

Week 37 Practice

One of the more common laments I hear as a therapist is, “I want to follow my passion—I want to discover my calling, I want to figure out my purpose for being here—but I have no idea what it is!” And one of the things I’ve learned over the years is, it’s not true. Almost all of us *do* know what we want to do with our life. But we glimpse it and shut the cabinet door on it.

On the heels of last week’s exercise—after beginning to give yourself permission to want what you want all over again and to walk the road of your resurrection—it’s quite possible you hit a road block. After so many years of habitually shutting the cabinet door on what you want, it may not be so easy to start living those desires once again.

The biggest barrier to walking this new road will continue to be the voice of shame. Now that you have recognized your truest, worthiest identity and are trying to resurrect it, shame’s only hope is to keep your life as unsatisfying as possible. This voice of shame may take many forms and may include voices from your past that convinced you to stop asking for what you want: parents, peers, teachers, and pastors, for instance. It will whisper, “Asking for what you want is greedy. It’s arrogant to hope for good things. God wants you to be serious about your life, not joyful. It’s selfish to think so much about your own purpose and satisfaction. Quit navel-gazing. Quit dreaming.”

So, this week, we will return to this year’s foundational exercise: listening for the voice of grace once again. Begin by finding a quiet place and an uninterrupted space. Bring your “Christmas list” of wants to that space. Then, for each want, listen for the voice of shame. Next to each item, in a sentence or two, write down what the voice of your shame is saying about that particular want and why it is not worthy of pursuit. Then, begin to turn your attention to the voice of grace. Listen to what it is saying specifically about the passions and wants that have arisen in you over recent weeks. Write down what you hear.

Return to this exercise as many times as you need to during this week, in order to slowly and mindfully work your way through the whole list. Your days of shutting the cabinet on your wants and passions are, finally, coming to an end. Their days of collecting dust are about to be over.