

Activity: Identifying People who Lift Up and Light the Way

This activity is excerpted from Session III “The People Question: Relationships and Community” of K.H. Staudt’s discernment curriculum resource “Shaping a Faithful Life”. The full curriculum is available in pdf on this website or by following the link <http://poetproph-discerningyourway.blogspot.com/>

In this session participants will call to mind those people in their lives who have been influential in their development of self-identity and faith and reflect on the interconnectedness of all people. This activity is designed for young adults.

Materials: pens or pencils
Worksheet found at the end of this document
Plain paper
Crayons or colored marking pens

The leader begins by saying: Desmond Tutu talks about all of humanity is interconnected and interdependent

Have someone read

The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God’s creation. In Africa recognition of our interdependence is called *ubuntu* in Nguni languages, or *botho* in Sotho, which is difficult to translate into English. It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours. . . . (Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream (Image Books, 2004)*, pp. 25-6)

The leader says: Archbishop Tutu talks about how this interconnectedness is expressed in the Christian tradition when we speak of being “knit together” with others in the “Body of Christ” or the “Communion of Saints”.

We can learn a lot about ourselves by asking “Who are the people whose examples, wisdoms, challenges, and support have helped to make me who I am today? Who do I rely on to remind me that I belong to a human family that is beloved by God? This activity is a chance to reflect for a few minutes on the people who have helped to shape our lives. Listen carefully and write your responses on the worksheet.

The Leader reads the following questions aloud and gives participants a chance to jot down names of people in response. (5-10 minutes – just to surface the names)

Can you recall:

- An adult who “got” you (or who “gets” you) in your childhood or young adulthood.
- Someone (living or dead) who taught you something in person, through their writing, or through a work of art that gave you great joy?
- Someone who saw in you a gift you didn’t see in yourself, or affirmed what you only suspected about your abilities or talents
- Someone you turn to for wisdom
- Someone you go to when you need to “lighten up” or have fun.
- Someone who listens to you/listened to you.
- Someone whose example you admire (what qualities, in particular, do you admire)
- Someone who prays for you
- Someone who has taught you something about prayer or prayer practice
- Someone who, when you see them, reminds you about something good in yourself.
- Someone who is always glad to see you.
- Someone who makes you smile whenever you see them.

Once participants have completed their lists, *the Leader continues* by saying:

Look at your list. Imagine that you have an important decision to make in your life and you want to have help in making that decision faithfully. **Circle the names of 5 people you would definitely want to turn to for help making that decision.**

- What would it be like to have all of them together in the same room, listening to you (even if this isn’t actually possible, try to imagine it)
- What gifts do you admire in the people you have chosen?
- What questions would you want to ask them?

- What questions would you want them to ask you?

The Leader says Now imagine a “family reunion” of the people you have chosen. Draw a picture of them together, including their main characteristics. Then when you are done turn to a partner and share what is in your drawing, and something about these people.

Allow 5-10 minutes for drawing, another 5 minutes to share with a partner something about these relationships that has been significant to them in their lives.

After the pairs finish sharing with one another, another 5 minutes can be spent “receive back” any insights people want to share with the whole group.

Closing Prayers:

Leader: Distribute index cards and invite each person, anonymously, to write on the card something that they have learned in this session that they are thankful, or something they wish to ask for. Invite people to write clearly so that someone else can read their writing.

Put index cards in a basket (or hat or box – whatever you have) and pass the basket around so that everyone can take out 1 card.

In closing, go around the circle and let each person read the prayer he/she has drawn from the box: by doing this we hear our prayers offered in the voices of other members of the community created tonight.

Close by saying together, slowly, the Lord’s Prayer, or with this version of the prayer for All Saints Day:

Almighty God, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses. Grant that, encouraged by the people you have sent into our lives, we may persevere in running the race that is set before us, knowing that we are always surrounded by a great fellowship of love and prayer. We pray in Jesus’ name. *Amen*

Worksheet for Session III: Use this paper to record your responses to the following prompts

Can you recall:

- An adult who “got” you (or who “gets” you) in your childhood or young adulthood.
- Someone (living or dead) who taught you something in person or through writing, or in a work of art that gave you joy,?
- Someone who saw in you a gift you didn’t see in yourself, or affirmed what you only suspected
- Someone you turn to for wisdom
- Someone you go to when you need to “lighten up” or have fun.
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