

Reflection Exercise for the Big Read Discussion

This exercise is intended to help people reflect on their experiences of vocation and make connections to themes from *Follow Your Bliss and Other Lies about Calling*. This reflection exercise could be used at the beginning of a gathering or perhaps as a pre-meeting reflection. The form is drawn from the Ignatian Examen, itself drawn from the ancient Stoics, and it has been widely adapted. Please feel free to make your own adaptations for your own context.

REFLECTION FORMAT

1. Compose yourself: Take a few moments to prepare yourself for reflection. You may wish to settle into your chair, close your eyes, or take a few deep breaths.
 - ◆ If you wish to make this reflection a prayer, you might consider asking God for light and grace to help you to see your life and work as God sees it.
2. Practice gratitude: For what in your vocational journey, with all of its twists and turns, surprises and setbacks, are you grateful? Or, thinking about your work with students in exploring their sense of calling, meaning, or purpose, for what are you grateful?
3. Review: Looking back on your own vocational journey, or on your engagement with students' journeys, what stands out to you? What moments, mentors, experiences, or events shaped you (or shaped them)? How did you (or how do they) face patterns of growth, insight, discovery, and authenticity? How did you (or do they) face unknowing, stagnation, suffering, injustice, or loss? How have you, or they, experienced obstacles to pursuing calling? Does one of the book chapters resonate more with your review?
4. Reflect: Choose one thing—a moment, event, or experience—from your review in the third step. This might be something that seems particularly important to you today, or maybe it surprised you in your reflection, or maybe it generated feelings that need more attention. It could be a regret, something you wish you had done differently. It could be ways that you helped or harmed others. Reflect more deeply on this thing. Why are you responding to it more vividly today? How is it affecting you, your life, and your work? What insight are you gaining from your reflection on this thing, and how might you understand it from your vantage point today?
5. Look forward: As a result of your reflection, what do you want to carry forward into your life and work around calling?

After you and any other group members finish your reflections, you may transition into book discussion.

This reflection is adapted from Jesuit examen prayer and reflection, which is central to Ignatian spirituality. If you would like to learn more about it, please see <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>