

Do You Believe

Chapter One – What is God Asking me to Do?

1. Do you have a sense of what it is that God has chosen for you since before you were born?
What are you and God trying to accomplish
with your life in general?
with your major activities (such as work, school, raising kids, volunteering)?
with your church community?
2. What is it that your church community is trying to accomplish
with God's help?

Chapter Two - Covenant and Christian Baptism

1. Have you seen your Christian commitment as an active "covenant with God"? Why or why not?
2. How does understanding the ancient practices of covenant and baptism assist you in determining your future path?

Chapter Three - The Church: Spirit-led People in an Organized Structure

1. Do your own talents lie more on the Movement side (meditation and prayer, introducing people to Jesus, calling people back to God, following the Spirit) or Enterprise side (setting up programs of study, organizing worship services, following the traditions) of the Focus of Ministry polarity?
Name at least one person you know who works best on the other side of the polarity as yourself.
2. In which of the four quadrants do you see your congregation currently functioning? According to the polarity theory, which quadrant(s) should it move to in order to move in a healthy direction?

List a few specific concrete steps your church could take to move into a healthier balance. (Examples include: Bible study, vocational discernment, reconciliation service, faith sharing, prayer teams, exercises to deepen basic faith, programs for adult faith formation, retreats, parish renewal programs, and so on.)

Chapter Four - The Study and Its Demographics

1. Is your congregation type represented in this study?
2. What percentage of your members is active as Christians
 - (a) inside the congregation's community life,
 - (b) at work and/or at home,
 - (c) in the local community,
 - (d) in other aspects of the world and God's creation?

Chapter Five - Do You Believe?

1. What do you believe "about" God? (Knowledge)
2. Do you believe "in" God? (Faith) If so, does your behavior reflect your belief? If so, describe. If not, explain.

3. Do you believe God? (Intimate knowledge and experience) What do you believe God is telling you? Is this something you want to believe? How does this effect your actions?

After answering the questions first for yourself, describe the image your congregation as a body seems to reflect regarding each.

Chapter Six – The Church

1. The first chapter of Genesis describes God's power of moving chaos into order through creation. In applying the concept of polarity, the church's role can therefore be seen as providing order to the ongoing creation that God works through us. Some of the ways the church does this is by alerting its members to the dangers of self-centeredness and selfishness, and by refocusing on the Spirit's guidance to new life, so that the church's own need for stability does not stagnate into death. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

2. Understanding that in today's culture of setting priorities what one does first is often the only thing that one has time for, what is the first priority for your church members? Is this the same priority for your church staff/clergy? Is this priority spoken of with a sense of urgency?

3. How might you re-address your congregation's basic need (building project, children's education, dwindling membership, internal conflicts, volunteer burnout), if you were to put the first priority on the development of a solid relationship with God?

Chapter Seven – Will You Continue?

1. The Greek word *koinonia*, which is often translated as "fellowship," is perhaps better rendered as "partnership." What is the difference in your experience between fellowship and partnership?

2. What would partnership with God and the Christian community look like for you individually? For your church community?

3. How might partnership affect "continuing in the apostles' teaching, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers" (Acts 2:42, BCP 304)?

Chapter Eight – Return to the Lord

1. How do you currently handle conflict in your personal life? At church?

2. In the ancient world, when evil struck, the lord with whom one had an allegiance would come to the rescue if one would but call upon him. Even mentioning the name of one's powerful protector could get one's enemies, fearing retribution, to abate. Consider the following passage:

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all

occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:10–18 NIV)

Does this passage help you understand how God, as Lord, will assist you in resisting evil and deal with your transgressions? Why or why not?

Chapter Nine – Will you Proclaim?

1. What good news would you like to share or “herald”?
2. Who would you like to be able to share this good news with? What is the first thing you might say?
3. A common truism is “Actions speak louder than words.” Do your actions speak loud enough to identify you (or your congregation) as a follower of Christ?

Chapter Ten - Christ in All Persons

1. The Greek word charisma was used to describe the “bonuses” given on festive holidays to soldiers to honor and acknowledge the emperor or ruler. Christians’ spiritual gifts can be referred to as “charismatic gifts.” What gifts have you been given by God that go beyond your mere talents and skills? That is, can you identify gifts that go beyond your own abilities and can be acknowledged as unearned and coming straight from God’s Spirit? How can you more often use these spiritual gifts to seek and serve Christ in all persons?
2. Although charismatic gifts are usually thought of in terms of individuals, can you identify such gifts that your congregation may have as a body?

Chapter Eleven – Every Human Being

1. What resolutions will you as an individual make before God as an indication that you are striving for God’s justice and peace?
2. How does your congregation respect the dignity of every human being? List specific actions. How could this be done better? Give concrete examples.

Chapter Twelve – God’s Help

God asks, “Are you ready, then?”

1. What is your response?
2. What is the first thing you know you must do (with God’s help)?
(Answer each question first as an individual, then as a congregation.)

Chapter Thirteen - Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Do you feel the term covenant is a fitting image to use for baptism into the Christian community and for affirming one’s relationship with God? Why or why not?
2. Through studying the concepts in this book, have you/your congregation been able to intensify your relationship with God?