

**ART OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT
REFLECTION ASSIGNMENTS
MONTH SIX: RELATIONSHIP**



A. FAITH TRADITION PERSPECTIVE “Insights from Reformation Christianity” CD, Richard Groves

1. Based on the “principle of protest”, Protestantism encourages persons to challenge the blind trust of beliefs and institutions and to test them against one’s own truth and experience.

Sacred Questions: *In what ways do think it is healthy “to call into judgment” the beliefs of institutions and authority... especially in religion? In what ways do you critique your own “causes and movements”?*

2. There are two elements of tension as faith meets culture today:
 - A tendency to accommodate culture vs. the call to live in the world without being of it AND
 - The rise of sectarian irrelevance vs. Fundamentalism [blind denominational propaganda]

Sacred Questions: *Where do you see these tensions evident in the world around you? Which tension is most impacting you at this time?*

3. Reflect on the teaching: “It is faith in God which has been revealed as the way of salvation. Religion is merely the human attempt to explain that faith. The problem of fundamentalism is not distinguishing between the two.

Sacred Questions: *How do you distinguish between “Faith” and “Religion”? What tensions do you experience between the two?*

4. A core doctrine of Reformation Christianity is the ‘priesthood of all believers,’ [radical equality of all] found in the writings of St. Paul and based on the Gospel tradition that Christ is the one High Priest.

Sacred Questions: *Regardless of your religious orientation, what keeps you grounded or connected to the Divine? How ‘democratic’ or ‘authoritarian’ is your experience of faith and religion?*

5. Protestantism has contributed much to modern Western culture including a strong work ethic and traditions of democracy, equal access to education for men and women, volunteerism (free will), and inalienable rights and choices (freedom of conscience).

Sacred Question: *Reflect on a way that the ‘Protestant ethic’ has influenced your way of life or ways of thinking? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the so-called “Protestant work ethic” (Good works demonstrating faith)?*

B. FOUNDATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION Care of Mind..., May, c. 6, ‘Relationship’

1. “Besides differing from psychotherapy in intent, content and basic attitude, spiritual direction is generally surrounded by a characteristic atmosphere that is seldom encountered in other interpersonal relationships... As one person put it, ‘Being in spiritual direction is just like being in prayer, only there’s someone with me in it.” p 113

- *How/do you resonate with this quote from your own experiences with spiritual direction?*
 - *If you were to try and describe spiritual direction to a person who never heard of it, how would you describe the relationship?*
2. "It is my belief that the primary task of spiritual directors is to encourage within themselves a moment by moment attention towards God..." p. 116
 - *How/does this description challenge you? Name something in May's language that intrigues you to explore how this kind of 'third person' relationship might be possible?*
 - *How would you re-phrase May's belief for persons who are non-theistic in orientation?*
 3. "It is neither possible nor desirable to entirely rid ourselves of distractions [when working with others in spiritual direction]... and in fact, many of them can serve us and others quite well..." p. 119
 - *May provides many examples in this chapter from the language of psychotherapy that can be useful in understanding naturally arising human dynamics when working with others [e.g. Transference, Counter-Transference, Sexual Feelings, etc.] What insights into these issues might have gained since beginning this course on Spiritual Direction?*
 - *Although May says that we will benefit from enhanced awareness of human psychological dynamics, there is another 'force' at work in spiritual direction that we can trust. Allow yourself some time to journal your own feelings regarding the spiritual direction dynamic.*

C. DISCERNMENT-IN-PRACTICE "God's Plan vs. God's Project" CD, Jack Kennedy

1. "What some people call 'God's Will' is not something 'out there' to be figured out -- but a dynamic process that invites us into a creative relationship..."
 - *Take some time reflecting on how your own notions of 'God's Will' have evolved in your life.*
 - *If 'God' for you is not a personal relationship, how might you translate these concepts?*
2. "Ignatius suggests that a more helpful notion than 'God's Plan' for us might be the concept of 'God's Project... which has huge implications for spiritual discernment.'
 - *How/does this distinction speak to you?*
 - *If my job is not to 'figure out God's predesigned' blueprint but co-create one... how might I approach times of change, stress or crisis differently?*
3. "Ignatius believed that our deepest dreams are really God dreaming in us..."
 - *Where might God/the Divine/the Universe be hoping in you right now?*

