

**Leader's Guide for
QUESTIONS OF THE SOUL WITH FATHER MICHAEL HIMES**

What Is Spirituality?

Questions of the Soul consists of five programs on two DVDs or five VHS tapes. Each program is 25 minutes long. You may choose to view these programs in the order of this study guide. This is not necessary, however. Each program stands on its own and you may use them in whatever order you wish.

Our leader's guide is meant as a suggested guideline for group discussions. The Spirit speaks to each group and person in a unique way. We encourage you to use your creativity and add or delete whatever you feel best helps your group come to know the Spirit within. Our prayers go with you as you start this exciting journey of faith.

Opening Prayer: Holy Mystery, we are here because you have pursued us. We have never been away from your love—even when we have tried to run from you. Right now, in this room, you are within us, among us and beyond us. Enlighten our minds and hearts as we explore our questions of the soul. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think spirituality is such a “hot topic” right now?
- Is Fr. Himes' definition of spirituality different than yours? Do you agree with it?
- Have you ever felt like “the lady with no faith” in the Brothers Karamozov story? What did you do? Have you rediscovered faith “bit by bit”?
- Nietzsche's madman says the marketplace has killed God. Is God dead in our marketplace? Is God dead in your decisions about material things? What part has God played in the major decisions of your life?
- Are you caught in “picture thinking” about God? Do you experience God as mystery?
- Have you ever had an experience similar to that of Augustine and Monica where you “almost touched perfect peace”?
- Did anything in this video “expand your imagination” about God?

Closing Prayer

Invite someone to read Luke 10:3-42 aloud. Ask the group to silently reflect on the following questions. Allow two or three minutes of silence between each question.

Where in your life are you behaving as Martha—very busy, feeling pressured? Think about that place.

Where in your life do you “sit with Jesus.” In your heart, go there.

Now, in your heart, try to bring the two “places” together. Invite Jesus into the busy, pressured place.

Leader: The Spirit permeates all of us—all we are and all we do. Let us walk humbly and serenely in that Spirit. Amen.

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NOTE: This guide can be printed and cut down in size to be stored with the DVD version of this video program. Simply cut ¼ inch from each side of the page for a guide that, when folded, can be placed inside of the DVD case or attached to the DVD or VHS case.

For use with: *Questions of the Soul: What Is Spirituality?* on VHS (V3001) and DVD (D3000)

St. Anthony Messenger Press
28 W. Liberty St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498
800-488-0488
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What Is Prayer?

Opening Prayer: Source of all life, tonight we dare to talk to you and about you. We know we are made for you. We are grateful for your presence now and for every breath we take. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- How do you pray? What methods of prayer have you tried? Which ones did not work for you? Which prayer methods have been successful?
- What has the Lord's Prayer meant to you? Do you have any new insights into it after viewing this program?
- When you pray, what is your image of God?
- Are you ever tempted to "lie" to God in prayer—for example, praising God when you feel angry and miserable?
- What do you think of Fr. Himes' statement that the person cured in surgery was cured 100% by God and 100% by the doctors?
- When was a time you "prayed as if everything depended on God and worked as if everything depended on you"?
- Have you ever had the experience of being "held in the arms of the loving God"?

Closing Prayer: *With candles lit in a darkened room, very slowly and reverently pray the Lord's Prayer.*

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What Can We Learn From Suffering?

Opening Prayer: Lord, we gather tonight to reflect on the very difficult question of suffering. Help us to find you in our reflections. Help us to let go of our need for certitude and, in letting go, to find a deeper relationship with you. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Did this video surprise you? Did anyone hope it might have a gentler message?
- Have you ever thought of Christ as “therapist”? What are the strengths of this image? What are the weaknesses?
- Has the Job story been meaningful to you in the past? Did you gain any new insights into it from this video?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you were not restless? Explain. Did you want to “freeze” that moment forever?
- How does God’s answer to Job make you feel? Is it difficult to be merely a creature or is it freeing?
- What have your personal experiences of suffering taught you?
- Do you know anyone who learned from suffering? What did they teach you?

Closing Prayer

Items needed: paper, pencils, matches, bowl

Write down a time when you suffered emotionally or physically and for which you want an answer.

Pause for a few minutes.

Now place the paper in the bowl. Light the paper with the match. As the papers burn, the leader says:

Lord, we no longer look for answers. We no longer hold you accountable to us. Instead we look for you. Be with us in suffering and joy, in good times and bad. We look to you not for answers, but for life. Amen.

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What Is Spiritual Discipline?

Opening Prayer: Lord, we gather together as a people looking to you for life, and we deeply accept the gift of each other. Help us to be truthful. Help us to see deeply into our own hearts and there find you. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- What does it mean to “see what is there”?
- Have you ever fasted? What was your motivation? Would you do it again? Did this video give you a different motivation?
- What is your image of St. Francis? Did you gain new insights into him from this video?
- What is your image of John the Baptist? Did you gain any new insights into him?
- What did you think of Auden’s poem, “As I Walked Out One Evening”? In your life, have you ever experienced disillusionment? Has that experience helped you to look beyond yourself to God?
- Who do you know that lives a simple lifestyle? What could you learn from that person?
- Is there anything in your life right now that is blocking your vision of reality?

Closing Prayer: Spiritual discipline invites us to “see what is there.” Right now, silently in your hearts, I invite you to do what Augustine did—let images and scenes from your life flash before your mind’s eye. Don’t hang on to any one of them. Just let the event come into your mind and then let it go.

(Pause for a few minutes.)

Lord, everything in my life, everything—the good and the bad, the successes and the failures, the joys and the suffering—have all brought me to this point. I accept my life as a gift from you. You have been there in the past and will be there in the future. To my life I say, yes. To you I say, yes. Amen.

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Do I Really Need a Community?

Opening Prayer: Lord, you gather us together as a community. Give us the courage for a deep conversation. Help us to take the risk of seeing things from a new perspective. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever attempted spirituality without a community? Do you agree or disagree with Fr. Himes' statement that there can be no spirituality without a community?
- What has been your experience of community?
- How has a community helped your spiritual journey?
- Fr. Himes speaks of conversion through "deep conversation." When was your last "deep conversation"? What did you learn from it? What was the deepest conversation you ever had? If you could choose to have a deep conversation with anyone, living or dead, someone you have known or someone you have never met, who would that be? Why would you choose that person?
- Recall from the video how St. Anthony went from being a "wonder" to a "sign." What do you think went on within Anthony as he surrendered his solitude? Have you ever been called upon to surrender your solitude for the community?
- What thought or image from this video is most meaningful to you?

Closing Prayer

Invite someone to read Acts 2:1-12.

We are called upon to find the Spirit within a community and we are called upon to share our gifts with others. take a moment now to reflect:

What gift do I bring to the community? *(Pause for a few minutes and invite people to share responses.)*

What gift do I need from the community? *(Pause for a few minutes and invite people to share responses.)*

Lord our God, you walk among us and with us, bringing us closer to one another and so closer to you. We invite you in and ask for the courage to go out into a hurting world with a message of hope and life. Amen.

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