

EVOKING QUESTIONS

for use in Faithfulness Groups

When offering spiritual support and assistance with discernment, questions are asked not to satisfy the curiosity of the questioner, but to help the focus person become more aware of the truth about the issue they are exploring. Rather than asking for facts or analysis, it is especially helpful to ask *evoking questions*, questions that assist the focus person in exploring their deep responses and inner knowing. Factual information and analytical reflection may be useful in understanding a situation, but a different kind of awareness is often needed in order to become clear about the interior movements of the Spirit. Questions that evoke greater self-understanding help free a person to live most fully and authentically. Such questions seek to elicit the knowing that may lie below consciousness, or that may not have been articulated out loud before. They invite a person to use imagination, and to describe images, metaphors, feelings, sensations, and bodily awareness. Some questions ask the focus person to “look at God” and sense how God is present with them, both in the moment and in the situations and concerns upon which they are focusing. Create a space for inward listening on this level, and gently encourage the focus person to speak aloud an emerging awareness. Use the spiritual language that you hear the focus person using; perhaps the word Spirit or the Light or something else.

Example #1: Chris is led to do a particular piece of writing and is seeking to find the heart of it.

Factual question: How long do you want this article to be?

Reflective/analytical question: What’s your main idea?

Evoking questions:

- What’s your sense of what God may want to communicate through this writing?
- What image do you have for how you hope this writing will affect your audience?
- What aspect of this topic do you feel most passionate about?
- What aspect of your own life is this writing calling upon you to re-examine?
- Is there a story, movie, poem or some scripture that comes to mind related to this?
- Have you had any dreams that might be connected to this piece?

Example #2: Jess is discerning about a possible leading to take up a particular service.

Factual question: When would you start?

Reflective/analytical question: What skills would you be using compared to your current work?

Evoking questions:

- How do you sense that God is present in this opportunity?
- When you imagine doing this work, how does your body and your breathing feel?
- Have you received any hints, messages, or signs about this possibility?
- What might be your biggest challenges to grow in this service?
- How do you feel when you think about who you would be serving?
- Does this opportunity feel like a temptation? If so, why?
- Do you feel a sense of duty in relation to this? If so, where does that sense come from?

Follow-up questions: Sometimes a response suggests that something significant might emerge if a follow-up question asks the focus person to explore further some aspect of what they have just said.

Be attentive to the focus person to see if this is needed before a new line of questions begins. A follow-up question may be asked by a different person than the one who asked the original question.

SAMPLE EVOKING QUESTIONS

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Modify the following questions for the specific needs of the moment.

What seems to most help or hinder your attentiveness to God?

How do you sense God at work in you or through you when you are seeking to serve?

How do you listen for guidance?

What do you experience when you pray about what God is asking of you?

What are your experiences and assumptions about what prayer is, how it happens, what power it has?

What images or phrases or scripture passages seem to be sources of guidance at this time?

How much freedom do you have in responding to the promptings of Spirit?

Do you seek God's help in addressing your impediments to faithfulness? How?

What might allow you to trust and relax more in your efforts to hear God's guidance and be faithful?

How is God working with you in this? What are you learning?

What fears are coming up? What resistance are you experiencing? Can you pray about your fear or resistance?

As you look at particular moments in which you feel that you were used by the Spirit to serve others, what do you notice about the presence or activity of God?

What is the stretch or growing edge into which God may be beckoning you right now?

How willing are you to enter into the unknown, to do new things or speak in different, clearer ways?

In which situations do you feel you are most authentic and faithful to what you were most truly made to be?

What seem to be the signs of grace in your service?

What help or support do you need from others in being faithful to how God is calling you?

As you take a step in faithfulness, what opens up in you and outside of you?