

Week Thirty-four

YEAR ONE

Read

The Book of Ezekiel
Collins, Chapter 18, "Ezekiel," pages 185–96

Focus

Identify a concept that runs through the readings. Write one or two descriptive sentences that capture the idea. Explore the dimensions of the topic, such as what is assumed and valued; name the destructive elements that are present in the topic; examine the explicit and implicit hopes for the future. Ask, "What light do ideas and voices from contemporary literature, television productions, or Internet blogs shed on the reflection?" Note what position or beliefs you hold in relation to the topic. Consider the importance and implications your thinking has for serving and ministering to those among whom you live and work.

YEARTWO

Read

1 John, 2 John, and 3 John
Powell, Chapter 27, "The Johannine Letters: 1 John, 2 John, 3 John," pages 493–507

Focus

Reflect on how the theme of "God is love" relates to your interests and passions.

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 24, "Not Peace but a Sword," pages 915–66

Focus

Look for the themes that interest you in the chapter and explore one using a couple of the theological perspective questions. Notice what connections you make with your experience and culture. What do you believe about the theme? Reflect on the implications your line of thought holds for living as a Christian in the various contexts of your life.

YEAR FOUR

Read

Peace, Rose, and Mobley, "Part VI: Finding Fellow Travelers," pages 205–40

Focus

Identify a theme that runs through the essays presented in Part VI. State the theme in writing. Examine the dimensions of the theme using the theological perspectives, such as how God discloses God's self; the quality and characteristics of humanity revealed in how the theme is developed in the essays; how the viewpoints of creation, sin, judgment, repentance, and/or redemption are discussed. Relate content from contemporary society and culture to the theme. Ask what you believe, value, and affirm as true. Draw out the significance for your ministry.



ALL YEARS

Respond

From time to time it is important to retrace the year's journey. This is particularly crucial when fostering vocational interests. Recall Frederick Buechner's descriptive definition of vocation: "The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."⁶⁶

Deep gladness fuels and sustains mission and motivates ministry.

Revisit your notes for the year and review some of the passages you have highlighted in your textbook(s) during the year. Notice what interested you and consider how those interests provide clues for your "deep gladness." Review your spiritual autobiography to see what has delighted you. Recall any discussions that suggest what you love doing. Call to mind experiences that you celebrate and enjoy.

Write a short paragraph describing the deep gladness you have within you. It may take several drafts to reach some clarity.

People often have issues that "push their buttons," causing them to jump on a "soap box" and rant in response to what they have heard or seen. Such rants can point toward what Buechner calls the "world's deep hunger." A rant usually grows out of a recognized profound need. Recall two or three of your "rants" and explore the yearning that provides the energy for the protestation. Describe the human and/or social need that often evokes your "soap box speeches."

Issues and concerns that you are passionate about, coupled with your joys, may reveal God's call. Name three or four contexts in which you experience the marriage of yearning and joy.

⁶⁶ Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*, 119.

Practice

Identify when you experienced the tension of wanting two things simultaneously, such as a desire to try new things in life and a desire to remain where life is familiar. Choose an experience that has ended, i.e., there are no decisions pending. For example, "I had just begun to work on a project that I like doing when my phone rang showing that a friend was calling. I knew from an earlier conversation that he was living through a crisis. At that moment I had to decide whether to answer the phone or let it ring, hoping my friend would leave a message that I could respond to later."

Find the Dilemma Method for Theological Reflection work sheet in Week Twenty-four (page 112) of the *Guide*.

Use the outline to reflect theologically on the issue that you have identified.

After completing the worksheet, reflect on the ways in which the theological reflection sheds light on your vocation and ministry.