

Week Thirty-three

YEAR ONE

Read

Jeremiah
Lamentations
Collins, "Chapter 17, "The Babylonian Era: Jeremiah and Lamentations,"
pages 174–84

Focus

Identify and explore what doctrines are implicitly or explicitly present in the prophetic traditions of Jeremiah.

YEAR TWO

Read

Ephesians
Powell, Chapter 16, "Ephesians," pages 323–41

Focus

Reflect especially in light of de Beer's comment, "What we most deeply want is often buried under layers of self-protection and false identity. . . . The place God calls us to is the place where we feel truly ourselves, able to give the gifts we have in service to others."

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 23, "To Make the World Protestant," pages 866–914

Focus

MacCulloch's chapter covers over two hundred years of history that is likely familiar. As the historian's work comes closer to the present, the line between history and journalism blurs. Identify a thread that runs through the chapter. In one or two sentences, describe it. Examine the thread using questions framed from the theological standpoints of human nature; creation, sin, judgment, repentance, and redemption; the way God is disclosed; and the kind of future desired. Develop associations with concepts, images, or stories from current culture and society. Uncover what truths and beliefs you hold. Consider what you have seen that you have not seen before. What do

you see that you have seen before? Describe what difference your reflection has for your day-to-day life as a Christian seeking to serve the world in Christ's name.

YEAR FOUR

Read

Peace, Rose, and Mobley, "Part IV: Unpacking Our Belongings" and "Part V: Stepping Across the Line," pages 127–203

Focus

"Interfaith encounter forces its practitioners to assume responsibility for both the actual and perceived histories of their groups."⁶² Reflect on the significance of what the authors in Parts IV and V dealt with in such encounters. Recall what you have experienced whenever you have encountered "the hospitality of your neighbor's faith"?



ALL YEARS

Respond

As Elizabeth O'Conner so aptly observes, a person's identity, purpose, and vocation are communicated through gifts. She writes, "We ask to know the will of God without guessing that His will is written into our very beings. We perceive that will when we discern our gifts."⁶³ Often awareness of gifts comes unexpectedly and unseen and therefore arrives unexamined. O'Conner's observations grow out of a theology that takes very seriously that human beings are created in the image of God. Within this theology, vocational discernment is intertwined with who a person is as that person lives in community. Determining gifts is both individual and communal. In addition to self-knowledge, gift discernment involves seeing something of God's reflection. Whenever a person asks, "What are my gifts?" the person also asks, "What of God is specifically and uniquely being reflected through my gifts?" From the perspective of this theology, gift discernment is a sobering process. Therefore, it is to be entered into prayerfully.

Discerning gifts is somewhat like trying to see your face without the aid of another person or instrument. Others see a person's face directly, but the individual self cannot. Even the best mirror or camera only approximates the reality.

62. Peace, Rose, and Mobley, *My Neighbor's Faith*, 125.

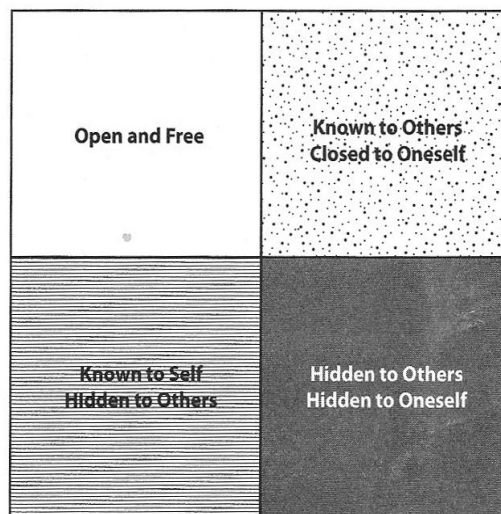
63. Elizabeth O'Conner, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 37.

Vocational discernment can happen only within community. The community may be intentional (like an EfM group) or unintentional like a chance conversation while standing in line to get a cup of coffee at Starbucks. The community also includes those who have lived before us. Study of the Christian heritage can be approached as discerning one's mission, ministry, and vocation. Reading Job, the Johannine Letters, nineteenth-century Christian history, or encounters with people of different religions includes reading about identity, gifts, ministry, and vocation.

Review your reading for this and the last few weeks. Look at the material from the standpoint of gifts discernment. What do you notice about your interests, concerns, values—your gifts? Additionally, what gifts and passions of members of your group are reflected in what you have been studying?

Practice

In the early 1960s Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham together developed a deceptively simple model of self-awareness that became known as the Johari Window. It is a simple diagram that distinguishes four features of self-awareness: 1) Open and free: what is known to the person and known to others; 2) known to self, hidden to others; 3) known to others, closed to oneself; and 4) hidden to others, hidden to self. They arranged the four features into a four window diagram:



The four windows are not fixed, but depend on the specific context under consideration. What the diagram between two good friends looks like is different than that between two acquaintances. The Johari Window you would draw representing your work situation would be different than that representing family members around the dinner table.

Think through how this model of understanding human nature can be used in vocational discernment. For example, state one interest/passion you

have that others in the EfM group know as well. Next, name an interest you have that you have not disclosed to them. Thirdly, if given an opportunity to ask what they have seen about your interests, what would you ask them? Lastly, reflect on thoughts and feelings things that are hidden from yourself and from others—those things known only to God.

Consider what light the Johari Window view of human nature throws on the prayer known as the Collect for Purity:⁶⁴

**Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our
hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

In the essay that opened this unit on vocation, de Beer writes:

What we most deeply want is often buried under layers of self-protection and false identity. Parker Palmer wrote of the connection between vocation and identity: "How much dissolving and shaking of ego must we endure before we discover our deep identity—the true self within every human being that is the seed of authentic vocation?"⁶⁵ Our vocation is to be our true self, to mature into the persons in whom God delights. Vocation, identity, gifts, ministry—these are all interconnected. The place God calls us to is the place where we feel truly ourselves, able to give the gifts we have in service to others.

How does work with the Johari Window support and clarify your sense of vocation, mission, and ministry?

64. The Book of Common Prayer, 355.

65. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 9.