

**Meeting 17 —Clearness  
Committees, Session #1  
(Up to 90 minutes)**



**women  
thriving  
in ministry**

AN INITIATIVE OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**Note to Mentor:** Despite everyone’s best efforts, it’s possible that no one is willing to be the “Focus Person” for a Clearness Committee conversation. Or, it’s possible that the person who was planning on sharing has an unavoidable conflict at the last minute. We are providing two options—Plan A, and Plan B. Plan A anticipates that someone has prepared in advance. Plan B will provide an opportunity to have a focused conversation around one person’s life or ministry circumstances but without preparation.

**PLAN A**

**The Gathering Time—15 minutes**

- As people join the meeting, welcome them and create a place of hospitality. When all have arrived, open your time in prayer.
- Provide an opportunity for a brief “check-in” by choosing one of these questions (or another of your choice). Model brevity by going first, but do intentionally give everyone an opportunity to share what is most pressing for them, as the focus this month will be on one member of the group:
  - What’s new and good since we were together last?
  - What is a high, a low, or an “a-ha” (something you’ve learned) in the last month (or share all three)?

**Clearness Committee, Session #1—50 minutes**

- Opening and Intros (no more than 10 minutes)
  - Opening Prayer for the Holy Spirit’s guidance
  - Facilitator refreshes the rules
    - *Focus Person:* keep the “backstory” or side comments to a minimum. Don’t get distracted by things not central to what’s at the heart of the discussion.
    - *Group members:* Focus on listening through the power of the Holy Spirit. Keep notes of the actual words that the Focus Person shared. Ask questions that emerge from the listening posture and stick to questions that bring up clarity. Don’t try to “fix” the thinking or the actions of the focus person.
  - Focus Person reads (or speaks from) her prepared statement

- The conversation (25 minutes)
  - The Facilitator starts a conversation with the first question (perhaps something like: what aspect of what you've shared is most pressing on your mind or heart right now?)
  - The group will discuss with open and honest, non-leading questions.
- The Reflection (10 minutes)
  - The Facilitator asks the Focus Person if she is ready to suspend the questions and begin the "mirroring." If not, continue questions. If so, move on to the process of reflecting her own language and body language to identify if what you observed resonates with her experience. She can respond, "Yes, that's me," "no, that's not me," or even just be silent.
- The Closing (5 minutes)
  - The facilitator asks the group members to affirm and celebrate the gifts of the focus person.

## **PLAN B**

**This plan is to be used when no one has prepared to be the "Focus Person" for the Clearness Committee.**

### **The Gathering Time—20 minutes**

- As people join the meeting, welcome them and create a place of hospitality. When all have arrived, open your time in prayer.
- This time will allow everyone to have a quick "check-in" but the hope is for one person to be opened up to sharing more deeply later on in the meeting. These questions are intended to probe a little deeper than our usual "opening" questions. Ask group members to answer one of the following questions:
  - What is really challenging you in your ministry right now?
  - What are you really enjoying or do you feel most hopeful about in your ministry setting right now?
  - Are there any "issues" that keep reappearing in your ministry? Can you name them?
- Ask the group if anyone would be willing to be the Focus Person for today and open up a bit more deeply for the group discernment experience.

### **Clearness Committee, Session #3—45 minutes**

- Opening and Intros (no more than 5 minutes)
  - Brief check in about previous experiences.
    - To the previous Focus Person: as you've had time to process your experience from last month, could you share about how the experience was valuable for you?

- To all: Did anyone have any questions about the process? Does anyone want to say anything about the Clearness Committee before we start?
- Opening Prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance
- Facilitator refreshes the rules
  - *Focus Person*: keep the "backstory" or side comments to a minimum. Don't get distracted by things not central to what's at the heart of the discussion.
  - *Group members*: Focus on listening through the power of the Holy Spirit. Keep notes of the actual words that the Focus Person shared. Ask questions that emerge from the listening posture and stick to questions that bring up clarity. Don't try to "fix" the thinking or the actions of the focus person.
- Identifying the Focus (10 minutes)
  - Facilitator asks the Focus Person the following questions:
    - Would you share with us a challenge or an opportunity that you're facing in ministry right now?
    - Who are the main "players" in the situation? What is each person's role?
    - Are there other non-people dynamics that are important in considering the tension around the challenge or opportunity?
- The conversation (15 minutes)
  - The Facilitator starts a conversation with the first question (perhaps something like: what aspect of what you've shared is most pressing on your mind or heart right now?)
  - The group will discuss with open and honest, non-leading questions.
- The Reflection (10 minutes)
  - The Facilitator asks the Focus Person if she is ready to suspend the questions and begin the "mirroring." If not, continue questions. If so, move on to the process of reflecting her own language and body language to identify if what you observed resonates with her experience. She can respond, "Yes, that's me," "no, that's not me," or even just be silent.
- The Closing (5 minutes)
  - The facilitator asks the group members to affirm and celebrate the gifts of the focus person.

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### **Shared Reading—Woodcarver—15 minutes**

Share the following reading and invite members of your group to each read a section (OR ask someone to read the whole thing). The reading is not written by a Christian, but, there are

insights that can be identified from our Christian perspective. Following the reading, ask the following questions:

### **Woodcarver- Chuang Tzu**

Khing, the master carver, made a bell stand of precious wood. When it was finished, all who saw it were astounded. They said it must be the work of spirits.

The Prince of Lu said to the master carver: "What is your secret?"

Khing replied: "I am only a workman: I have no secret. There is only this: When I began to think about the work you commanded I guarded my spirit, did not expend it on trifles, that were not to the point. I fasted in order to set my heart at rest. After three days fasting, I had forgotten gain and success. After five days I had forgotten praise or criticism.

After seven days I had forgotten my body with all its limbs.

By this time all thought of your Highness and of the court had faded away.

All that might distract me from the work had vanished. I was collected in the single thought of the bell stand.

Then I went to the forest to see the trees in their own natural state. When the right tree appeared before my eyes, the bell stand also appeared in it, clearly, beyond doubt.

All I had to do was to put forth my hand and begin.

If I had not met this particular tree there would have been no bell stand at all.

What happened? My own collected thought encountered the hidden potential in the wood; From this live encounter came the work which you ascribe to the spirits."

#### **Questions for Group Discussion:**

- What stands out to you from the reading?
- How does this reading articulate where you are right now?
- Where are you encountering the Holy Spirit's activity in your life, bringing clarity or direction?
- Read it a second time, just to linger a bit longer with some of the possibilities that could emerge from these words: Is there a word, a phrase, or an idea that you may want to "hold on to" in the season ahead?

#### **Inviting Response—5 minutes**

- Is there anything that you've not said yet that you'd like to say?
- Who would be willing to go next by presenting something to us as a Clearness Committee next month?
- Confirm next meeting time.

**Closing Prayer—5 minutes**

Remind them of the Group Commitments, one being prayer for one another. Are there any updates or new prayer concerns within this group? Share them now. Ask each person to pray for another person. (Agree upon those prior to praying.)