

MAGICAL QUESTIONS

From *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*, by Priya Parker

A question is good for a group when it's both interesting to each person to answer and each person would be curious to hear everyone else's response.

1. What's a path you almost took but didn't?
2. What song would they play at your funeral?
3. What's a dish you loved as a child and maybe forgot about? Who made it?
4. What gift would you give to aliens on behalf of humanity?
5. If you were a fly on the wall, what would you love to hear people saying about you?
6. If you could bring one food to share now with the group, what would it be?
7. What's one rule you had growing up that, looking back, you now think was totally unnecessary or even a little funny?
8. What is something about yourself that use to embarrass you as a child, but now you fully embrace?
9. What is one thing life is teaching you right now?
10. If you were a museum, what would it be like?
11. What is your anti-pet peeve, something minor/small that brings you outsized delight?
12. What are you an evangelist for?
13. What is someone else's accomplishment that you are most proud of?
14. What is something you believe you have talent for, but would never turn into a profession?
15. What does the way you dress say about you?
16. What do you want to be able to tell your grandchildren about how you showed up during this time in history?
17. If you were going back to school to study something different from your degree, what would it be and why?
18. What's something you thought you were bad at as a kid, only to find later in life that you were actually good at it?
19. When was the last time you used glitter?
20. If a restaurant you loved named a burger or sandwich after you, what would be on it?
21. What is your favorite building in our community and why?
22. If you could have a lifetime supply of any one thing (but it can't be money), what would it be and why?
23. To where have you gone on a pilgrimage and why?
24. Who is an artist that inspires you but you would never hang on your walls?
25. What Jeopardy category on a niche or random interest could you answer every question on?
26. Would your childhood friends be surprised at your career? Why?
27. If you could have a song play every time you walk into a major meeting, what would it be?

28. What is a sliding door moment in your life—a seemingly small or big decision that, at the time, you didn't realize would forever change the trajectory of your life?
29. How did you get your worst physical scar?
30. If you could only have 3 apps on your phone, what would they be?
31. In 100 years, someone is trying to summon your spirit. What three objects would they use?
32. What topic could you give a 20 minute talk about, with no preparation whatsoever?
33. When was the last time you felt gezellig? For those who don't know, gezellig is a Dutch word for the feeling of coziness, togetherness, conviviality.
34. If your life was a movie, what would be the opening credits song?

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.
Psalm 19, verse 1

God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but
on trees and flowers and clouds and stars.
Martin Luther, theologian and Protestant reformer

3 Imagination is more important than knowledge.
Albert Einstein, mathematician, scientist and researcher / inventor

Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.
Erich Fromm, social psychologist and philosopher

Every moment of light and dark is a miracle.
Walt Whitman, poet

While I know myself as a creation of God,
I am also obligated to realize and remember that
everyone else and everything else
are also God's creation.
Maya Angelou, author and poet

The intuitive mind will tell the thinking mind where to look next.
Jonas Salk, medical researcher who developed the polio vaccine

In order to create there must be a dynamic force, and what force is more potent
than Love?
Igor Stravinsky, composer, pianist and conductor

3 Whether accepted or rejected, rich or poor, innovators are forever guided
by that great and eternal constant – the creative urge.
John Coltrane, jazz saxophonist and composer

CREATIVITY QUOTES

Creativity is seeing something that doesn't exist already. You need to find out how you can bring it into being, and that way, be a playmate with God.

Michele Shea, author

The creation is quite like a spacious and splendid house, provided and filled with the most exquisite and the most abundant furnishings. Everything in it tells us of God.

John Calvin, theologian and Protestant reformer

The event of creation did not take place so many eons ago, astronomically or biologically. Creation is taking place every moment of our lives.

David Suzuki, scientist and environmental activist

And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

Anaïs Nin, author

I feel such a creative force in me: I am convinced that there will be a time when I will make something good every day, on a regular basis. I am doing my very best to make every effort because I am longing so much to make beautiful things. But beautiful things mean painstaking work, disappointment, and perseverance.

Vincent van Gogh, painter

3 Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.

Carl Jung, psychologist

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.

Martha Graham, dancer and choreographer

I work in whatever medium likes me at the moment.

Marc Chagall, artist in many media

My future starts when I wake up every morning.... Every day I find something creative to do with my life.

Miles Davis, musician and composer

Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.

Thomas Merton, monastic and author

To practice any art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. So do it.

Kurt Vonnegut, author

3

What art offers is space --- a certain breathing room for the spirit.

John Updike, author

God created the arts in order that life might be held together by them, so that we should not separate ourselves from spiritual things.

John of the Cross

God and other artists are always a little obscure.

Oscar Wilde, author

God showed me in my palm

A little thing round as a ball

About the size of a hazelnut.

I looked at it with the eye of my understanding

And asked myself: "What is this thing?"

And I was answered: "It is everything that is created."

I wondered how it could survive since it seemed so little.

It could suddenly disintegrate into nothing.

The answer came: "It endures and ever will endure, Because God loves it."

And so everything has being because of God's love.

Julian of Norwich, anchoress and mystic

Call to Worship (for Friday morning)

“Praying” by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

[from *Thirst: Poems by Mary Oliver*, 2006 reprinted in Roger Housden, *For Lover of God Everywhere*
(New York: Hay House, Inc, 2009), 196.]

Discernment: Quiet Morning Reflection Questions

Who am I? Considering core values, and all the other insights gleaned from the week thus far, how would I describe myself, or who I most want to be?

Whose am I? In what relationships do I find I belong?

Who is God for me? What does God desire for me? What might that look like in real life?

Through all the challenges and things I cherish, what is my life saying to me, right now?

What makes me respond the way that I do—whether self-rejection or joyful celebration?

Is there some way I might better pay attention to my life? What persistent “question(s)” keeps arising for me?

Question / Situation:

Blessings to be grateful for

Burdens to address

Possibilities to pursue

The Daily Examen

begun by St. Ignatius Loyola

(typically practiced at noon or night)

1. **Become aware of God's presence.** Look back on events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. **Review the day with gratitude.** Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through the day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on gifts received. Look at work accomplished, and at people present in the day. Give thanks for gifts exchanged. Pay attention to small things—the food eaten, sights seen, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. **Pay attention to your emotions.** One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on feelings experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings? God may show some ways we fall short. Make note ... but look deeply for other inclinations and inspiration. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants us to consider a new direction in some area of work? Are we concerned about someone or a particular situation? Perhaps we should reach out in some way.

4. **Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.** Ask the Holy Spirit for direction toward something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person

or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from the heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. **Look toward tomorrow.** Ask God to give light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to feelings that surface in a survey of what's coming up. Doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask the Spirit for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for sin. Ask for protection and help. Ask for wisdom about the questions and problems still to be faced. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Lord's Prayer.

Adapted from <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray>