



CREATING A CULTURE OF CALLING

Reflective Writing Handout

Curriculum for Faith Formation Leaders

A Project for Vibrant Faith, C3 Initiative

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REFLECTIVE WRITING INSTRUCTIONS:

These are step-by-step suggestions for those of us who like more concrete instructions. Remember, as long as you have a posture of openness and listening, there is no right or wrong way to structure your reflective writing.

1. As you prepare to write, invite the Holy Spirit into your process. Then, listen for what comes up within yourself as a starting place. You can wait as long as you need - there is no pressure, no rush.
2. Notice any distracting thoughts or emotions, with curiosity and without judgment.
3. You can write about these thoughts and emotions first if you would like, and/or simply ask God to clear your mind so that you can hear his voice.
4. As you listen, try to put aside any preconceived notions you may have of what God might say to you, or even of how you normally hear from him. Posture yourself to hear not what you expect God to say, but what God is actually saying.
5. If you don't feel like you are hearing anything, that's ok! You can simply start writing and God will speak through that process in a way you can understand.
6. Respond to the prompts that stand out to you.

REFLECTIVE WRITING TIPS:

- You can write in first person, using "I" statements.
- You can write to God, either as a prayer or simply writing to him as you would a close confidante.
- You can invite God into your experiences as you recount them.
- You can write stream-of-consciousness.
- You can write certain key words that resonate with you - you don't have to write complete sentences.
- You can write poetry.



WRITING PROMPTS:

Read the following writing prompts and respond to any that resonate with you. Keep in mind that these are only starting points – the Holy Spirit may lead you somewhere entirely different than what you expected, or than what the prompt asks! You do not have to “stay with” the prompt in any rigid sense.

Think back over the last few weeks or months. (“Listen to your life.”)

Where have you sensed God speaking to you about your gifts and passions? Can you think of specific situations you have been in, thoughts you have had, or people you have talked with that filled you with excitement or new energy? When have you felt refreshed or inspired? Reflect on these experiences using whatever details or images the Lord brings to mind...and don't worry, he will bring things to mind. Remember, all you have to do is be open to him and listen.

Think back to the original opening exercise:

“If you had to write words to describe who you are, what would you say?” Try doing it again, but try to go beyond your roles. You can write about how you view yourself, how you think God views you, what characteristics or gifts you have that seem unique, or whatever else comes to mind. Do you tend to compare yourself or your calling with those of others? How so? What do you think it would be like not to compare in this way? What would it feel like? What do you think is holding you back from walking into the fullness of God's calling for you at this time in your life? What would it take to overcome that barrier?

QUOTES & BOOKS

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.” Frederick Buechner

“There is a special way of waiting upon truth, setting our hearts upon it, not letting ourselves go out in search of it...a way of waiting, when we are writing, for the right word to come of itself at the end of our pen...” Simone Weil

*“Help me, O God,
To listen to what it is that makes my heart glad
And to follow where it leads.
May joy, not guilt,
Your voice, not the voices of others,
Your will, not my willfulness,
Be the guides that lead me to my vocation.
Help me to unearth the passions of my heart
That lay buried in my youth.
And help me to go over that ground again and again
Until I can hold in my hands,
Hold and treasure,
Your calling on my life.”*

Windows of the Soul, by Ken Gire



RECOMMENDED READING LIST

- *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the voice of vocation*, by Parker Palmer
- *Callings: Twenty centuries of Christian wisdom on vocation*, edited by William C. Placher
- *Invitation to a Journey: A road map for spiritual formation*, by M Robert Mulholland Jr. and Ruth Haley Barton
- *Called: My journey to C.S. Lewis' house and back again*, by Ryan Pemberton
- *The Gift of Being Yourself*, by David Benner
- *The Sacred Journey: A memoir of early days*, Frederick Buechner
- *Now and Then: A memoir of vocation*, Frederick Buechner

SCRIPTURES

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world,[a] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Psalms 1 (ESV translation)

*1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but **his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.***

***3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.***

*4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*



VOCATION, PSALM 1

By Katie Anderson Horvath

*How can I still my soul so as to hear
Beyond the noise of possibilities?
Sometimes the only voices in my ear
Are merely "shoulds" and "oughts" distracting me.
"The mission field should make your future bright!"
Abstractions flood my mind and mold my dreams;
They say these goals will take me to new heights
Yet all I feel is squelched anxiety.
I try to grow myself with branches wide
Sprouting my own red fruits for all to see;
Yet in the quiet murmur of the night
A fresh voice sounds, distilled with clarity.
It says "your work is something you receive.
Drink from Me, dear – you're planted by my stream."*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Reflect on what the writing was like for you today.
What surprised you?
What came up for you?
2. How was it listening for God's voice?
What did you learn about yourself, about God?
3. Where are you right now in your own discernment of your calling?
Where do you sense God leading, if at all?

Take turns sharing for each question.

If you feel so led, you may also share some of your writing with the group!

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