

Week Six

YEAR ONE

Read

Genesis 12-50
Collins, Chapter 4, "The Patriarchs," pages 44-55

Focus

Identify terms or references that you had to look up.

Reading the primary text is essential to understanding scripture. Your reading forms the basis for understanding what scholars and others say about the text. Dr. Robert Denton, professor of the Old Testament at General Theological Seminary, often reminded his students that they would be amazed by how much the text illuminates the commentary. Each person has unique experiences that shape how scripture is interpreted. While the work of biblical scholars is enormously valuable, only you can bring your distinctive experience to the learning process. Then, your experience with the text can be brought into dialogue with what scholars have written. It is within that dialogue that deeper learning occurs.

Identify, note, and define: types of legends (etiological, ethnological, etymological, ceremonial); Hermon Gunkel; *Sitz im Leben*; *bris*; Abraham Cycle; Jacob Cycle; Joseph Story

What sources do the "authors" of the stories of the patriarchs use to express the meaning of the story?

Notice what sources Collins uses in this chapter. (Possible candidates for the sources might be academic disciplines, biblical references, personal experience, or beliefs or conclusions he asserts.)

YEAR TWO

Read

Powell, Chapter 5, "Matthew," pages 103-123

Focus

Identify: five speeches of Jesus; Beatitudes; binding and loosing of the law; *oligopistoi*; Eusebius; *Ecclesiastical History*

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 4, "Boundaries Defined," pages 112-154

Sprinkled throughout the chapter are references to primary sources. Find two or three of them to read. They can be found in Bettenson's *Documents of the Christian Church* and online. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, www.ccel.org, provides numerous documents of the church. For example, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.iii.html> presents *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Commonly Called the Didache*.

Focus

Find and become familiar with pronunciation: *Hermas (The Shepherd)* and the *Didache* online or in Bettenson (if you have purchased that book) or elsewhere and read what you can or want.

Terms to learn: Letter to Philemon; *Didache*; gnosis, Gnosticism, Nag Hammadi; Docetism; key points of difference between gnostic and Jewish attitudes; Marcion; Diatessaron; *presbyteroi*; *diakonos*; *episkopoi*; the importance of Antioch and Jerusalem in the early church; Clement; Ignatius; Victor; Stephen of Rome

YEAR FOUR

Read

Allen, Chapter 3, "The Maker of Heaven and Earth" and Chapter 4, "Limits of Science," pages 28-43

Focus

Identify: Von Rad; Israel's cosmology; Augustine's examination of time; contemporary cosmology; relationship of creation and salvation

State the difference between the biblical view of creation and the scientific view of the universe. Draw a distinction between the origin of the universe and the purpose of creation.

Respond

Faith is a complex matter; like any form of life, it consists of beliefs, actions, attitudes, and patterns of behavior that are often hard to identify, much less distinguish from one another and then define. Thus, at times we may not know what it is we believe theologically or why we undertake the specific faith-practices that we do, but we nonetheless do them over and over again just as we are constantly re-enacting particular theological habits of thought in the course of our daily lives. Furthermore, our religious beliefs can almost never be separated from other beliefs, actions, and attitudes that we hold and that also shape us, such as our culturally constructed beliefs about what it means to be a woman or a citizen or a student of theology.¹¹

What does living faithfully mean to you?

How have reading, reflecting, and listening expanded your understanding of what is involved in living faithfully?

Autobiography: Who are the people in your life of whom you could say, "That person is an example of living faithfully" ?

Practice

Write the qualities or characteristics of living faithfully.

Listening requires attentiveness, which also requires silence. Practice attentive listening this week. Notice what it takes for you to be silent and really listen to someone else. Make some notes about that.

What do you have to do in order to achieve that? What is difficult about listening attentively?

¹¹ Serene Jones, *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classic Themes*. A project of The Workgroup On Constructive Christian Theology. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 11-16-2012), Kindle edition.