

**Questions of the Heart: The Merton Questionnaire**  
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The Marcel Proust Character Questionnaire was developed by Proust from a popular Victorian French parlour game, called a *confession album*. The Proust Questionnaire has become a widely used secular interview tool used to evoke insight and revelation from the person giving answers. The following is a “play” on Proust’s called The Merton Questionnaire, for the purposes of evoking spiritual insight and revelation. It can be used by individuals in their own spiritual practice, reflection, journaling. It can be used by Spiritual Directors with Directees, as they explore ways to go more deeply into one’s experience and inner faith life. Directors could use this tool or pose some selection of the questions, those times when a Directee comes to the hour without a clear agenda or starting point. The days when they say, “I don’t have much to say today”. This may be the moment to ask some of these questions. The Merton Questionnaire might also come in handy when the directional work needs a bit of a jolt having become too familiar or repetitive.

The Merton Questionnaire offers an opening into reflection and revelation of how it is with the soul and the inner life of faith. It may also be helpful as a yearly examen tool, a time of spiritual reflecting back as one looks forward.

Of course, there are no “right” answers, no “wrong” answers. All answers are insightful, helpful and good: leading to self-awareness and soul-awareness.

I give the title to Merton, as a tribute. In my practice, I lean on Thomas Merton as a spiritual mentor and guide. He is someone whom I imagine would ask these questions of me when I am floundering or stuck. Asking them with kindness, seriousness, true curiosity, and a wink of whimsy. I do hope that they are helpful.

*Note: These use terms: God/Jesus/saint are word used here but can be adapted to the religious name/source/teacher/term that honours the faith perspective of the person answering the question.)*

1. When are you most at peace within yourself and with God/the Divine?
2. When are you least at peace with yourself? What causes this unrest of the soul?
3. What is your favourite way to pray? (form or practice).
4. What “took your breath away” this week? When did God break in with beauty, surprise?
5. What “broke your heart” this week? What breaks your heart open with grief or despair?
6. How do you practice the ancient prayer of lament? (deep sorrow).
7. How do you practice exuberant joy? (like David dancing before the Lord in 2 Samuel 6:14, ff)
8. What is the prayer you pray in times of trouble? When you are most panicked?
9. What parable/phrase of Jesus’ (Buddha, Mohamed, insert your Sacred Teacher here) is your favorite? Why?
10. What teaching/parable/phrase of Jesus troubles/disturbs you most? Why?
11. When you were a child, who was your hero?
12. Who is your hero now?
13. What was your first experience of God that you remember?

14. Who taught you to pray? What do you remember about them?
15. If you could give God an aroma, what would it be? What does God smell like to you?
16. What do you wish your religious tradition had not done in history?
17. Of what are you most proud in your religious tradition?
18. When is the last time you wept?
19. Describe what to you is a perfect day.
20. Who forgave you the most in your life?
21. Whom do you need to forgive?
22. What colour is your soul today?
23. What spiritual counsel/advice would you give your 14year old self?
24. What is your favorite name for God?
25. What is God's favorite name for you?
26. What do you believe is your spiritual gift?
27. What spiritual gift to you wish you had?
28. Who is your favorite saint and why? ("saint" can be anyone living or dead whom you deem as sanctified or holy)
29. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
30. If you could change one thing about your spiritual practice/life, what would it be?
31. If Jesus came to your house for lunch today, what would you serve?
32. Which "secular" or non-religious writer/poet/artist/person revealed God to you in their work?
33. What is the one thing you most want to experience before you die?
34. Where do you hold hope in your body? What does it feel like?
35. What are you wondering about today?
36. When is the last time you laughed out loud? Share a recent memory of a belly laughing or giggling fit?  
(remember that Blessed = Laughing/Happy)