

Theological Foundations for Evaluation

“Evaluation is one of God’s ways of bringing the history of the past into dialogue with the hope of the future.... We are called into new growth and new ministries by taking a realistic and hopeful look at what we have been and what we can still become.”

— *Theological and Theoretical Foundations for Evaluating Ministry*, 1990

Scripture

The wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures offers foundations for evaluation.

- “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future.” (Proverbs 19:20)

Jesus invited evaluation of his ministry.

- “He asked them, ‘Who do you say I am?’” (Mk 8:27-29; also Mt 16:13-23; Lk 9:18-22)

The Bible calls us to grow toward “perfection.”

- Jesus challenged listeners to “Be perfect ... as [God] is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)
- From Paul: “Not that I have...already been made perfect, but I press on....” (Phil. 3:12)
- Also from Paul: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith...that you may become perfect.” (II Cor. 13: 5, 9)

Truthful, loving communication can result in growth.

- “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into...Christ.” (Eph. 4:15)

Theology and Heritage

Growing toward the “not yet” God has for all of us.

- *Growth and development* are essential both to human existence and to faith.
- *Faith is a lifelong process* — a continual journey of growth.
- The way things are is never synonymous with God’s ultimate will for us.

Growth through mutual accountability.

- Christians seek help from others in *reflecting on one’s faith journey*.
- Small groups often provide a loving, supportive, and nurturing environment in which to *evaluate one’s growth*.
- Mutual trust and respect permit allow for the *giving and receiving honest feedback*.

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