

Principles for Transformation: Connecting Personal and Public Life

Who is doing God's work?

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How many of us feel our work is not “spiritual” enough or doesn’t matter in God’s grand design? Understanding this concept of a “priesthood of all believers” can help us see how all our vocations bear great importance.

The priesthood of all believers is an important biblical idea that has great implications for our personal spirituality, our public life in the Church and the world, and our work.

So what is the priesthood of all believers, and what does it have to do with faith and work?

When Martin Luther referred to the priesthood of all believers, he was maintaining that the plowboy and the milkmaid could do priestly work. In fact, their plowing and milking *was* priestly work. There was no hierarchy in which the priesthood was a “vocation” and milking the cow was not. Both were tasks that God called his followers to do, each according to their gifts.

The Priesthood of All Believers in Scripture

The priesthood of all believers is based on the clear teaching of Scripture. The Old Testament anticipates this reality:

- God says to his people at Sinai, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6).
- Isaiah says that a time will come when “you shall be called the priests of the Lord, man shall speak to you as the ministers of our God” (Isa. 61:6).

The New Testament points to the reality accomplished:

- 1 Peter 2:5 tells believers that “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
- 1 Peter 2:9 says that “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession that you may proclaim the excellence of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”
- Revelation echoes the reality prophesied in Exodus 19:6, saying, “Thou hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on earth” (Rev. 5:10).

The theological background for this idea is Christ’s high priesthood, outlined in Hebrews 7. Because of Christ’s high priesthood, and because we are now in him, we all become priests. Because of Christ we are now all prophets, priests and kings. We are now part of a “royal priesthood” that prophetically proclaims his message.

Application

There are at least four positive implications of the notion of the priesthood of all believers for our lives. The first two are spiritual privileges, and the last two are responsibilities for our work in the church and the world.

1. Direct Access to God

Today, we have the privilege of direct access to God through Christ. We can come boldly unto the throne of grace. It is because of Christ that “we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him” (Ephesians 3:12). This is a tremendous privilege, yet it is so easy for us to neglect it. We take prayer and its power for granted.

It’s important that we integrate our faith and work with a prayerful demeanor, remembering that we have direct access to God as we work out the implications of calling for our lives.

2. Spiritual Sacrifices

We are still to offer sacrifices. However, these are no longer offerings of bulls and goats but sacrifices such as prayer, praise, thanksgiving, repentance, justice, kindness, and love. 1 Peter 2:5 spells out this function. We are a holy priesthood in order to “offer up spiritual sacrifices wholly acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Above all, you can be confident that your sacrifice will be accepted through Christ.

3. Prophetic Role

As a “royal priesthood,” one of our responsibilities is to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). This is not to say that all should be preachers or teachers. Everyone can and should bear witness to Christ in some way—*according to his or her gifts*.

John 16 says that the Holy Spirit was sent in order to “convict the world” of “sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8). This “convicting of the world” can also apply to public prophetic proclamation not only in preaching but in politics, business, law, and other arenas where believers need power to speak about their cause.

4. Agents of Reconciliation

We must mediate Christ’s love into a dark and troubled world. Just as priests are agents of reconciliation to God and others, so are we to be such mediators.

God is the one who initiates the process of reconciliation: “all this is from God, who has reconciled himself through Christ, and has given us a ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Because of what God has done in Christ, we are given the task of carrying out this ministry of reconciliation.

We as Christians act as agents of reconciliation and restoration, pointing towards the coming kingdom that God has initiated and will complete when Christ returns. Our work is one area of our lives where we bear witness to this promised consummation.

If we recover the notion that we are a “priesthood of all believers” we will pray more boldly and realize our unique privilege in Christ. We will be willing to prophetically confront the problems in the church and in the world. We will be agents of reconciliation, ambassadors, and mediators. In other words, we will be priests in our society.

Read Dr. Lindsley’s complete article on this topic [here](#).