

SELF-AWAKENING QUESTIONS

Jesus asked his friends and followers an important question: “What do you want me to do for you?” Sometimes he would do what they asked. But the question always invited them to interrogate their lives and their deepest desires. Good questions, asked by a caring listener, can wake us up to our own lives, the life around us, and to the life of God.

Self-awakening questions are not always the questions we are in the habit of asking, but they become more habitual with practice. They help us recognize gifts, listen more attentively for God’s presence, and hear God’s call. They are questions that emerge when our heads and hearts are open to the holy. We invite the storyteller to explore metaphors or images that help the explore who she is, what she loves, and what she cares passionately about. Rather than satisfy our curiosity, these questions help the speaker walk around in his story long enough to remember risks, challenges, choices, and outcomes—and notice the presence of God.

Who in your life has asked you questions that led you to go deeper into your story, your passions, your values? What were the questions?

Framing Self-Awakening Questions

The best questions are simple, brief and to the point. They are not questions to which you could anticipate the answers, or with right or wrong answers. Invite the storyteller deeper self-reflection on his or her faith, gifts and sense of call or meaning. Ask “how,” “what” or “why” questions. Invite images or metaphors because they can open things up in ways that more direct questions don’t. Ask questions to clarify feelings, images, passions, concerns, hopes and values as well as patterns and themes in his or her story. Ask questions aimed at helping the storyteller to walk around in his or her story—in order to remember the risks or challenges, choices and outcomes—rather than satisfying your own curiosity. Watch the pacing of the questions, allowing some silence. Trust your intuition in asking questions. As you listen deeply to the storyteller allow your questions to emerge from a place where your head and heart are opened to the presence of the holy.

What are some questions you might ask that could help someone “go deeper” with their story?

Practice: Self Awakening Questions

Find a partner and decide who will share first, and who will share second. You will have 2 minutes in silence to think, and then 2 minutes to share your story. The listener will then have 2 minutes to form and ask a Self Awakening Question (and listen to the response).

Tell a story about a time when someone took you or your gifts seriously.

*2 min silence, 2 min person A tell story, 2 min ask a question (and response) then
2 min person B story, 2 min ask a question (and response)*

For Further Reflection

What was it like to have someone ask you a “self-awakening question”? What was freeing about it? What was scary?

What makes for a good self-awakening question?

How can you tell if someone asking you a question is really interested in you, or is asking the question for other reasons? How does each sort of question make you feel?

What did the questions open up for you in this exercise? Were you surprised by your answers?

Did any of the questions stump you? How might you let those questions continue to work on you?

Why do you think Jesus asked so many questions? What was he trying to do when he did that?

What are the next steps for you in discovering your gifts and discerning your vocation?