



Soul Matters

Awakening Curiosity



Small Group
May 2026

Welcome to Awakening Curiosity

UU minister, Victoria Safford, speaks of curiosity using the metaphor of perception and sight. She writes:

“To see, simply to look and to see, is an ethical act and intentional choice; to see, with open eyes, is a spiritual practice and thus a risk, for it can open you to ways of knowing the world and loving it that will lead to inevitable consequences. The awakened [and curious] eye is a conscious eye, a willful eye, and brave, because to see things as they are, each in its own truth, will make you very vulnerable.”

Consequences. We rarely think of curiosity in terms of consequences. But Rev. Safford seems to have it right. There is a type of curiosity that is about enjoyment and adventure. This way of understanding curiosity invites us to experience life as a playground. But when we look closely at our lives we realize there’s another type of curiosity at play. This kind leads us, not to playgrounds, but into dark alleys and pathless woods. It demands, not just our attention, but our courage. It’s not interested in entertaining us with the wonders of the world. Instead, it wants to enlist us in the work of the world.

Just think of how we UUs talk about our dances with curiosity. We don’t just tell stories about peppering our poor Sunday School teachers with “Why?!” and “Who says?!”; we tell stories about how asking why got us *kicked out* of Sunday School. We don’t just talk about being open-minded; we talk about how our open-mindedness led us to leave home and family and walk a lonelier path than we wanted. And recently, many of us have leaned into the hard work of being curious about our role in upholding institutional racism and structures of white supremacy, which is clearly about more than learning new and interesting things about ourselves.

And here’s the important insight revealed by these stories: As hard as these paths of curiosity are, we are grateful for them! Which in turn suggests that there is a part of us that doesn’t want curiosity to just be fun or interesting. It wants curiosity to change us, to make us anew. This part of us wants to be altered, not just enriched.

So, maybe we need to tweak this month’s theme a bit. Maybe, what we need to hear is not simply “Awaken your curiosity!” but “Awaken the kind of curiosity that comes with consequences!”

Friends, it is, of course, fine to be inquisitive for the fun of it. At the same time, we must remember that curiosity is not a game. Well, actually, maybe it’s the greatest game. The one that drives us to constantly become more, for our sakes and for the sake of others.

Spiritual Exercises

It's one thing to analyze a theme; it's quite another to experience it. By pulling us out of the space of *thinking* and into the space of *doing*, our spiritual exercises invite us to figure out not just what we have to say about life, but also what life has to say *to us*!

With that in mind, pick and complete the one exercise that speaks to you the most. **Come to your group ready to share why you picked the exercise you did, how it surprised you and what gift it gave you.**

Option A

Which Companion Piece Speaks to You?

Sometimes we come across a quote, song, article or movie and it perfectly captures what's going on for us right now or allows us to view our current circumstances in a new light.

With this in mind, spend some time this month going through the Companion Pieces section below to find the one piece **that speaks most powerfully to you.** (Or "[shimmers](#)" most strongly for you.)

Come to your group ready to share the piece you picked, why it called to you and what insight, memory, comfort, or challenge it offered you.

Option B

100 Questions & You

When it comes to curiosity, we often leave out ourselves. Saint Augustine captured this perfectly when he wrote, "People go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering."

Author, Michael Gelb, seems to agree with Augustine completely. Proof for this can be found in Gelb's best-selling book, "How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci," where he invites his readers to do a curiosity-based, self-awareness exercise called "100 Questions." This exercise invites you to give it a try. Here's how:

First, find a place where you won't be disturbed for 45-60 minutes. Bring your computer or a journal and a pen.

Second, start writing down questions that you have about yourself and life. These can be questions you've asked yourself in the past, are wrestling with now or that you come up with on the spot. *And here's the catch:* You need to keep writing them until you come up with **100 of them!** The first 20 or so questions will come fairly easily. After that it will get harder. But as Gelb points out, this harder stage is where the best insights will come from, because you will be forced, paradoxically, to focus and dig deep as well as let go and trust your subconscious to come up with questions for you.

Your questions can range from the mundane ("Why do I love rhubarb pie so much?") to the psychological ("Why do I distrust people so easily?") to the philosophical ("Where does the religious impulse come from?"). No matter what, do **not** let your inner critic or perfectionism sneak in. The point is to identify **all** of the questions that dance around in your head, not just **the respectable or impressive** ones. (If you want some help getting started, [here](#) are the first ten questions that one of the Soul Matters team came up with)

Important note: Don't get stuck on hitting 100. If all you can come up with is 50 or 70, that's fine. The point is to push yourself way beyond the point where it is easy to come up with questions. You can also put the list down and come back to it to add more questions later.

Third, look for themes. What groupings do your questions most fall into? Career? Relationships? Family? Status? Happiness seeking? Money concerns? Spirituality? Aging worries? Anxieties? The meaning of life?

After identifying the themes, focus on the top 2-3 themes and spend some time getting curious about what they say about what is going on for you at a deeper level.

Fourth, pick your top ten questions. This is going to be tough! So take your time and forget perfection. The goal is to pull out your curiosity antenna and identify the ten most *compelling* ones. The ones you find most powerful and meaningful. Or as we often say in Soul Matters, find the ten that *shimmer* the most.

After you have your ten, rank them. Yes, it's going to be extra hard! But you're almost done. Rank them in order of importance.

When you are done ranking, step back and again ask yourself what your top ten - as well as the process of picking and ranking your top ten - has to say about what is going on for you at a deeper level. A powerful way to gain insight is to read your list *out loud* to yourself.

Option C

Your List of Curiosities

Another great way to get curious about yourself is to look at the things that have grabbed your curiosity over your life. In short, this exercise invites you to create a list of your curiosities. (It might help to also think of this as listing your *obsessions*.)

We suggest you do this by dividing the list according to the stages of your life. For instance, childhood, college, early adulthood, midlife, later life.

Be as specific as possible. In other words, when thinking of your childhood curiosities, list "Luke Skywalker" rather than "Star Wars." Or when listing your midlife curiosities, list "How wine is made" rather than "wine." Or when you turn to your later life list, write down "The way fear works in my life," rather than "Myself."

When you feel that your list is complete, or complete enough, look it over to see what it says about you. Look for patterns or gaps. What surprises you about the list? What does it say about how much you've changed or grown? Or not changed or grown?

Extra mile options:

- Show your list to someone close to you and ask them what strikes them about the list? What do they think it says about you? What did they learn about you because of the list? What do they think is missing?
- Take 10-15 of your curiosities and turn them into a poem. Keep it simple and just list your 10-15 in some creative way. It could be as straight-forward as ordering them by age or by the letter they start with. Trust your gut; the order you need will come to you.

Option D

You Through the Eyes of a Trusted Friend

One more exercise to help you be curious about yourself.

Often, there's no better way to get curious about yourself than with the help of an honest and trusted friend. For many of us, the only way we can see ourselves clearly is by looking at ourselves through the perspective of someone else. With that in mind, here are your directions:

1. Think of 8-10 questions that are edgy enough to get at the heart of who you are. We've provided some examples below.
2. Then invite a friend or family member to sit with you over coffee or to take a walk with you and ask them how they would answer these questions about you. Stress that you want them to be honest.
3. Afterward, sit with and get curious about their answers. Mull them over. Notice how they challenge, comfort, open, affirm or redirect you.
4. Come to your Soul Matters group ready to share where this brave adventure led you.

Example Self-Exploration Questions:

- What makes me come alive?
- What is my greatest strength as a friend? spouse? parent? grandparent? son? daughter? sibling?
- What scares me?
- How happy am I?
- What three adjectives describe me best?
- Do I fight fair?
- Am I good at saying I'm sorry?
- What breaks my heart?
- How good am I at keeping secrets?
- What is my most underrated quality/character trait?
- How am I courageous?
- How do I need to become more courageous?
- Do I take care of myself?
- Where do you see me in 10 years?
- What do you most love about me?

Option E

Practicing a Curiosity that Conquers Judgement

"Curiosity is the key to letting go of judgment... The bottom line is that judgments are assumptions, not truths."

- Jen Picicci

Curiosity isn't just about viewing others as interesting. It's also about being able to view them as well-intended. Without even noticing it, our human default seems to be judgement. It's just how our brains are tilted. When interpreting other people's behavior, we easily grab hold of negative assessments. Curiosity can help us short-circuit this pattern.

This insight about curiosity is exactly what the writer Jen Picicci discovered later in life. And it transformed the way she engages other people and the world.

So for this exercise, you are invited to follow Picicci's example.

Start by reading her essay, [How Curiosity Can Help Us Be Kinder and Less Judgmental](#). In it, she gives a number of examples of how she trained her brain to view people through the lens of curiosity rather than judgement. These examples will help you understand what it might look like for you to do the same.

Which leads to step two: **Spend a week looking for opportunities to be kindly curious about people's behaviors rather than judgmental about them.**

Picicci ends her essay by saying that this practice set her free. Come to your group ready to share if it freed you too, as well as what other gifts it gave you.

Option F

Ask Them About Curiosity

One of the best ways to explore our monthly themes is to have conversations about them with people who are close to you. It's also a great way to deepen our relationships! Below is a list of questions to guide your conversation. Be sure to let your conversation partner know in advance that this won't be a typical conversation. *Remember to also answer the questions yourself as they are meant to support a conversation, not just a time of quizzing them.*

Come to your group ready to share what surprised you about the conversation and what gift or insight it gave you.

Curiosity Questions:

- Are you someone who is mainly curious about the world out there or the world inside you?
- During your childhood, what were you not allowed to be curious about? And how did that shape who you are today?
- During childhood, what one or two things were you most curious about? How do you see an echo of that in your life today?
- If a crystal ball could reveal something about yourself, your future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
- Have you ever been punished for being curious? Have you ever punished someone else for being curious?
- When it comes to you worrying about the future or being curious about it, which one wins?
- What aspect of your *current* stage of life are you most curious about? How about your *upcoming* stage of life?

Finding Your Question

This list of questions is an aid for [deep reflection](#). How you answer them is often less important than the journey they take you on.

So, read through the list of questions 2-3 times until **one question** sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions "[shimmers](#)." Or as we like to say, "Read over them until one of the questions **picks you**."

Then reflect on that question using one or all of these questions:

- What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?
- What might my inner wisdom be trying to [say to me](#) through this question?
- How might this question be trying to wake me up or get me to realize something through this question?
- How might Life or my inner wisdom be trying to offer me a word of comfort or challenge through this question?



1. During your childhood, what were you not allowed to be curious about? How did that shape who you are today?
2. During childhood, what one or two things were you most curious about? How do you see an echo of that in your life today?
3. Has being curious ever come at a cost for you?
4. Is it time to be more curious about what your body is trying to tell you?
5. What is the greatest adventure that your curiosity took you on? What did that adventure teach you about yourself?
6. Have you ever been punished for being curious? Have you ever punished *someone else* for being curious?
7. Do you think you are worth someone being curious about? Have you always felt that way?
8. When it comes to you worrying about the future or being curious about it, which one wins?
9. Which were you taught was more important: the "expert mind" or the "beginner's mind"?
10. What familiar thing (a person, object, or routine) in your life is asking you to approach it with a beginner's mind?
11. Have you ever opened a [Pandora's box](#) of your own? What's one thing about that moment you'd do differently?
12. If a crystal ball could reveal something about yourself, your future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
13. How has approaching mistakes with curiosity rather than shame healed you and helped you heal others?
14. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. Nor are they intended to be analyzed in your group. Instead, they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get you thinking and open you up to new ways of embodying this month's theme in your living and loving.

Wise Words

Each of us is shaped as much by the quality of the questions we are asking as by the answers we have it in us to give.

[Krista Tippett](#)

The ability to ask beautiful questions, often in very unbeautiful moments, is one of the great disciplines of a human life. And a beautiful question starts to shape your identity as much by asking it as it does by having it answered. You just have to keep asking.

[David Whyte](#)

Curious people are interesting people; I wonder why that is.

Bill Maher

My grandmother, an incredibly gifted, creative, if not eccentric woman, imparted me with these simple but powerful words. She said: "To be interesting, Kate, you have to be interested." Curiosity not only makes the world interesting, it makes you interesting.

Kate Berardo

People go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering.

Saint Augustine

Everyone and everything around you is your teacher.

Ken Keye

Mistakes are the portals of discovery.

James Joyce

When people are extremely angry and even hostile with the way they express an opposition to something, the challenge is to figure out what it is they're trying to protect.

[Mónica Guzmán](#)

If you want to know why you do something, stop doing it and see what happens.

[Michael A. Singer](#)

Work becomes great when curiosity drives it beyond obligation.

Shane Parrish

The best spiritual instruction is to wake up in the morning and say, "I wonder what's going to happen today."

Pema Chodron

The opposite of anxiety is not calm, it's not confidence. The opposite of anxiety is curiosity. Anxiety is worrying: OH NO What is going to happen? And curiosity is OH, WOW, I wonder what could happen?

Rev. Sara Goodman

Be curious, not judgmental.

[Attributed to Walt Whitman,](#)

Made Famous by [Ted Lasso](#)

Great Doubt, Great Awakening. Little Doubt, Little Awakening. No Doubt, Fast Asleep

[Zen Maxim](#)

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind there are few.

Shunryu Suzuki

The place where we are right
is hard and trampled like a yard.
But doubts and loves
dig up the world...
And a whisper will be heard in the place
where the ruined
house once stood.

[*Yehuda Amichai*](#)

There's something in us that likes to be lost. There's contentment in the moment of arrival, but isn't the seeking part of the journey when we feel most alive? Nothing's better than that bend in the road when we realize *anything* could be around the corner. Who wants the feeling of "I figured it out!" when instead you can live in the state of "What could it be?!" The curious unknown is what keeps us moving, and grateful to be alive.

Rev. Scott Tayler

Maybe answers are just resting places on the way to better questions.

Mark Causey

Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment.

Rumi

Articles

Curiosity Can Help Us Be Kinder and Less Judgmental, Jen Picicci

<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/how-curiosity-can-help-us-be-kinder-and-less-judgmental/>

On The Power Of Being Curious About Our Bodies

<https://wisdomschool.com/p/what-the-body-knows-long-before-the>

In Praise Of Not Knowing: The joy of choosing curiosity over certainty, Andrea Gibson

<https://andreagibson.substack.com/p/power-of-curiosity-uncertainty-fear-cancer>

Potential Voice Loss (And Finding Oneself Nestled in the Arms of Curiosity, Andrea Gibson

<https://andreagibson.substack.com/p/cancer-chemotherapy-voice-loss>

Videos & Podcasts

On Coming Alive by Caring More About What We Don't Know Than What We Do

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/06L4HaxN9ao>

A Poet's Call for Us to Get Curious about "Our Pilgrim Question"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfls8cQ4Q_c

On the Kind of Curiosity & Questions that Allow Us to Truly Connect

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1358883585664752>

This Question Can Change Your Life, Ezra Klein

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/02/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-stephen-batchelor.html>

On being curious about life "from your belly" not your mind

On Curiosity's Call To "Start With Relationship, Not the Issue" So We Can "Undrown Each Other"

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DUD1yANKdtE/>

The Secret to Staying Curious

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOz2mrkZmSc&t=446s>

A Scientist's Curiosity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImTmGLzPVyM&t=15s>

A Comedian's Take on Why Curiosity Gets You Farther than Ambition

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ow-0P3SyZpM>

How a Faith-full Curiosity Turned Tools that Kill into Tools that Cultivate Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq-p892RN5o>

Books

[I Never Thought of It That Way](#): How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times, by [Mónica Guzmán](#)

[More Beautiful Question](#): The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas, by Warren Berger

Related podcast interview with the author [HERE](#)

Movies

[Oppenheimer](#)

[Captain Fantastic](#)

[The Truman Show](#)

[Contact](#)

[WALL-E](#)

[Moonrise Kingdom](#)

Music

Our thematic playlists - on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#) - are organized as a journey, so consider listening from beginning to end and using them as a personal musical meditation.

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify playlist** on Awakening Curiosity

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube playlist** on Awakening Curiosity

More Monthly Inspiration from Soul Matters!

Our Facebook Inspiration Page: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Our Instagram Page: Find us as “soul_matters_circle”

Packet Introduction Credit Note: Unless explicitly noted otherwise, the introductions of these packets are written by our Team Lead, Rev. Scott Tayler. Rev. Scott gives permission for his pieces to be used in any way that is helpful, including in newsletters, worship and online service/recordings.



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