

DEVELOPING SKILLS IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION – ADDING TO THE TOOLKIT.

Using Questions

An OPEN question is one that:

- Can't be answered by one or two words
- Usually starts with 'how' or 'what'
- Encourages the directee to talk

A CLOSED question is one that:

- Can be answered by 'yes' or 'no' or by one word
- Starts with 'is', 'do', 'have' etc
- Discourages the person from talking and slows or stunts the flow

USING OPEN QUESTIONS: Remember when asking questions: '**For whose sake?**'

Beginning a session:

- 'Would some time to settle and reflect help you or.....?'
- 'What are your reflections since we last met?'
- 'How has God been in your life since we last met?'
- 'What has most been on your heart recently?'
- 'What have you been noticing most since we last met?'
- 'Have you a sense of what you would like to share of your reflections on your life with God?'
- 'What are you bringing today?'
- 'What is on your heart today?'
- 'Have you any sense of how God is looking at you as you come today?'
- 'How has your review of the day helped you notice where God is in the last while?'

Clarifying and elaborating:

- 'Can I ask what do you mean by.....?'
- 'Are you able to say a bit more about.....?'
- 'What does that mean for you?'
- 'Is it OK to explore that a bit more.....?'
- 'Can you say what is most life giving/life draining in this situation?'

Working with feelings:

- 'How do you feel about that?'
- 'How does that make you feel?'
- 'What feelings does that bring up in you?'
- 'What is that feeling like?'
- 'What do you notice is happening as you say that?'
- 'How do you feel right now?' (helps people bring feelings into the here and now)
- 'What's it like to hear yourself say that out loud?'
- 'What are you noticing about that feeling now?'
- 'What's happening for you now?'
- 'What's moving in you as you say that?'
- 'Have you any sense of what is life giving in all this?'

Paraphrasing spoken feelings:

- 'So you are feeling....., is that right?'
- 'Sounds like.....'
- 'I'm hearing.....is that about right?'
- 'I'm wondering if.....'

Endings:

- 'What is the most important thing you have heard yourself say in this session?'

- 'What have you heard yourself say today?'
- 'What are you noticing as we come to a close today?'
- 'Who is the God who is with you now as we finish for today?'
- 'How are you now?'
- 'What do you need for yourself till we meet again?'
- 'Have you a sense of what you need to ask God for as you go from here?'
- 'Is there anything you have heard yourself say today that you might need to go back to?'
- 'For what are you most grateful as you go?'
- 'What is staying with you from this session?'

DON'T:

- Ask questions to satisfy curiosity
- Ask 'why?'
- Ask long complicated questions with many parts
- Give advice in a question ('Have you tried talking to him?')

DO:

- Keep questions clear and simple
- Keep questions in the here and now with the person. Don't direct someone not in the room.

**'Staying with the Experience'
'Old faithfuls': The open questions we use over and over again**

Some questions are so general and so useful that we find we use them constantly. Each of us has 4 or 5 we use so much that the people we accompany say 'I knew you were going to ask that..' but still they work. Don't view this list as exhaustive or prescriptive. What questions do you find yourself asking a lot?

- How does that feel?
- What was that like?
- Is there an image that expresses what you are feeling?
- Where do you feel that in your body?
- Do you notice anything else?
- Is it OK if we stay a little longer with X?
- Are you feeling different now?
- Do you notice what God is feeling?
- Where is God in this?
- What's God like?
- What's God doing?
- How does God regard you?
- How is God looking at you right now?
- How is God looking at you as you feel X?
- What do you find yourself wanting / desiring right now?
- What do you want?
- What do you really want?
- What are you wanting from God at this time?
- What was Jesus' tone of voice?
- What's that God like?
- Who is the God who is with you now?

(Material from Loyola Hall)