

INTERVIEW WITH SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE

UNBINDING YOUR SOUL (page 9 & page 40, question 5)

Who would you like to talk with about what they *really* think?

Here's your chance! You choose whomever you think is most fascinating. Those of you who go to church all the time may want to pick someone who has never connected with a religious community, or someone who was raised in a church and drifted away. If you *haven't* had much church in your life, it could be great to talk with someone who does. Pick someone different than you who you haven't talked with before. Grandchildren, talk with a grandparent. And vice versa! Who's the amazing person in your life? Who have you always wondered about? Who have you just met and would love to know more about? That person will almost certainly feel honored to be asked. We all like to know we're interesting and that our lives and opinions matter. Go for it!

The purpose of the interview: Find out what the other person thinks about faith! ***Really*** thinks.

Choose a person: Sit quietly for a while (pray) and ask who would be great to talk with about this. Ideas may come to mind. Write down the names. Then think about it for a day or two and sit quietly again, and ask yourself/God who you'd really love to know about. You'll probably have a sense at that point. It may be someone in your daily life, someone at work or school, a family member, a person in your *Unbinding Your Soul* group. It could be someone you hardly know, but who intrigues you.

Ask them: Explain that you're part of a group that's talking about faith issues and that you've thought about it and chose him/her as the person you'd most love to talk with – to hear what ~~they~~ s/he really thinks about issues you're mulling over yourself. (This is sort of similar to that 5th grade homework assignment of talking with the "Person You Most Admire" – let your person know you chose them because you think they have an interesting life and way of thinking and you want to hear what s/he thinks.

Where to meet: A coffee shop, for lunch, breakfast, a walk, or go visit your grandma in her kitchen – whatever's most comfortable for you both. Make sure the place feels as if you won't be overheard, but not creepily isolated! Coffee/tea shops - or a walk if you're both walkers - are great!

How to start the discussion: Tell your friend that everything said will be in confidence. You're not going to repeat details – you just really would love to know what they think and how ~~their~~ s/he perceives some of the big questions about life and faith or *not* faith! Thank them for doing this. Tell ~~them~~ your friend that s/he can ask you anything afterwards, if s/he wants! (Fair's fair!)

*Remember - Your job is to **listen**, to **hear**, to **try to see** the other person's point of view. Ask a question, and then listen really clearly and quietly to what they say. You can ask a follow-up question, but don't interrupt or tell about what you think. Just listen. These are your questions, but it **their** time. You might pray for the person as they're talking – just pray that they (s/he) find(s) the right words, and can say what they mean comfortably, and that you'll hear accurately.*

Questions: What do you wonder about? Think before you ~~go about~~ ask what you really want to know about. You'll probably have a good idea of what intrigues you about your person's faith life and beliefs. Ask anything you want. In case it might help you get started, here are some questions I might ask a friend or acquaintance to try to understand what they really think:

A. If the person doesn't have a big church background:

1. Have you had any connection with a church, or a synagogue, or a mosque or a monastery – anything religious? (What's their background with religion/faith?)
2. What do you think about religious things? What do you believe?
3. Have you ever had an experience with God, a faith encounter, a spiritual realization? What was it like?
4. If you could ask God any question (and get an answer), what would it be?
5. Have you ever had a group of people you could talk with about *anything*? Who really are "for you," no matter what? When was it? Does that feel important to you?
6. Do you want to ask *me* anything?

B. If the person is a long-time Christian:

1. How long have you been a Christian? How did you get connected with your faith or a faith community?
2. What difference does it make in your life that you're a Christian? (How would your life be different if your faith disappeared?)
3. Could you think for a minute, then tell me a story about God in your life? Some time when God, or Jesus, or the Spirit felt really present?
4. If you could ask God any question, what would it be?
5. Anything else you want to say about why this faith stuff matters or is important?
6. Do you want to ask *me* anything?

Take notes in your journal when you get home. (Don't do it right there – that might make your friend feel self-conscious). But write down the things s/he said, as accurately as possible. Now write about this:

- A. What do your friend's faith life is like? What might it be like to **be** that person?
- B. How did your time together affect you?
 - 1. Did you realize anything important?
 - 2. What do you wonder about because of your talk?
 - 3. Anything you want to **do** now?

Talk with your group: When you meet for your third session together, you could spend some time talking about these interview conversations. Don't reveal any details, but you can talk about the effect this conversation had on you. Were you amazed by the person's faith/beliefs? Did anything puzzle or scare you? What are you thinking about now? Any surprises? You could pray together for all these people (use made-up names if it feels appropriate – God knows who it is!)