

# Week Twenty

## YEAR ONE

### Read

Job  
Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)  
Collins, Chapter 25, "Job and Qoheleth," pages 256–67

### Focus

Job and Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) provide literary classics from the world of the Hebrew Bible. They expose humanity's agony and glory. The giftedness of the main characters lay hidden amid the dramatic rubble of their lives.

## YEAR TWO

### Read

Hebrews  
Powell, Chapter 23, "Hebrews," pages 427–43

### Focus

Powell notes that "persistent Christians have found real substance in this [Hebrews] letter: teaching that not only reveals who Christ is but also discloses who they are (and can be) in relation to him." What significance does knowing who Christ is and who people are in relation to him have for sustaining one's spirituality? Notice especially the role faith plays in fostering spirituality.

## YEAR THREE

### Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 14, "Orthodoxy: More Than an Empire," pages 466–502

### Focus

MacCulloch uses a sweep of eight centuries of history to show how Orthodoxy became more than an empire's religion. Describe the profile of Orthodoxy that comes through to you from the chapter. What key figures, ideas, and events contributed to what Orthodoxy became?

## YEAR FOUR

### Read

Allen, Chapter 14, “Jesus as Lord and Jesus as Servant,” pages 147–68

### Focus

Allen outlines a theology of Jesus as Servant-Lord that defines a Christian’s relationship with God and with one another. Describe the essence of the doctrine of discipleship asserted and the importance for ministry in daily life.



## ALL YEARS

### Respond

Work and worship live in a symbiotic relationship. The Greek word for worship—*leitourgia* (let-oor-YEE-ah)—literally means work of the people done on behalf of all the people. Worship (that is, liturgy) expresses ultimate significances of the meaningful action a person takes on from day to day. While “work” in common usage refers to income-producing activity, a deeper understanding moves toward activity done creatively. The work of parenting, hosting a party, creating a painting, caring for the needs of a loved one are all activities done out of a deeper sense of meaning. They matter to the person, for the work shapes personal identity, builds belonging, contributes to the community, and draws the person beyond oneself.

Basic human yearning for intimacy, belonging, contributing, and transcendence motivate work. What work do the people in your readings engage? Look for what values underlie the work.

State four or five values held by the people in your assigned reading.

Reflect on how those values might have shaped worship.

### Practice

In English, “worth” (in the sense of value) is closely related to worship. Worship is the response given to someone or something that is worthy of reverence, honor, and praise. Work—in the sense of meaningful action—is done out of a sense of worth. As a way to develop a connection between your meaningful work and your worship, use the worksheet “An Individual Theological Reflection Process” to reflect theologically on a specific work. For example, it might involve an incident from your income-producing activity. It might be the creation of a special meal. The sole criterion for selection an incident is that it involves some meaningful activity.

## An Individual Theological Reflection Process

### IDENTIFY A FOCUS

### RESPONSES

#### Write a brief description of an incident for reflection.

For this reflection, use something related to “work” in a broad sense. Recording the experience aids in making the identification specific and concrete. Use the criteria of “a piece of your life story which challenged your feelings, values, or way of looking at things.”

*For instance: Describe one specific incident of parenting, or income-producing work, or hobby. The criterion is that the incident matter to you.*

#### List the shifts in action in the incident you chose, and choose one shift for the focus.

“Shifts in action” can be physical, emotional, or cognitive movement. Conscious decisions as well as spontaneous responses are listed. Look over your list and choose one. Any of the shifts will serve as a point of departure. Therefore, choose one that holds a certain interest for you.

*Example: A work-incident of creating a garden that was raided by deer might have shifts such as:*

- *I walked out to enjoy coffee in my garden.*
- *I saw most of the plants eaten down to the ground.*
- *I saw deer prints.*
- *I sat down and cried.*

*One of the shifts in your incident will have the most energy. Choose that one as the focus.*

**IDENTIFY A FOCUS**

**RESPONSES**

**Recapture the feelings and thoughts at the moment of focus.**

List three or four feelings and thoughts you had *at the key moment of shift of focus identified above*. Often, there is the temptation to project feelings and thoughts into past situations. Recall as accurately as possible what you actually experienced at that moment specifically.

Thoughts

Oh no!  
I'm going to set a trap  
All that work gone

Feelings

Shock  
Anger  
Sorrow

**Recall another time when you had the same combination of feelings and similar thoughts.**

Identifying another time when you viewed life in the same way is important. Metaphors are generated best by comparing two or more incidents. When you recall a past experience, new insights often occur. Briefly record the similar incident, including any insights and awareness.

*Similar Incident*

**Create a metaphor.**

Think about both experiences. Allow them to become present again. Consider what they were like. How would you describe them using a single metaphor, image, or simile? List all that come to your mind. Then, choose one to explore further.

*Example: At the moment of seeing the destroyed garden—Possible images/metaphors that capture what it's like in that kind of moment: "I feel like a wrung-out dishcloth"; "I feel like I've been hit in the stomach"; "I feel like a fallen soufflé."*

*What images/metaphors reflect what life is like when you had the thoughts and feeling you identified?*

*Write or draw your metaphor.*

**EXPLORE THE FOCUS****RESPONSES****Explore the “world of the metaphor.”**

Explore or question the metaphor from one or more perspectives such as:

“What is life like in the metaphor?” (CREATION)

“What temptations to destroy are there in the metaphor world?” (SIN)

“What brings those in that image up short, takes their breath away?” (JUDGEMENT)

“What changes would be called for?” (REPENTANCE)

“What would be an occasion for celebration?” (REDEMPTION)

These are some of the questions that can be used to develop your understanding of the “world of the metaphor.” Don’t attempt to give a full account of each question. When your energy begins to slow, take this as a sign that enough work may have been done. Sometimes insights will occur while exploring the metaphor. Write those down.

Example: In a world of being hit in the stomach—Creation—what the world/life is like: life is dangerous, needs caution, painful

Sin—what tempts those in this world to be destructive: tempted to seek revenge, to harm in return, to give up because of anger or fear

**CONNECT TO OTHER SOURCES OF MEANING**

**RESPONSES**

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**Bring in the Christian Tradition.**

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Consider the material that you have been studying as it relates to this reflection. Is there anything from the current reading chapter that comes to mind? Review several of the chapters you have read. Write a few sentences commenting on the part of the TRADITION that connects with the selected metaphor/image.

*What stories from the Bible or hymns or prayers come to mind with this metaphor? Ex.: Where in the Bible would there be accounts where someone might feel/think "It was like being punched in the stomach"?*

*List possible stories and select one. Read it carefully.*

**Compare and contrast the perspectives of the metaphor and of the piece of Christian Tradition.**

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Write a short paragraph that compares and contrasts the Christian Tradition with the perspective contained in the "world of the metaphor."

*How is the scripture story or hymn or prayer similar to and different from the metaphor perspectives?*

**Connect to Contemporary Culture/Society and Personal Beliefs.**

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What examples are there in our contemporary CULTURE of life being like the metaphor you chose? How is God present in those times?

*Record your responses.*

Include any statements or judgments that represent presently held positions or beliefs. How would you state the "truth of the matter" as you see it in this reflection (POSITION/BELIEF)? What does "the truth of the matter" contribute to the relationship of meaningful work and worship?

**APPLY**

**RESPONSES**

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**Identify insights and questions.**

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Record insights you now have. Do you have any new questions related to the matters that the reflection brought up for you?

*Record your responses.*

**Decide on implications.**

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In light of your reflection, what might you do? Are you aware of something you want to change, or study more, or pray about, or talk to someone about? You might want to choose a new way to act out your ministry during the next few days.

*Record your decisions.*