5

Which branch of the military do you currently serve in?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Army (A1)	0	0.00%
Army National Guard (A2)	1	20.00%
Army Reserve (A3)	2	40.00%
Navy (A4)	1	20.00%
Navy Reserve (A5)	0	0.00%
Marine Corps (A6)	0	0.00%
Marine Corps Reserve (A7)	0	0.00%
Air National Guard (A8)	0	0.00%
Air Force (A9)	0	0.00%
Air Force Reserve (A10)	1	20.00%
Coast Guard (A11)	0	0.00%
Coast Guard Reserve (A12)	0	0.00%
(A13)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

## Summary for A1Q6

Please choose the one job that most closely matches your job in the military.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Administrator (A1)	0	0.00%
Air Traffic Control (A2)	0	0.00%
Chaplain (A3)	0	0.00%
Chaplain Assistant or RP (A4)	0	0.00%
Computer Tech (A5)	0	0.00%
Construction (A6)	1	20.00%
Contracting (A7)	0	0.00%
Counselor (A8)	0	0.00%
Doctor (A9)	0	0.00%
Educator (A10)	0	0.00%
Emergency Rescue (A11)	0	0.00%
Engineer (A12)	1	20.00%
Executive Leadership (A13)	0	0.00%
Food Services (A14)	0	0.00%
Fire and Rescue (A15)	0	0.00%
Finance (A16)	0	0.00%
Hospitality (A17)	0	0.00%
Human Resources (A18)	0	0.00%
Intelligence (A19)	0	0.00%
Lawyer (A20)	0	0.00%
Logistics (A21)	0	0.00%
Maintenance (A22)	0	0.00%
Mechanic (A23)	0	0.00%
Medical Administration (A24)	0	0.00%
Nurse (A25)	0	0.00%
Pilot (A26)	1	20.00%
Planning (A27)	0	0.00%
Police/Master at Arms (A28)	0	0.00%
Other	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

ID	Response
5	CIVIL AFFAIRS
9	Executive Officer

Summary for B1Q1(SQ001)[[]]

1. How would you rate this course? (1 = did not like it at all and 10 = I liked it a lot).

Answer	Count	Percentage
1 (1)	0	0.00%
2 (2)	0	0.00%
3 (3)	0	0.00%
4 (4)	0	0.00%
5 (5)	0	0.00%
6 (6)	0	0.00%
7 (7)	0	0.00%
8 (8)	2	40.00%
9 (9)	3	60.00%
10 (10)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for B1Q2(SQ001)[[]]

2. Would you recommend this course to others? (1 = definitely no and 10 = definitely yes)

Answer	Count	Percentage
1 (1)	0	0.00%
2 (2)	0	0.00%
3 (3)	0	0.00%
4 (4)	0	0.00%
5 (5)	0	0.00%
6 (6)	0	0.00%
7 (7)	0	0.00%
8 (8)	1	20.00%
9 (9)	2	40.00%
10 (10)	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for B1Q3(SQ001)[[]]

3. This course has practical use in my personal life. (1 = definitely no and 10 = definitely yes)

Answer	Count	Percentage
1 (1)	0	0.00%
2 (2)	0	0.00%
3 (3)	0	0.00%
4 (4)	0	0.00%
5 (5)	0	0.00%
6 (6)	0	0.00%
7 (7)	0	0.00%
8 (8)	1	20.00%
9 (9)	1	20.00%
10 (10)	3	60.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for B1Q4(SQ001)[[]]

4. This course has practical use in my work or professional life? (1 = definitely no and 10 = definitely yes)

Answer	Count	Percentage
1 (1)	0	0.00%
2 (2)	0	0.00%
3 (3)	0	0.00%
4 (4)	0	0.00%
5 (5)	0	0.00%
6 (6)	0	0.00%
7 (7)	0	0.00%
8 (8)	1	20.00%
9 (9)	1	20.00%
10 (10)	3	60.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ001)[Question 1: I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	1	20.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	4	80.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ002)[Question 2: Before taking the course, my answer to #1 would have been.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	1	20.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	2	40.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ003)[Question 3: I understand vocations to be the callings God gives a Christian to serve his/her neighbor whether paid for that service or not.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	1	20.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	0	0.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	4	80.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ004)[Question 4: Before taking the course, my answer to #3 would have been.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	1	20.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	1	20.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	1	20.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ005)[Question 5: I feel prepared to handle hardships in my vocations with a sense of hope.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	1	20.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	4	80.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ006)[Question 6: Before taking the course, my answer to #5 would have been.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	3	60.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ007)[Question 7: I feel prepared to endure hardships in my vocations with the expectation that it will help produce good character.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	1	20.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	4	80.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ008)[Question 8: Before taking the course, my answer to #7 would have been.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	3	60.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ009)[Question 9: I feel that I possess tactics, techniques, and procedures I can use to deal with vocational hardships.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	2	40.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	3	60.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ010)[Question 10: Before taking the course, my answer to #9 would have been.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	2	40.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	1	20.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	2	40.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ011)[Question 11: I feel able to balance the demands of my military-civilian vocations.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	2	40.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	3	60.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

Summary for R5(SQ012)[Question 12: Before taking the course, my answer to #11 would have been.]

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (A1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat Disagree (A2)	0	0.00%
Neither Agree nor Disagree (A3)	1	20.00%
Somewhat Agree (A4)	3	60.00%
Strongly Agree (A5)	1	20.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q1

1. I attended all five sessions of the course in person.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	2	40.00%
No (N)	3	60.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q2

2. I participated in the course by attending in person and watching the video recording of the course when not able to attend in person.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	2	40.00%
No (N)	1	20.00%
No answer	2	40.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q3

3. The term vocation was clearly defined in the first session of the Bible study.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	5	100.00%
No (N)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q4

4. The term vocation was defined as a call God gives to all Christians for various stations of life in which they serve, not just clergy and others who serve in church offices.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	4	80.00%
No (N)	1	20.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q5

5. I participated in a Bible study on the topic of "vocations" prior to this study.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	1	20.00%
No (N)	4	80.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q6

6. This course on vocat ons made use of many Bible passages as the basis for course teachings.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	5	100.00%
No (N)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q7

7. This course on vocations made use of practical examples of vocations in the National Guard and Reserve.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	5	100.00%
No (N)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q8

8. This course on vocations used quotations related to the topic from a variety of authors.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	5	100.00%
No (N)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

### Summary for D1Q9

9. This course on vocations emphasized the importance of character and connections for leadership.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (Y)	5	100.00%
No (N)	0	0.00%
No answer	0	0.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

---

### Summary for E1Q2

Open-Ended Response 2: If you have questions or topics about vocation that you would like to see addressed in future courses, please list them here. Your response will help determine questions and topics that need to be covered in future courses. Thank you for taking time to respond.

---

Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	2	40.00%
No answer	3	60.00%
Not completed or Not displayed	0	0.00%

ID	Response
3	For the active folks, this could also lead into designing post service vocational decisions.
7	I think more on the right and left hand realms, where those notions have been used in the past, and where those notions came from would be beneficial.

## APPENDIX SIX

### Public Service Announcements Advertising MAP Bible Study

#### PSA Date January 26, 2022

From: USN Camp Lemonnier NAF DJ PAO Mailbox CLDJ PAO  
[email redacted]  
Sent: Wednesday, January 26, 2022 2:05 PM  
Cc: Schleusener, David S CDR USN NAF DJ SPEC STAFF (USA)  
[email redacted]  
Subject: PSA: Bible Study for Handling Blessings & Burdens of Military Life

WHO: Military and DoD Beneficiaries  
WHAT: Bible Study for Handling Blessings & Burdens of Military Life  
WERE: CLDJ Enduring Freedom Chapel  
WHEN: Thursdays, 1900-2000, FEB 3 through MAR 3  
WHY: Spiritual Resilience/Spiritual Toughness  
HOW: All study materials provided for presentation and discussion.

#### Additional Information:

- Discuss literature related to military service challenges (Bible, Christian and secular writers)
- Apply literature to military duties, challenges, and growth areas.
- Build spiritual stamina and toughness to handle the good and bad
- Grow in character by communication with peers and leaders

POC:  
Chaplain David Schleusener  
DSN: 824-5076  
NIPR: [email redacted]

#### PSA Dated April 27, 2022: Advertisement for third offering of MAP Bible Study

From: USN Camp Lemonnier NAF DJ PAO Mailbox CLDJ PAO <[email redacted]>  
Sent: Wednesday, April 27, 2022 4:18 PM  
Cc: Young, Kurt R LT USN (USA) <[email redacted]>  
Subject: PSA - Bible Study Topics and Times at Enduring Freedom Chapel

WHO: Military, DoD Beneficiaries, and all CLDJ Personnel  
WHAT: New Bible Study Topics and Times at the Chapel  
WHERE: CLDJ Enduring Freedom Chapel  
WHY: Religious Needs  
HOW: Religious Ministry Provided by CLDJ Chaplains.

WHEN: Beginning 28 APR 2022 (Specifics Below)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

1. MONDAY, at 1800: "Philippians: The Choice to Rejoice"

- Ch. David Schleusener leads an in-depth study on Paul's letter to the Philippians.
- This study looks at key parts of the Greek text, and historical background of the letter, to highlight key themes of joy and rejoicing, hope and peace.
- Paul's emphasis on the grace shown in Christ Jesus, and encouragement found in the fellowship in Christ Jesus, is also emphasized.

2. THURSDAY, at 1800: "Handling the Blessings & Burdens of Military Life"

- Ch. David Schleusener facilitates a discussion on "Handling the Blessings & Burdens of Military Life." Five Sessions
- Explore the Christian teaching of vocation, and how that relates to military duties, challenges, and growth areas. Build spiritual stamina and toughness to handle the good and bad. Grow in character by communication with peers and leaders.
- Each lesson is an interlocking puzzle piece with the others. Participants will benefit from taking ALL FIVE lessons, but do NOT need to take them in order.
- Come when you can. Take as often as you like. Repetition is the mother of learning.

3. THURSDAY, at 1900: "The Biblical Foundations for Catholic Practices and Beliefs"

- Ch. Kurt Young will offer a weekly discussion on the Biblical Roots of various Catholic Beliefs and Practices.
- Discuss topics such as: Why do Catholics pray to Mary and the Saints? What are the Theological Foundations of the Mass? Why do Catholic go to Confession to a Priest? What is the purpose of the Catholic priesthood?
- Build further understanding of the foundations of the Catholic beliefs and practices and deepen personal faith.

POCs:

Chaplain David Schleusener (CDR)

NIPR: [email redacted]

Chaplain Kurt Young (LT)

NIPR: [email redacted]

## **PSA Listing in Printed Copy of Chapel Schedule**

Thursday at 1800: “Handling the Blessings & Burdens of Military Life”

Ch. David Schleusener facilitates a rotating discussion on “Handling the Blessings & Burdens of Military Life.”

Explore the Christian teaching of vocation, and how that relates to military duties, challenges, and growth areas. Build spiritual stamina and toughness to handle the good and bad. Grow in character by communication with peers and leaders.

+ This rotating series offers five lessons.

+ Participants can enter the series at any time.

+ Each lesson is an interlocking puzzle piece with the others.

+ Participants will benefit from taking all five lessons. Come when you can.

+ Take as often as you like. Repetition is the mother of learning.

## APPENDIX SEVEN

### Pre-Study Knowledge Check

Bible Study for Navigating the Blessings and Burdens of Military-Civilian Duties || Pre-Course Check and Demographics

#### Pre-Study Knowledge Check:

1. The word vocation means:
  - a. relaxing
  - b. screaming
  - c. calling
  - d. shouting
2. Choose the better definition for vocations in Christian context:
  - a. Any calling God gives a Christian to serve in the church as a pastor, chaplain, church musician, church teacher, or other calling to serve in church work.
  - b. Any calling God gives a Christian to serve his or her neighbor at home, in the military, or in the civilian community, for volunteer as well as pay.
3. Vocations include all the callings God gives a Christian to serve others, paid or not paid.
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Have you participated in a study on vocations prior to this Bible study?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Have you participated in a study focused on the military-civilian vocations of National Guard and Reserve (NGR)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Where have you learned about Christian vocations? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a. Website articles
  - b. Books
  - c. Bible classes
  - d. Podcasts
7. How prepared do you feel to handle hardship in your vocations with a sense of hope or optimism?
  - a. Not at all prepared
  - b. Somewhat prepared
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Prepared
  - e. Very prepared
8. How prepared do you feel to endure vocational hardships with the expectation that it will help produce good character?
  - a. Not at all prepared
  - b. Somewhat prepared
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Prepared
  - e. Very prepared
9. Have you learned any tactics, techniques, and procedures to deal with vocational hardships?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
10. Where have you learned tactics, techniques, and procedures to deal with vocational hardships? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a. Website articles
  - b. Books
  - c. Bible classes
  - d. In-person lectures
  - e. On the job training
  - f. Personal conversations
  - g. Podcasts
11. Do you feel able to balance the demands of your military-civilian vocations?
  - a. Not at all able to balance
  - b. Somewhat able to balance
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Able to balance
  - e. Very able to balance

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

1. In which branch of the military do you serve?
2. Circle your current status.
  - a. Active Duty
  - b. National Guard or Reserve (NGR)
3. How many years have you served?
  - a. Active Duty \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. NGR \_\_\_\_\_

Charts for Open Ended Responses 1 and 2

OPEN RESPONSES ONE

A: Raw Data, Open Ended Question	B: Summary and Key Words	C: Theological Translation	D: Practical Suggestions	E: Secondary Themes
<p>Question 1. Please write any additional comments you may have about this Bible study course or clarify any of your responses. <b>Your comments will help to improve the course. Please take your time to respond. To help formulate response, consider these questions:</b></p>		<p><b>DO I REALLY NEED TO TRANSLATE INTO THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE, or should I list COMMON themes?</b></p>	<p><i>related to method of presentation, course content, and instructor delivery</i></p>	
<p>What worked well and should be repeated in future courses? What did not work well and should be improved in future courses? Please write your answer here: Comments may address method of presentation, course content, instructor delivery, or anything else you consider helpful for improving the course.</p>				
<p>Respondent 1 (107 words) This was a very interesting course. I was not able to attend all of the sessions because I was doing a RIP and then I had redeployed before the last session. I gave my email address to the Chaplain to have him send me the you tube links when complete so I can watch them all. Worked well: The emphasize that everything we do is a calling or vocation that God has placed us in for whatever reason. Everything we should do is to his glory. No matter the success or failure of the situation you are in, God has placed you in it for a reason.</p>	<p>Finished 4 sessions Very interesting course Redeployed before last session Worked well: all "we do is a calling or vocation that God has placed us in for whatever reason everything ... to his glory success or failure ... for a reason Finished 4 sessions Very interesting course Redeployed before last session Worked well: all "we do is a calling or vocation that God has placed us in for whatever reason everything ... to his glory success or failure ... for a reason</p>	<p>THEOLOGY Soli Deo Gloria Called for a purpose Teleic nature of vocation Wisdom of God Trust in God THEME Interesting Hard to attend all courses All we do is a calling Reason for what God called you to do</p>		<p>interesting course</p>
<p>Respondent 3 (31 words) Rich, thoughtful content was very valuable along with beneficial reflective questions. A notepad or journal type spiral bound handout could allow for a compact and convenient place for notes and thoughts.</p>	<p>Rich, thoughtful content Very valuable Beneficial reflective questions Journal type, bound handout, for a compact and convenient place for notes and thoughts</p>	<p>THEOLOGICAL Theological content matters It benefits to reflect on theological content  THEME Practical advice Handout/journal/for notes and thoughts</p>	<p>Reflective questions beneficial.  "A notepad or journal type spiral bound handout could allow for a compact and convenient place for notes and thoughts."</p>	<p>rich, thoughtful content was very valuable</p>
<p>Respondent 5 (109 words) It should be emphasized what a calling is and that one's callings may vary in and out of various seasons. We are not to hold too tightly to any calling or position because God takes us from glory to glory, therefore, He continues to call us to various callings and positions to fulfill our purpose in Christ. Perhaps, the study should include a sub-study of Spiritual Gifts. Maybe this topic could be helpful in further understanding one's vocations. Another topic to consider to be included would be how to discern and hear the Voice of God because that is both critical and essential to guidance and direction in life.</p>	<p>Emphasize what calling is Emphasize callings may vary Callings may shift in seasons of life Do not hold too tightly to calling or position "God takes us from glory to glory" God calls to positions to fulfill our purpose in Christ <i>The Second Paragraph, for respondent 5 will be included for Open-Ended Response 2 and analyzed there.</i></p>	<p>THEOLOGICAL: Theology of glory? Passage referred to "from glory to glory" Sub-study of spiritual gifts. Study spiritual gifts to understand vocation Enthusiasm? Listening for God's Voice Word and Sacrament? How we test and approve God's will (Romans 12)</p>	<p>Related to the THEOLOG and "Listening for God's Voice," considered by Simon-Netto in <i>The Fabricated Luther</i>, Luther stated: "In temporal matters man...needs no other light than reason. This is why God does not teach in Scripture how to build houses, make clothes, get married, conduct war and the like...[F]or all this the natural light is sufficient." [source: Simon-Netto, <i>The Fabricated Luther</i>, 85. Simon-Netto quoted Luther from <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke - Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Schriften (WA)</i>. 68 volumes. Weimer: Hermann Böhlaus, 1883-1999. WA 101.1:531.6-16.] It would be good to look at Phillip Cary, See notes collected for Galatians 1. <i>Good News for Anxious Christians</i>: Ten Practical Things You Don't Have to Do (Cary, Phillip) - Your Highlight on Location 516-527   Added on Sunday, March 1, 2015 6:06:06 AM</p>	

## OPEN RESPONSES ONE

<p>Respondent 7 (276 words) The course was enjoyable. If I answered "no answer" on the survey it meant that the neither response was appropriate. For example, I missed lesson 5; however, I did receive the lesson plan/guide (handout) and reviewed it. Vocation was clearly defined many times in the course handouts; however, the part about 'being paid or not' was not prioritized in my memory. I am quite the talker though... so I may have been failing to listen appropriately well during the time that was being focused on. I wish there was more time spent talking about the left and right hand realms. I will further investigate those notions though-- I had actually never heard of them prior to this study. The discussions were usually limited in time and it felt as though the lesson plan needed moved along artificially to hit all of the lesson objectives. I know that is the nature of a lesson plan--but there were times that the (extremely) small group would have profited more from just discussion without a time restriction.</p>	<p>Enjoyable course Vocation clearly defined Wanted more time to talk about left and right hand realms Plan to further investigate right hand and left hand realms; never heard of them prior to this study Discussion limited in time Felt as though lesson objectives and lesson plan had to be strictly adhered to, at the expense of discussion. Would have been beneficial to discuss WITHOUT A TIME RESTRICTION. Not sure about quotes from multiple authors. Suggest the survey question be reworded. Survey should have a "GO BACK" feature, to allow changes to the responses.</p>		<p>Regarding quotes from multiple authors. DSS Notes: there were many quotes used throughout the handout. YES, most were Bible quotes, but there were extra Biblical quotes. The LAYOUT of the notes and graphic design needs to do a better job of CALLING OUT or EMPHASIZING who is being quoted. Also to be fair, most of the quotes were from Martin Luther. REVISED layout and design will hopefully make the quotes more clear. Regarding Discussion Limited Class was held in a multiple use chapel, with a class right after. If there had not been activities right after the class, discussion could have continued as long as participant interested required. Future studies could try to be scheduled in spaces/times to provide flexibility on length. REALISTICALLY that will be hard to do. Perhaps be prepared to adjourn to another location, for those who want to continue with the conversation.</p>	<p>the course was enjoyable</p>
<p>Respondent 7 continued (276 words) One of the questions asked about multiple authors. I think I responded "yes"; however, I want to clarify that the quotes were all from authors of books from the Bible. I almost said no because the quotes were all biblical; however, I realized they were technically different authors. I would re-word that question to help the survey respondent understand the nature of the question. It would be good to be able to go back in the survey and change responses. I did not see that option within the browser. I realize that is likely done deliberately; however, we all make mistakes.</p>				
<p>Respondent 9 (five words): I enjoyed all of it. <i>I did not have primary themes (shared by all). I may need to restore that if more responses require it.</i></p>				

## OPEN ENDED RESPONSES TWO

A: Raw Data, Open Ended Question	B: Summary and Key Words	C: Questions or Topics for Future	D: Actions Taken, Planned, Comments
<p>Open-Ended Response 2: If you have questions or topics about vocation that you would like to see addressed in future courses, please list them here. Your response will help determine questions and topics that need to be covered in future courses. Thank you for taking time to respond.</p>		<p><i>Questions or Topics to be addressed in future courses. With my planned actions, and actions taken.</i></p>	
<p>Respondent 1 (No Comment)</p>			
<p>Respondent 3 (14 words) For the active folks, this could also lead into designing post service vocational decisions.</p>			
<p>Respondent 5 – No Comment <i>(the second paragraph from Respondent 5, Response 1, was inserted here, it fits the prompts for response 2)</i> Perhaps, the study should include a sub-study of Spiritual Gifts. Maybe this topic could be helpful in further understanding one's vocations. Another topic to consider to be included would be how to discern and hear the Voice of God because that is both critical and essential to guidance and direction in life.</p>	<p>Spiritual gifts Use teaching on spiritual gifts to understand vocation  "how to discern and hear the Voice of God"</p>		<p>From "The Lutheran Difference"    They are given along with the Spirit immediately in and through Baptism. With the power of the Holy Spirit, the eyes of faith are opened to a realm of spiritual reality. We can see the truth of God's love amid a world of suffering and evil. We are taught words of divine wisdom from above that human reason can never reach up to or comprehend. We find the divine truth that God saves and renews us through grace, even though the truths of the Gospel remain "folly" to the non-Christian, who cannot "understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). And we also discern God's will for our life. This includes the ability to recognize our vocation. (page 678)</p>
<p>Respondent 7 (28 words) I think more on the right and left hand realms, where those notions have been used in the past, and where those notions came from would be beneficial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend more time on the right and left hand realms</li> <li>• Give historical examples of how those "notions" have been used in the past.</li> <li>• Giving the background of where the right hand and left hand realm doctrine came from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time on the right and left hand realms</li> <li>• Give historical examples of how those "notions" have been used in the past.</li> <li>• Giving the background of where the right hand and left hand realm doctrine came from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DONE:</b> Created an "addendum" with the booklet, entitled "More about Vocation" and "More about Two Realms" Material taken from The Lutheran Difference: An Explanation &amp; Comparison of Christian Beliefs</li> </ul>
<p>Respondent 9 (No Comment) <i>After 5 responses, there was NOT one theme common to all participants. That can be attributed to the type of open-ended question. I may have drawn out primary themes had I asked a question like: What have been some of the hardships you encountered in military service? That could not be used within the scope of questioning, since the focus had to be on the Bible study and not the member of the NGR taking the survey.</i></p>		<p>SUMMARY OF ALL 1) Expand the study to give guidance for post-military vocational decisions, 2) Expand the study to include material on spiritual gifts, 3) Expand the study to give additional material on "How to discern and hear the Voice of God," which is critical for vocational guidance, 4) Give additional time to teaching the two realms, including a) providing historical examples of how those "notions" have been used in the past, and b) give background on where the two realm teaching came from.</p>	

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