

Living the Questions

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Concerns (10 min)

Silence (3 min)

Shared Readings:

There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.

Barry Lopez

How do we teach a child to have compassion: to allow people to be different; to understand that like is not equal; to experiment; to laugh; to love; to accept the fact that the most important questions a human being can ask do not have or need answers.

Madeleine L'Engle

Skepticism is the first step towards truth.

Denis Diderot

If you are only skeptical, then no new ideas make it through to you. You become a crotchety old person convinced that nonsense is ruling the world. (There is, of course, much data to support you.) But every now and then, a new idea turns out to be on the mark, valid and wonderful. If you are too much in the habit of being skeptical about everything, you are going to miss or resent it, and either way you will be standing in the way of understanding and progress.

Carl Sagan

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

Albert Einstein

Jesus went about providing answers to questions that no one was asking and refusing to answer the questions everyone thought important.

Andrew Greeley

There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance — that principle is contempt prior to investigation.

Herbert Spencer

It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it.

Jacob Boronowski

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I: Read one of your questions out loud.

Round II: Talk about what was most meaningful to you in the homework.

Round III: (Optional) What did you discover about yourself and living the questions during Round II?

Closing (Responsive Reading)

Group Business

Cherish your doubts, for doubt is the handmaiden of truth.
Doubt is the key to the door of knowledge; it is the servant of discovery.

A belief which may not be questioned binds us to error,
for there is incompleteness and imperfection in every belief.
Doubt is the touchstone of truth; it is an acid which eats away the false.

Let no man fear for the truth, that doubt may consume it;
for doubt is a testing of belief.

The truth stands boldly and unafraid; it is not shaken by the testing;

For truth, if it be truth, arises from each testing stronger, more secure.

He that would silence doubt is filled with fear; the house of his spirit is built on shifting sands.

But he that fears no doubt, and knows its use, is founded on a rock.

He shall walk in the light of growing knowledge; the work of his hands shall endure.

Therefore let us not fear doubt, but let us rejoice in its help:
It is to the wise as a staff to the blind; doubt is the handmaiden of truth.

Robert T. Weston
Responsive Reading 413 from Hymns for the Celebration
of Life – Beacon Press

Covenant Groups

Living the Questions



Leader's Guide: Living the Questions

Chalice Lighting: Choose one from your Leader's Handbook

Sharing of Joys and Concerns (10 min)

Hold Each Other in Silence (3 min): Introduce the time of silence with words such as, "Let us hold each other in silent support."

Share the Readings: Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from Shared Readings found in the bulletin until all readings are finished.

Review the Covenant: Read aloud to the group (they don't have it on their bulletin this session)

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent and to come to the group one last time and say goodbye if I need to quit.
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories.
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I: Go around in a circle having each person read their question. (5 min)

Round II: What was most meaningful to you in the homework? (45 min)

Round III (Optional) Ask: Was there anything you discovered about yourself and questions during deep sharing/deep listening?

Closing:

Do responsive reading on the back of the bulletin.

Sing "Go Now in Peace."

Pass out next week's homework.

Living the Questions

We all find a way to cope with the mystery in life. Some dive right into the questions and spend time speculating and intuiting answers. Others trust the scientific method and find speculating about what can seemingly never be known through empirical evidence an utter waste of time. Most of us probably go down both of these paths when faced with the big questions. This session is about discovering how *you* are living the questions.

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Ranier Maria Rilke

Our tolerance of diversity is not just the sort that "suffers fools gladly," you see, it is the sort of tolerance which believes that truth emerges best when people share their different versions in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Our argument for pluralism comes from our theological modesty; that we know enough of truth to inform our own lives and give them meaning but not so much that we would claim it for others, much less force it upon them. This modesty is not personal passiveness but instead a true theology which suggests the largeness of the divine and the impossibility of anyone knowing everything for all time.

Christine Robinson

It is the things for which there is no evidence that are believed with passion. Nobody feels any passion about the multiplication table or about the existence of Cape Horn, because these matters are not doubtful. But in matters of theology or political theory, where a rational man will hold that at best there is a slight balance of probability on one side or the other, people argue with passion and support their opinions by physical slavery imposed by armies and mental slavery imposed by schools.

Bertrand Russell

1. What are the big questions for you? They might range from contemplating the nature of the universe to the details of your personal path in it. Please jot them down on the back of this paper.
2. Please share your history with your big questions. When and why did they come up for you? How have you answered them? How have your questions and your answers changed over time?
3. What do you know for sure about life? How did you find your answers? Do you like to share these answers with people? Why or why not?
4. What don't you know about life? Do you try answers on? Give an example. Do you consider yourself skeptical? What answers to big questions have you rejected? Why?

*O Love, I know a lot.
I can list the capitals of Europe,
thread my way through the periodic table,
and name the last names of all the artists who ever painted in Rome.
I know a lot,
but I have so few answers.
Fewer and fewer all the time.
And the questions themselves
get more convoluted, more subtle and cunning,
making me wonder if I even want to know the answers.*

*Sometimes,
my footing isn't so sure.
Sometimes,
my map crumples into powder at my feet.
Sometimes,
the lights go out, the engine seizes, the song is cut off.
And on those days, I don't need Paris or Prague,
and I don't need answers.
I don't even need the questions.
What I need is a squeeze of my hand,
a shoulder on which to lean,
a voice that says, "We'll do it together,"
a smile that does not say "chin up" and "be tough,"
but which simply stands close, silent,
arms draped around my stooping shoulders.
Give me no lectures on clumsiness when I stumble.
Give me no pep talks on vision when I cannot see.
Just be there, o precious Love,
whenever I am not strong enough to admit I am not strong.
Be there. Hold me. And then walk with me all the way home.----*

Unknown