

Theological Reflection

Theological reflection is a key Christian spiritual practice. It lies at the heart of how Christians engage with the Bible in daily life, how we form and shape communities, and how we make sense of the world in which we live. This is not a practice only for Bible scholars, pastors, or experts, but can be done by anyone. Theology is about how we speak, understand, and wrestle with God and the holy in our lives and through the sacred stories that emerge. “Reflection” here suggests a mirror—looking back at ourselves and our surroundings through something outside of ourselves. And so, theological reflection, at its core, is simply “looking back at ourselves and our world through talk and images of God and sacred stories.”

Theological reflection is something that Christians and Christian communities practice over a lifetime, and it may be something you already do. However, at the heart of the practice, is another practice—reflecting and connecting—that is much simpler to learn. After this practice becomes familiar, try using stories of Scripture to connect to your story.

Practice: Reflect and Connect

Step 1: Think back on the songs, poems, stories, pictures, images, etc. that are or have been important to you in your life. They do not need to have “spiritual” or “religious” aspects to them. List some here:

Step 2: Pick one that “speaks to you” for whatever reason, or one that spoke to you in a particular stage in your life. Notice key words, lines, or images. Represent it here in some way:

Step 3: Explore what it is (or was) about this song/poem/story/etc. that connected so deeply to your life. Why is (or was) this important to you? What “gifts” might this bring to light?

Step 4: Try to bring to mind a specific moment in your own story that is the type of moment this song/poem/story/etc. connects to. Represent it here in some way:

Step 5: Do any other songs/poems/stories/etc come to mind that connect with these stories? Do any stories from the Bible connect with these stories? How? What do they say to you?

Step 6: Imagine telling someone else about this song/poem/story/etc. and the impact it had in a particular moment in your life. How could you use your gifts to do that? Write what you would share:

For Further Reflection

Why did you choose the song/poem/story/etc that you chose? Why did it “speak to you” in this moment? Why was it important previously in your life?

What role has music/art/story/poetry/etc played in your life? When do you turn to these art forms? What do they do for you? How do they help you make sense of your life?

Do the Holy Scriptures, or some other sacred writings, play a part in helping you make sense of your life? Why or why not? Could you imagine applying this exercises to a story from the Bible? Why or why not? How might that be different for you from this exercise?

What are some of the ways you have heard others talk about God (or the holy)? What kinds of images and symbols have they used? What images do you find helpful? What images do you find harmful? Why?

What are the ways you have talked about or understood God (or the holy) in your life? What kinds of images and symbols have you used? Why have you chosen those images?

What are the next steps for you in discovering your gifts and discerning your vocation?