

# Small-group Spiritual Conversation Guide



## Guidelines for Facilitators

- Create an environment of hospitality, openness, and safety. Sitting in a circle and lighting a candle can be helpful.
- A series of smaller groups rather than one-large group offers more opportunity for personal sharing.
- Allow at least an hour for the conversation, more for some groups. The amount of time is less important than creating a safe and fruitful means for people to share their spirituality. You can always meet a second time. Work through the list one question at a time, one person at a time, or in whatever way suits your group.
- Distribute the conversation questions at the beginning of the session. Participants may write responses or simply use the questions as guidelines. The papers will not be collected. Make sure all participants know that not sharing in response to a particular question is always an option. The lists of examples are provided in the questions to “prime the pump” for individual stories.
- Take time to allow the Spirit to be present and to guide the direction of the conversation. This is why we suggest beginning with prayer and a Scripture passage of your choice (e.g., Psalm 46:10; selected verses from Psalm 139; Romans 8:26; 12:2).
- Listening and asking open-ended questions are vital. Avoid making evaluative comments. Ask follow-up questions aimed at inviting persons to uncover and share more about their experiences (e.g., How did that make you feel? What was the impact on your life of faith? Why was that significant for you?).
- Invite participants to speak one at a time and to practice active listening as others are speaking. This is not a time of judgment or equating one’s experience with others’. You are naming and sharing your individual stories—hearing and being heard. This practice will also ensure that all voices are heard.
- Be willing and prepared to wait in silence for responses.
- Seek to let the Spirit create in you love, appreciation, interest in, and respect for those willing to enter this conversation. Sharing in this way sometimes has the power to “break us open.” Tears of joy and sorrow may accompany such vulnerability, so it can be helpful to provide tissues. Embrace both the tears and the laughter that are a natural part of sharing our stories.
- Ask if the group members wish to meet again. If so, make arrangements that suit all who wish to continue in participation. Resources for deepening this conversation are available from the Spiritual Formation Resource Team.
- Conclude with silence and a prayer of thanksgiving for the work of the Spirit in your time together.



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## Conversation Questions

1. What drew you here to participate in this conversation?
2. What have been some major turning points in your life? Examples include a move, a new job, loss of a job, marriage, the birth of a baby, a divorce, a period of family struggle, the death of a loved one, others.
3. Did you experience God's presence or love at any of these times? If your answer is yes, in what ways did you experience God's presence or love?
4. Have you experienced God's presence and love or felt especially close to God at other times? Examples include during prayer and meditation, in worship, studying Scripture, participating in a small group, listening to music, reading literature, encountering art, being in nature, an important person in your life, other. Please share an example or examples.
5. What do you regularly do that brings you into God's presence and deepens your relationship with God? If you do not currently have a regular spiritual practice, what would you like to try?
6. Do you feel a hunger to grow closer to God? Are you looking for ways your relationship with God could grow? What help and guidance would you like your local church or the conference to offer? For example: Bible study, prayer and meditation, spiritual direction, books on spirituality, spiritual support group, spiritual friend, dream interpretation, study of other religions, retreats, discovery of Spiritual Gifts.

