

## Finding Your Way toward a Life of Flourishing: A Retreat Guide



### I. Reflecting on Your Life

There are many ways to reflect prayerfully on our life and to consider directions we'd like to pursue or changes we'd like to make. On the last page of this guide you will find a diagram to assist you in reflecting on your life and how it aligns with or supports who God has created you to be and the purpose to which God has called you. (You will be invited to use colored pencils or highlighters for this exercise.)

This diagram is based on the Japanese concept, Ikigai. Ikigai is a term that describes the happiness and joy we feel when we are living a full and meaningful life. From a Christian perspective, we might call this the "abundant life" that Jesus spoke of in John 10:10. There are four domains that contribute to our experience of Ikigai:

- What I love
- What I'm good at
- What I can be paid for
- What the world needs.

The diagram suggests that when there is synergy between these four domains, the result will be a strong sense of living aligned with God's purposes for my life. And we will experience ikigai as a result!

- Begin by thinking deeply about each area and filling in each oval with words that describe what you love, what you're good at, what you can be paid for and what the world needs. Name concisely, yet vividly what you know to be true about yourself and your current life.

- Once you're finished, read over each area. What stands out to you?

## II. Reflecting on Your Life's Signature Themes

Now reflect on where you notice synergy between the recurring themes and where you see a disconnect. Make note of those.

- Synergy

- What recurring themes do you notice?

- Select a color and underline or draw a circle around recurring themes. For instance, you might see the theme of "creativity" or "offering hospitality" in three or four domains. Take a marker and draw a shape/circle around each time you see the mention of creativity or hospitality, including things that relate to this theme. Do that with each theme. When you're finished, you will have a colorful map of your life's signature themes, each one designated by a specific color.

- Disconnect

- As you reflect on the recurring themes, is there an invitation from God for you to bring your life into greater alignment with how God created you and God's purposes for your life? How would you describe this invitation?

- What is currently getting in the way of you living a fuller and more meaningful life? What can you do about it?

### III. Wrapping up

As you savor the gifts from this time, or perhaps wrestle with the implications of what has come up from your process, spend a generous amount of time meditating on this well-known Psalm. Make it your prayer.

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24 (The Voice Translation)

O Eternal One, You have explored my *heart* and know *exactly* who I am;

<sup>2</sup>You even know *the small details like* when I take a seat and when I stand up again.

Even when I am far away, You know what I'm thinking.

<sup>3</sup>You observe my wanderings and my sleeping, *my waking and my dreaming*, and You know everything I do in more detail *than even I* know.

<sup>4</sup>You know what I'm going to say *long before I say it*. *It is true*, Eternal One, that You know everything *and everyone*.

<sup>5</sup>You have surrounded me *on every side*, behind me and before me, and You have placed Your hand *gently* on my *shoulder*.

<sup>6</sup>It is the most amazing feeling to know *how deeply* You know me, *inside and out*; *the realization of it is so great that I cannot comprehend it*.

<sup>7</sup>Can I go anywhere apart from Your Spirit? Is there anywhere I can go to escape Your *watchful* presence? <sup>8</sup>If I go up into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in the realm of the dead, You are there. <sup>9</sup>If I ride on the wings of morning, if I make my home in the most isolated part of the ocean, <sup>10</sup>Even then You will be there to guide me; Your right hand will embrace me, *for You are always there*.

<sup>11</sup> Even if I *am afraid and think to myself*, “There is no doubt that the darkness will swallow me, the light around me will soon be turned to night,” <sup>12</sup> You can see in the dark, for it is not dark to Your eyes. For You the night is just as bright as the day. Darkness and light are the same to Your eyes.

<sup>13</sup> For You shaped me, inside *and out*. You knitted me together in my mother’s womb *long before I took my first breath*. <sup>14</sup> I will offer You my grateful heart, for I am Your *unique* creation, filled with wonder and awe. You *have approached even the smallest details with excellence*; Your works are wonderful; I carry this knowledge deep within my soul.

<sup>15</sup> You see *all things*; nothing about me was hidden from You As I took shape in secret, carefully crafted in the heart of the earth *before I was born from its womb*.

<sup>16</sup> You see *all things*; You saw me growing, changing *in my mother’s womb*; Every detail of my life was already written in Your book; You established the length of my life before I ever tasted the sweetness of it. <sup>17</sup> Your thoughts *and plans* are treasures to me, O God! I cherish each and every one of them! How grand in scope! How many in number! <sup>18</sup> If I could count each one of them, they would be more than all the grains of sand on earth. *Their number is inconceivable!* Even when I wake up, I am still near to You.

<sup>23</sup> Explore me, O God, and know the real me. *Dig deeply and discover who I am*. Put me to the test and watch how I handle the strain.

<sup>24</sup> *Examine me* to see if there is an evil bone in me, and guide me down Your path forever.