

Week Twenty-four

YEAR ONE

Read

1 Kings

2 Kings

Collins, Chapter 13, “First Kings 1–16: Solomon and the Divided Monarchy” and Chapter 14, “First Kings 17–Second Kings 25: Tales of Prophets and the End of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah,” pages 131–52

Focus

Prophets speak God’s truth to those in power and generally have the most to lose in speaking. Difficulties arise when prophetic voices do not agree on what the “truth” is. Two possible responses to the contradiction are either to wait to see which was speaking truth or to decide, in the midst of the uncertainty, which is correct and act accordingly. Reflect on how uncertainty impacts the consistency of belief and behavior.

YEARTWO

Read

Philippians

Colossians

Powell, Chapter 17, “Philippians” and Chapter 18, “Colossians,” pages 343–69

Focus

Note what passages Powell highlights from Philippians and/or Colossians. Which passages did he not include in his discussion, but that you thought were important?

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 17, “A House Divided,” pages 604–54

Focus

Describe the values that drove the actions of reformers. Think about how those values shape doctrines of God, humanity, and creation. How do those values relate to your personal experience and values? How are those values reflected in our contemporary society? What challenges or support are there for you in living faithfully with your values in today’s world?

YEAR FOUR

Read

Allen, Chapter 17, “Sin, Evil, and Hope for the Future” and the Epilogue, pages 183–99

Focus

Allen presents several key ideas in these two essays: for example, Julian of Norwich’s comparison of knowledge of God to wounds; a “colony of heaven”; and “truth which is active in the soul [the whole person]” (Simone Weil). State key ideas you found in your reading. What significance, if any, do the ideas have to tensions between belief and behavior?



ALL YEARS

Respond

Rushmore Kidder, an ethicist, wrote *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*, in which he defined a dilemma as a choice between two “goods.” The gap between a belief and behavior can be framed within the conflict between two values in a specific situation.

As in the preceding session, identify a incident or two in which you were in a dilemma of conflicting values, perhaps between two good choices; for instance, I planned to work on a necessary project one day and a neighbor suddenly appeared at the door needing help. What’s the dilemma? What are my choices? What beliefs do I use to sift and decide among choices?

Practice

Reflecting theologically on dilemmas can move a person toward integrating beliefs and behaviors. Building a theology relies on the integration of beliefs with doctrines as experienced in the actions taken in everyday life.

Use the Dilemma Method for Theological Reflection work sheet overleaf to work with a belief/behavior dilemma. Either use one identified above or one from the preceding session. Set aside an hour or so if you can to work through the process and take your work to the seminar session.

Dilemma Method For Theological Reflection

Identify

1. DESCRIBE an incident for reflection

An experience in which you felt pulled in at least two directions over something, and for which there are no decisions pending. The incident is over.

Description of the incident

Ex.: I had looked forward to my best friend's wedding for months and had my plane ticket and my new outfit. We had plans to enjoy the sights and catch up and just have fun. And then my mother got sick, but told me I could go ahead with my plans. I felt so torn. There was no one else there for my mother

2. DECIDE AND NAME the turning point in the incident

What's the central moment of the incident? Where is the tension greatest? What was happening? What were you thinking and feeling at that moment?

Record the central moment in a short sentence.

3. STATE the dilemma

Try to state what's at stake or what the central issue is at the moment of greatest tension.

Record the primary pair of tension statements as "I wanted _____ and I wanted _____":

To help get to the dilemma, list declarative statements about what you wanted at that moment or what interests were at stake at that moment.

Ex.: I wanted to attend my best friend's wedding and I wanted to stay to take care of my ailing parent.

Select a pair of statements that best represent the central tension.

Record the central issue/what's at stake. Ex.: Personal fun conflicting with caring for another

Identify what's at issue or at stake in that tension.

4. IDENTIFY another time

Clarify the dilemma by recalling another time when you experienced a dilemma.

Record your additional identification by completing the sentence: "It was a time when..."

Explore

5. EXPLORE the dilemma

What is it like to live in that issue/tension?
Use Cost/Promise (Risk/Hope) or Perspective
Questions of Creation, Sin, Judgment,
Repentance, and Redemption.

*Record your responses to the questions using either
Cost/Promise or Perspectives:*

Cost of each choice

Promise of each choice

Perspective example:

Judgment—What choices are there?

*Repentance—What might require a change
of heart?*

Connect

6. TRADITION

Identify some stories from scripture or church history that relate to the dilemma. Or perhaps some prayers or hymns come to mind.

Responses:

7. DIALOGUE between tradition and the dilemma—

Compare and contrast what our Christian tradition has to say about that dilemma. What choices would the tradition support? Not support? Why?

Responses:

8. CULTURE and POSITION

Where is that dilemma experienced in our culture? Have there been news stories about it? Have you read a book or seen a movie that dealt with that dilemma? Is there a political dimension to that dilemma?

Responses

What do you believe about that dilemma? How was your belief in conflict in the issue? What do you hope for regarding the dilemma?

Apply

9. INSIGHTS and QUESTIONS

What do you see in a new way now? What have you learned from facing this dilemma? What questions do you have about the dilemma in your life?

Responses:

10. IMPLICATIONS

What do you want or need to do about this dilemma? Are there social implications? Are there actions you could take? Is there something more to learn? What support would help? Where will you find that support?

Responses: