



TOUCHSTONES

Small Group Discussion Guide

Journey

Touchstones Small Group Discussion Guide on Mercy

Preparation: (Read the *Touchstones Journal* on the theme and the questions below.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: “I’ve come to believe that there exists in the universe something I call ‘The Physics of The Quest’ — a force of nature governed by laws as real as the laws of gravity or momentum. And the rule of Quest Physics maybe goes like this: ‘If you are brave enough to leave behind everything familiar and comforting (which can be anything from your house to your bitter old resentments) and set out on a truth-seeking journey (either externally or internally), and if you are truly willing to regard everything that happens to you on that journey as a clue, and if you accept everyone you meet along the way as a teacher, and if you are prepared – most of all – to face (and forgive) some very difficult realities about yourself... then truth will not be withheld from you.”

Elizabeth Gilbert

Chalice Lighting (James Vila Blake), adapted (In unison) Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be

listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading the following wisdom story.

A Long Journey

Janeen Grohsmeyer (adapted)

One morning, a boy named Ethelred Brown went to the Montego Bay Episcopal Church in Jamaica where he sang in the choir. Usually the people sang the creed, which described what they believed. But that morning, instead of singing, the priest said a line of it, and the people repeated. It included these words: “The Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.”

Ethelred thought, “What?” He was good at math. He knew that three wasn’t the same as one. How could you have a unity in trinity or a trinity in unity? How could three things be one thing or one thing be three things? It just didn’t make sense.

In that moment, Ethelred knew that he didn’t believe the creed. That afternoon at his uncle’s house, he found a booklet entitled *Unitarian Christianity* by Rev. William Ellery Channing. He borrowed the booklet. After reading it, Ethelred knew he was a Unitarian. But there were no Unitarian churches in Jamaica.

When he grew up, Ethelred worked as a civil servant in the Treasury. He married in 1898, and he and his wife, Ella, had four children. At the age of 32, he decided to become a Unitarian minister. This was the beginning of an amazing journey. Ethelred sent a letter addressed to “Any Unitarian Minister in New York City.”

Eventually, he got a letter back from the Rev.

Frank Southworth, President of Meadville. Southworth invited him to study there. Ethelred asked people he knew to help him through contributions of money. Then he sailed to Baltimore.

When he arrived, he didn't have the correct papers. He went back to Jamaica to try again. A second attempt failed when his father refused to help pay for his ticket. Finally, in 1910 he enrolled at Meadville Lombard Theological School. He completed his studies in 1912 and was ordained. Ethelred was the first black person to become a Unitarian minister.

He returned to Jamaica and spent eight years trying to start a Unitarian Church, first in Montego Bay, and then in Kingston. Then he and his family moved to New York City, and he started the Harlem Unitarian Church in 1920. It had to be for blacks, because at that time, blacks and whites didn't attend the same churches.

It wasn't easy. They still didn't have much money, and they still didn't get much help. His wife became sick, and one of his children died. Besides being a minister, Ethelred worked long hours at an extra job that he didn't like.

For the next 35 years, Ethelred was the minister at the Harlem Unitarian Church. Over the years, hundreds of people found their way there to pray and learn, to worship and sing.

In honor of his ministry, one of the songs in our hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*. It has a tune named Ethelred. It's the tune for #112 *I'm on My Way*.

It was a long journey, but Ethelred found a way to do what he believed in, and so should we.

Source:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session8/finding-your-way>

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group Members read selections from Readings from the Common Bowl as follows. Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Day 1: “And you? When will you begin that long journey into yourself?” Rumi

Day 2: “The beautiful journey of today can only begin when we learn to let go of yesterday.” Steve Maraboli

Day 3: “Sometimes the hardest part of the journey is believing you're worthy of the trip.” Glenn Beck

Day 4: “In the middle of the journey of our life I found myself within a dark wood where the direct way was lost.” Dante

Day 5: “Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now.” Eckhart Tolle

Day 6: “Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future; therefore, you can trust this indirect, oblique side of yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more important it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey.” John O'Donohue

Day 7: “We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.” Marcel Proust

Day 8: “My favorite journey is looking out the window.” Edward Gorey

Day 9: “...there ain't no journey what don't change you some.” David Mitchell

Day 10: “May I share with you a formula that in my judgment will help you and help me to journey well through mortality... First, fill your mind with truth; second, fill your life with service; and third, fill your heart with love.” Thomas Monson

Day 11: “The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours—it is an amazing journey—and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really

begins.” Bob Moawad

Day 12: “We’re not on our journey to save the world but to save ourselves. But in doing that you save the world. The influence of a vital person vitalizes.” Joseph Campbell

Day 13: “It may be that when we no longer know which way to go that we have come to our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.” Wendell Berry

Day 14: “The journey itself is my home.” Matsuo Bashō

Day 15: “All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware.” Martin Buber

Day 16: “A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.” John Steinbeck

Day 17: “Losing your way on a journey is unfortunate. But, losing your reason for the journey is a fate more cruel.” H.G. Wells

Day 18: “There is meaning in every journey that is unknown to the traveler.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Day 19: “And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our own feet, and learn to be at home.” Wendell Berry

Day 20: “Some beautiful paths can’t be discovered without getting lost.” Erol Ozan

Day 21: “A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.” John Steinbeck

Day 22: “Life is not a journey to the grave with

the intention of arriving safely in a well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming, ‘Wow what a ride!’” Marjorie Pay Hinckley

Day 23: “The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It can’t be organized or regulated. It isn’t true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth.” Ram Dass

Day 24: “My invitation, my challenge to you here, is to journey into a deeper intimacy with the world and your life without any promise of safety or guarantee of reward beyond the intrinsic value of full participation.” Oriah Mountain Dreamer

Day 25: “The Sun will rise and set regardless. What we choose to do with the light while it’s here is up to us. Journey wisely.” Alexandra Elle

Day 26: “My dad used to say that life’s a journey, but somebody screwed up and lost the map.” Rachel Caine

Day 27: “All great literature is one of two stories; a ...person goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town.” Leo Tolstoy

Day 28: “As you start traveling down that road of life, remember this: There are never enough comfort stops. The places you’re going to are never on the map. And once you get that map out, you won’t be able to re-fold it no matter how smart you are. So, forget the map, roll down the windows, and whenever you can, pull over and have a picnic with a pig.” Jim Henson

Day 29: “In every journey comes a moment... one like no other. And in that moment, you must decide between who you are... and who you want to be.” J.C. Marino

Day 30: “I guess that’s the thing about a hero’s journey. You might not start out a hero, and you might not even come back that way. But you

change, which is the same as everything changing. The journey changes you, whether or not you know it, and whether or not you want it to.” Kami Garcia

Day 31: “The journey is part of the experience—an expression of the seriousness of one’s intent. One doesn’t take the A train to Mecca.” Anthony Bourdain

Sitting in Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: “And so, does the destination matter? Or is it the path we take? I declare that no accomplishment has substance nearly as great as the road used to achieve it. We are not creatures of destinations. It is the journey that shapes us. Our callused feet, our backs strong from carrying the weight of our travels, our eyes open with the fresh delight of experiences lived.”
Brandon Sanderson

Living the Questions

Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving to the next.

1. Whose journey most inspired you?
Why?
2. Has your journey in life been what you have expected? If yes, how? If not, what unexpected twists, turns, delays, and detours have you experienced?
3. In traveling on your life path, what have you discovered about yourself?
4. As you look back on your life journey, what has surprised you most? Concerned you most? Delighted you most?
5. What was/is most difficult about the journey of life you are living?
6. Where did your spiritual journey begin and where has it taken you?
7. What remains on your bucket list in terms of your journey?

The facilitator or group members are invited to propose additional questions that they would like to explore.

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person for the time claimed. Using a timer allows the facilitator to also listen fully.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together and the experience of exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: (Elizabeth Selle Jones)
We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Closing Words: (Rev. Philip R. Giles)
(In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*