

Discussion questions New Year 2018: Holy Endings

Exploring prayerfully bringing things to an end with dignity, care and love.

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [Holy Endings Resource Pack PDF](#) to help adapt the material for small group work. These questions are just a guideline and there is no need to go through them all in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose what interests your group.

Part 1: Calling time - trusting God		
<p><i>Kintsugi</i> is a Japanese practice where cracks and breakages in pottery are fixed with gold - so that rather than hiding the break - it is treated as part of the artwork itself - telling you something of the story of an object. The breakage has made something new and more beautiful.</p> <p>Does Kintsugi resonate in your life? Is there a time when you thought something was broken and done-for (it could be an object, a project, or relationship) and yet you (or someone else) managed to repair it and it became stronger and better?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 148.</p> <p>How do we get our heads around the fact that God created the universe and yet still enters into our time and cares deeply about each of us?</p>	<p>How can we learn to appreciate better that things sometimes have a 'season'?</p> <p>Recognising that something, while good in its time, may have reached a natural end and therefore need to stop so something new can happen.</p> <p>See Ecclesiastes 3: 1-13.</p>
Part 2: Timeline - change is natural		
<p>What are the routines of your daily life? Think about an average day, a week, a month and a year.</p> <p>What stays the same? What changes? What patterns emerge?</p>	<p>What does Baptism mean to you?</p> <p>In what way is Baptism an ending as well as a beginning?</p>	<p>Read: Psalm 72: 10-14.</p> <p>We read that the blood of the oppressed and the victims of violence - is precious. Established systems of oppression are not inevitable or inescapable.</p> <p>How do we challenge harmful systems that oppress others and challenge our own complicity?</p>

Part 3: Being self aware and God aware		
<p>Read I Samuel 3:1-10.</p> <p>What is your experience of 'calling'? Have you ever felt that you have been called to do something, or say something, or go somewhere?</p> <p>How do we discern that God is calling us to do something?</p>	<p>Read I Corinthians 6:12-19.</p> <p>As well as being called to something there are times when we are called from something. The expression 'my body is a temple' has become a cliché, that is overused in marketing fitness lifestyles.</p> <p>The word for temple could also be translated as 'sanctuary' - what would be the consequences if you thought of your body as a sanctuary?</p>	<p>Read John 15: 9 -17.</p> <p>God wants to have a relationship with us. What makes you - <i>you</i>, matters to God. What makes you distinctive is important.</p> <p>What do you think God likes about you?</p>

Part 4: The end of the beginning - trusting there is something more		
<p>Read Psalm 71.</p> <p>It is an incredibly raw and emotional poem by turns hopeful, despairing, vulnerable, triumphant, bitter, and humble, but above all honest...</p> <p>What lines stand out for you at this moment in your life?</p>	<p>Read Mark 1:14-20.</p> <p>Simon, Andrew, James, and John are giving up careers as fishermen to do something new and precarious. What they were being called from wasn't in itself bad. In fact their existing livelihoods probably gave them a sense of security, belonging and sustenance.</p> <p>Have you ever had to give up something that was good in itself but that you had to stop so that you could do something else?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 147: 3.</p> <p>Think through the process of healing a wound. It always takes time. Cleaning it, binding it, changing the dressings, monitoring the progress, protecting the tender new skin as it heals.</p> <p>God does not magic away our wounds. God does heal the brokenhearted, but just like physical wounds, this takes time, and sometimes pain, and often leaves us with a scar.</p> <p>How can we help God treat us?</p>

Part 5 : Broken idols - inconvenient truths		
<p>In contemporary UK society, people are often uncomfortable talking about ageing, care and death.</p> <p>The main exception in our public discourse is when a celebrity dies - and then the press and social media is filled with public outpourings of grief and mourning. Why is this?</p>	<p>Read Deuteronomy 18:15-20.</p> <p>Who are the prophets in today's society? Those who are willing to stand up and articulate inconvenient truths (not just telling people what they want to hear).</p>	<p>Democratic politics is structured around election cycles with the consequence that politicians are often forced to think in the short term.</p> <p>As Christians how can we press our politicians to think longer term to make the structural changes that offer dignity and respect to all of God's people?</p> <p>See: Ecclesiastes 7:8-10.</p>

Part 6: When things end		
<p>Much great art - visual, literary and musical - has centred around humanity coming to terms with loss, catastrophe, and tragedy. The poetry in the Psalms is a great example. Read Psalm 147.</p> <p>What are examples of works of art that have really meant something to you? Perhaps a song, a film, a painting, a book, or a poem?</p>	<p>Read Ecclesiastes 3: 5-7.</p> <p>What are practical ways we can begin to sift through painful memories and experiences - to celebrate the good while letting go of the hurt?</p> <p>Think of concrete things we can do (with the help of God's grace) either by ourselves or with others we trust, to process painful things that have happened to us.</p>	<p>Read Ephesians 4: 31-32.</p> <p>Journaling in some sense (words, pictures, scrapbooking, digital/ handwritten) could be a useful way of challenging ourselves to take the longview, to better consider ourselves and others, to see where we have come from, and where, perhaps, we are heading. It could help us reflect and give things a holy ending.</p> <p>Do you journal? If so, how? Think of different creative approaches one could take to journaling. How often? What time of day? Using a notebook or something else?</p>