

Background - Vox's Values

<Provide some context on why we're talking about Vox's Values.>

We are in the middle of a sermon series exploring the values of Vox. These values are meant to describe who we are in this season and who we hope to be as a community and individuals. They have risen to the surface over the course of our journey as a church. It is from these values of who we are, that should shape what we do and how we live. Vox's values include: Artistry, Posture, Empathy, Participation, Peculiarity and Mystery.

Mystery: Session 6 Objectives

Send out the link to the sermon podcast to your group ahead of time so everyone can get a chance to listen to the sermon on Mystery.

- <http://voxveniae.com/values-mystery/>

These objectives might be helpful in shaping and guiding the discussion to a healthy landing spot by the end of the night.

- Reflect on what it means to be holistic and non-dualistic
- Discuss how certainty can be detrimental to our faith experience
- Consider how mystery and faith intertwine in your life and in the life of our community
- Invite a practice of discovery into your faith journey

Value of Mystery

Introduce the value statement of Mystery and if it's helpful for your group, reflect on the Scripture passage in Colossians 1.

Read the value statement for Mystery to the group.

Mystery. Our narrative begins with light, which is both finite and infinite based on speed. The Incarnation is God, who is timeless, slowing and entering into linear time. Within these parameters healthy faith is we who are finite, learning to be loved and love the One who is infinite. In ancient times people chased after the mystery of God in a pillar of cloud by day and by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. As a community we lean into the mystery of Christ leading us on our bright days and in our darkest hours. This type of faith involves doubt, uncertainty and learning to trust in the One whose name is Truth and Love. We invite you to become a people of healthy faith learning to trust what we hope for and do not see.

Read/Reflect on Colossians 1:24-29.

24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Reflection on Mystery

Spend some time reflecting the value of Mystery. This can be a time to reflect on the value statement, the Scripture passage and the sermon podcast.

1. How does the value of Mystery connect or not connect with you?
2. How have you experienced or seen this value demonstrated in the Vox community?
3. Was there anything that stood out for you in the sermon?

Certainty vs Mystery

The sermon proposes that certainty is spiritually detrimental, and that mystery is healthy and necessary to a maturing faith. Where certainty can shut down a conversation, curiosity and mystery can open doors. Where certainty can give us the illusion of control, paradox challenges our notions of control, helping us to "live into a new way of thinking" (Nouwen).

4. How has the expectation of certainty shaped your ideas of faith? Have there been or are there things you need to unlearn to fully embrace this value of mystery?

5. How does your enneagram type relate to the ideas of certainty and mystery?

Discovery and De-Objectification of God and One Another

We realize that we too often objectify God, making him a means to our ends, and therefore assume that God is objectifying us. Self-awareness helps us in our ability to understand God by helping us to see our own acts of objectification and move out of an I-It paradigm and into the I-Thou paradigm, which may be where we see the very image of God.

"When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them." –Martin Buber

6. In what ways do you find yourself objectifying God?

7. In what ways do you sometimes objectify yourself?

When we think God objectifies us, our worthiness of love is dependent on morality and behavior, when perhaps what God really wants is our love and our being.

Lectio Divina the Shining Word "And"

Spend some time listening and reflecting on the poem "The Shining Word 'And'" by practicing a Lectio Divina (see the guide below).

EXERCISE: Lectio Divina

8. Practice Lectio Divina by reading and listening to the poem "The Shining Word 'And'" below.

The Shining Word "And"

"And" teaches us to say yes

"And" allows us to be both-and

"And" keeps us from either-or

"And" teaches us to be patient and long-suffering

"And" is willing to wait for insight and integration

"And" keeps us from dualistic thinking

"And" does not divide the field of the moment

"And" helps us to live in the always imperfect now

"And" keeps us inclusive and compassionate toward everything

"And" demands that our contemplation become action

"And" insists that our action is also contemplative

"And" heals our racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism

"And" keeps us from the false choice of liberal or conservative

"And" allows us to critique both sides of things

"And" allows us to enjoy both sides of things

"And" is far beyond anyone nation or political party

"And" helps us face and accept our own dark side

"And" allows us to ask for forgiveness and to apologize

"And" is the mystery of paradox in all things

"And" is the way of mercy

"And" makes daily, practical love possible

"And" does not trust love if it is not also justice

"And" does not trust justice if it is not also love

"And" is far beyond my religion versus your religion

"And" allows us to be both distinct and yet united

"And" is the very Mystery of Trinity

Practice (Application)

Spend the remaining time reflecting on personal practice and what it means to live and practice faith in the context of Mystery.

9. What is an area or opportunity where you can practice and express the value of Mystery?

10. In what ways can Vox continue to foster and facilitate this value?

Prayer

Close your time in prayer for any reflections that came from this time of dialogue and also allow space for any personal areas that require care.

Appendix - Other Resources

Vox Sermon Podcast

- Vox Podcast - Values: Mystery (Gideon Tsang)
 - <http://voxveniae.com/values-mystery/>
- Sermon Content
 - Intro
 - Perspective that we're right and everyone else is wrong is detrimental to our faith experience
 - What's the alternative to certainty?
 - 1. "Rejoicing in my sufferings" v24
 - Paul and Jesus use paradox techniques to teach
 - Trying to interrupt your cognitive control
 - Mystics say you don't try to solve it, you move to a new way of thinking
 - "You live your way into a new kind of thinking"
 - Practice - Embrace doubt (doubt is the puberty of faith) - keep a journal of doubts
 - 2. "Has now been revealed (discoverable) to the saints" v26
 - Is faith ideology to be defended and marketed or does our faith feel like endless discovery
 - What is it like to discover something new about something you have known for a while
 - Practice - Find a discovery partner - discovery of faith, God, scripture is unending
 - 3. "Glory of this mystery which is Christ in you the hope of glory" v27
 - I-Thou (Buber model)
 - I and It ("I" am subject and "it" is object) - objectify others instead of seeing them as human)
 - Alternative is I and Thou (both are subjects)
 - We objectify God because we think God objectifies us
 - "God refuses to be known but can only be loved" - John of the Cross
- Resources
 - Video – [Kids Arguing about Rain](#)
 - Book – [But What if We're Wrong \(Chuck Klosterman\)](#)
 - Article – [The White Flight of Derek Black](#)
 - Book – [The Sin of Certainty \(Peter Enns\)](#)
 - Icon – [The Trinity \(Andrei Rublev\)](#)

Exercises/Activities

Lectio Divina Guide

1. Lectio – This first movement consists of reading the passage slowly and attentively. Identify words or phrases in the passage that grab your attention. (Read the entire passage once)

2. Meditatio – Next, spend some time contemplating the passage and the words or phrases that stood out upon first reading. Try 'praying the passage', opening your mind to God's understanding of this passage. (Read the passage again)

3. Oratio – After another reading, share with each other the words that you focused on and perhaps the result of your meditation on them. (Read the passage and then have an extended time of sharing – see below)

After the 3rd reading, use the following questions to draw some discussion from the passage and what people were reflecting on.

- a. What words or phrases stood out to you from this passage? Why?
- b. How does this text speak to you in your current situation and environment?
- c. What is the text calling you to do or become this week? (How do I need to live in light of this passage?)

4. Contemplatio – Close by reading the passage a final time, try to 'savor' the words and thoughts shared earlier. (Read the passage one last time)