

An exercise in theological imagination:

1. Watch a television commercial, three times in a row.
2. Begin by attending to your physical and emotional responses to this piece. What adjectives come to mind to describe how you are feeling right now. Don't judge them, simply write them down as rapidly as they occur to you. Regardless of what the producer of the commercial might have intended, how did you experience it? Is there a word or a symbol or a theme that emerges from your listening to your feelings in relation to this commercial?
3. Sit with that image or symbol for a while and explore it. Listen for how God may be present and calling. What is existence like within this image? What is life-giving and joy-filled about it? What is broken or sorrowing about it? What possibilities for healing and newness exist within it? Write down your thoughts as they occur to you, in brainstorming mode.
4. Take that image/symbol/word to scripture. Brainstorm a list of places/stories/passages in scripture where this image/symbol emerges for you or resonates with you. Avoid asking why a passage or passages emerged for you. Simply trust that a possible connection exists.
5. Pick one of the passages that occurred to you and find it in the bible. Read it a couple of times, look at its context. Think about the same questions you asked initially of your image, now in relation to this passage: what is existence like here? what is full of joy? what is broken or sorrowing about this passage? are there possibilities for newness and healing within it?
6. Now try to organize the results of your engagement with this commercial and scripture, and the resonances and explorations that accompanied it. Have any insights emerged for you from this conversation between a piece of pop culture and the deep structures of your faith? Have any pressing questions emerged for you? Are you being called in any way to direct or concrete action?
7. Finally, how will you take whatever you might have learned from this process into your daily living? Write down at least one intentional step you will take. When will you begin? Who will support you?

(based on *The Art of Theological Reflection*, Patricia O'Connell Killen, John deBeer; New York: Crossroad Press, 1996.)