



# DISCERNMENT

*“There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.” - 1 JOHN 4:16-19* <sup>[1]</sup>

## CLASS DISCUSSION: YOUR STATE AND THE SINGLE STATE-IN-LIFE

### KNOW YOURSELF

“The unexamined life is not worth living,” Socrates famously said. He really meant it, too, as he also said that a man must “interrogate his own nature” and “work precisely” or else he will “miss what is good and become involved in what is bad.”

Every Christian should regularly ask himself, “What kind of person am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses?” That sounds like a pretty serious exercise, and it is, but it can also be very satisfying. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote about the thrill of discovering “the dearest freshness deep down things;” but discovery doesn’t happen without work.

Discerning your vocation, at base level, is discovering the deepest truth about yourself. It is the journey of self-knowledge par excellence. It is glimpsing the built-in purpose given to you by the Creator of the universe, aeons before you existed.



*How could that discovery not be thrilling?*

Self-knowledge is a life-long work, and it involves many different aspects of your emotional, spiritual, and psychological make-up. You could spend a lot of time in prayer, for instance, just evaluating your own virtue of patience (or lack thereof).

Your purpose at this time in your life is to examine yourself, paying attention to signs that might indicate to what vocation God is calling you. Of course, anyone discerning a vocation will need to gather good information, seek advice from trusted adults, and be committed to prayer.

Self-knowledge can also be a little frightening. Many people avoid it simply because they do not want to reveal and confront the weaknesses, injuries, et cetera, which may lurking under the surface of their lives. But there’s no reason to be afraid, for two reasons: first, we can trust that God will give us the grace to overcome all things when we trust Him to do so; and, second, once a dark spot of one’s personality is confronted, it is no longer a threat to his happiness and well-being.

With a little effort, courage, and trust in God, deeply examining your life will help to prepare you for whatever great things God has planned for your life!

[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>





## OPTIONAL READING

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### SIMONE WEIL

Simone Weil (1909-1943) was a French philosopher and writer. Born to a Jewish agnostic family, she was politically active in her youth and supportive of Marxist ideas, but began to be drawn more and more to Christianity through experiences beginning when she was 27. Some experiences included hearing Catholics singing near a church in Portugal and an experience of prayer while visiting the tiny Portiuncula chapel where St. Francis of Assisi prayed. Torn over the decision whether to become Catholic, she wrote numerous essays about God and the spiritual life under the direction of a Dominican priest, Father Joseph-Marie Perrin. She did not enter the Church before dying at the young age of 34.



Weil was single her whole life and wrote this essay on Waiting for God on using the time we have well.

*Excerpt from “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God.”*

*The key to a Christian conception of studies is the realization that prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God. The quality of the attention counts for much in the quality of prayer. Warmth of heart cannot make up for it....*

*Never in any case whatever is a genuine effort of the attention wasted.... If we concentrate our attention on trying to solve a problem of geometry, and if at the end of an hour we are no nearer to doing so than at the beginning, we have nevertheless been making progress each minute of that hour in another more mysterious dimension. Without our knowing or feeling it, this apparently barren effort has brought more light into the soul. The result will one day be discovered in prayer....*

*Every time that a human being succeeds in making an effort of attention with the sole idea of increasing his grasp of the truth, he acquires a greater aptitude for grasping it, even if his effort produces no visible fruit.... The useless efforts made by the Curé d’Ars, for long and painful years, in his attempt to learn Latin bore fruit in the marvelous discernment that enabled him to see the very soul of his penitents.... Not only does the love of God have attention for its substance; the love of our neighbor, which we know to be the same love, is made of this same substance. Those who are unhappy have no need of anything in this world but people capable of giving them their attention. The capacity to give one’s attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle.... this way of looking is first of all attentive. The soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth. Only he who is capable of attention can do this. So it comes about that, paradoxical as it may seem, a Latin prose or a geometry problem, even though they are done wrong, may be of great service one day, provided we devote the right kind of effort to them. Should the occasion arise, they can one day make us better able to give someone in affliction exactly the help required to save him, at the supreme moment of his need.*

## DEBATE TIMELINE AND WORKSHEET

<i>Period</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Goals</i>																		
Affirmative offers arguments	3	<p>Definitions</p> <p>Basic claim</p> <p>Arguments:</p> <p>I.</p> <p>A.</p> <p>B.</p> <p>II.</p> <p>A.</p> <p>B.</p>																		
N cross-examines	1.5	Ask questions and makes sure he understands what A said																		
N: 1st Break	1.5	Consults with team to plan how to respond																		
1st Negative Rebuttal Win by making your own arguments or, if not, by disproving that A's arguments really work	3.5	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Restates A's arguments in order; deals with them in order.</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Definitions</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Claim</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Arguments:</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>I.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>A.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>B.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>II.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>A.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>B.</td> </tr> </table>	Restates A's arguments in order; deals with them in order.	Definitions		Claim		Arguments:		I.		A.		B.		II.		A.		B.
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	B.																			
A cross-examines N	1.5																			
A: 1st Break	1.5																			
1st Affirmative Rebuttal	2	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Responds to N's attacks on A's arguments; points out any arguments that N was unable to fault.</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Attacks N's arguments.</td> </tr> </table>	Responds to N's attacks on A's arguments; points out any arguments that N was unable to fault.	Attacks N's arguments.																
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N: Last Break	30 sec																			
2nd Negative Rebuttal	3	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Explains how N's original attacks on A still stand; points out which of N's arguments A was unable to attack.</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Offers no new arguments; just rebuilds case in light of A's attacks, then summarizes position and offers 2-3 final reasons (from everything already stated) that support N's position.</td> </tr> </table>	Explains how N's original attacks on A still stand; points out which of N's arguments A was unable to attack.	Offers no new arguments; just rebuilds case in light of A's attacks, then summarizes position and offers 2-3 final reasons (from everything already stated) that support N's position.																
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A: Last Break	30 sec																			
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal	1.5	Summarizes position, deals with remaining N's arguments, and offers 2-3 final reasons (from everything already stated) that support A's position.																		