

In the tidal wave of questioning which hit Catholic hearts after Vatican II was a student of mine who reacted furiously against, even refused to read, an assigned book called FIFTY KEY WORDS.* Said she, "All the old words I have come to reject!" At the time, she'd abandoned mass but was faithful to a small Catholic group, though her Catholic faith was fast eroding (as was her faith in violence, though she continued designing bombbays for aircraft). Since I was (and am) wholeheartedly pro-Biblical, she only endured my course, fighting all the way against--it eventuated--Christian faith; and, when I phoned her a year later to find how she was, she said "I have nothing further to do with anything Christian."

WORDS, some words, are close to the bone and in the heart as perpetual companions. As one may undergo a change of friends, so one may eject certain words from one's inner sanctum, relegating them to some outer circle of consciousness and life. But at any state or even moment of life, upon reflection one can surface the central, livest words, the words that have the keys to one's inner world, the value-commitment world that centers what the Bible calls our "goings out and comings in" --thus, the "key" words.

EXERCISE:

1. On p.2 (the reverse of this sheet), make five columns.
2. On p.1, quickly write fifty words (or phrases), as they tumble into consciousness--value-words representative of your life-sense, your "world" of yes-wow-aha.
3. On p.2, arrange your p.1 words in columns titled (1) MOST IMPORTANT, (2) ALMOST AS IMPORTANT, (3) LESS IMPORTANT, (4) METAPHORS, (5) ? (Column #5 is for words that don't seem to fit in the other categories.)
4. Reflect (alone, with another, or in group) on your results and their correlates (i.e., "How does my word-profile fit with the Biblical language,...the language of my workplace,...my leisure world,...my intimacy world?").

Handwritten notes:
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*Julian Charley, FIFTY KEY WORDS: THE BIBLE (Jn.Knox Press). The others in the series: Eric J. Sharpe, FIFTY KEY WORDS: COMPARATIVE RELIGION; and F.G. Healey, FIFTY KEY WORDS: THEOLOGY.