

I've Been Meaning to Ask...A Series for Curiosity, Courage, and Connection

In order to build connection and trust, we need to listen to each other's stories and experiences to learn who and what has shaped us. We also need to feel seen and known for who we are. We believe everyone has needs, but each of us needs different things at different times. We believe God calls us to care for one another—in seasons of joy, transition, and hardship. We commit to listening and being present.



Questions for Reflection:



This week's question recognizes that we all have needs and that we need each other. It reminds us that we each have unique needs; we can't assume to know what is best for others. It also prompts us to reflect on our own needs, priorities, and desires, which can sometimes be difficult to discern from one situation to the next. In the midst of Job's afflictions, three of his friends promptly leave their homes and come to him. They tear their garments, weep loudly, and sit with him for seven days, saying nothing. Their response is the ministry of presence, of true solidarity, of seeing his excruciating pain and joining him there. Beaten and imprisoned, Paul writes to Timothy with a simple request: "Come quickly." He lists those who abandoned him, but says, "I hope that God doesn't hold it against them!" In his greatest moment of need, Paul doesn't need revenge, but instead asks for companionship. In essence, this is what we all need—for someone to come quickly, to gather the items we want, and to simply show up.

- What helps make a bad day better?
- When you feel lonely, what helps you feel less alone?
- Read the Job scripture. What are the actions Job's friends take? In the midst of his suffering, what do they NOT do?
- Read 2 Timothy 4:9-18. According to Paul's letter, what does Paul say that he needs? When in your life has someone dropped everything to come be by your side? When have you done this for someone else?
- Reflect on a memory of a time someone extended care for you. What did they do and how did it make you feel?
- Think about a time you have been in a caretaking role. What needs do you have as a caretaker?
- Reflect on a memory of a time you tried to extend care for someone else but didn't give them what they needed. What do you wish you could have changed about that experience?
- Think about a time you needed help but didn't ask for it. What do you wish you could have changed about that experience?
- What's a gift (tangible or intangible) you've received that you'll never forget?
- Describe a time when you felt God was near.
- The question, "What do you need?" de-centers the one offering aid so that the one hurting has autonomy. However, we must also be willing to pose this question to all people in a relationship and community. Caregivers and caretakers have needs that shouldn't be ignored or dismissed. How can this question be used to further interdependence, reciprocity, and the sharing of power in our relationships?

Adapted from SANCTIFIED ART I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK SERMON PLANNING GUIDE

Spiritual Practice: Contemplative Art

Choose some art materials (colored pencils, crayons, watercolor paints, etc). Reflect on this week's scripture and reflection questions. Create a picture or symbol illustrating a time you felt God was near, or something that speaks to your needs or a need you observe in your community. Then, create a picture or symbol illustrating what responding to that need, listening or simply being present might look like. You don't need to draw pictures unless you are moved to do so. Just allow the colors and shapes to flow from your spirit as you reflect.

