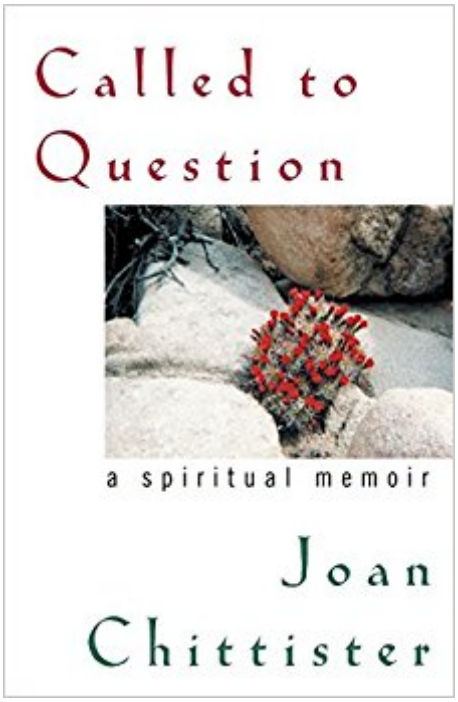
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Called To Question: A Spiritual Memoir



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Synopsis

Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir is Sr. Joan Chittister's most personal and intense writing to date. Alive with the raw energy of a journal and polished with the skill of a master storyteller, each chapter is an engaging dialogue between Sr. Joan and many different wisdom sources about such topics as God's existence and call, experience, struggle, justice, the role of women and men in society and church, living through doubt, and celebrating life. The paperback edition contains a new Preface by the author.

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Customer Reviews

In this hopeful book, best-selling author and Benedictine sister Chittister asks tough questions, some of which have dogged her for years. There came a point in her life when customary answers to big questions didn't speak to her anymore, but left her at a spiritual crossroads. She learned to ask questions no one wanted her to ask, such as, What does it mean to live a spiritual life? and Where do women fit in the iconography of a male-dominated religion? Her journal of that time is the basis of this book focused on seeking answers to life issues and mundane matters that haunt us daily, but which few take time to consider. Besides the questions, Chittister expertly and succinctly discusses the differences between religion, which she sees as an institution, and spirituality, which transcends dogma and creed, she says, and dwells in the heart. She reflects upon love and friendship, solitude and contemplation, power and evil, ecology and nature, and ultimately promotes a feminist spirituality to save the world from looming mass destruction. June SawyersCopyright

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Some leading figures (like the Pope) never say, 'I don't know;' others (like the Dalai Lama) say it surprisingly often. Joan Chittister admirably demonstrates the sparkling wisdom which springs from befriending our uncertainty. Page after page, her spirited questioning makes us feel joyfully alive. (Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B., senior member of Mount Savior Monastery, active participant in and author of several works on Buddhist-Christian dialogue)In Called to Question, Joan Chittister calls us to enter deeply into ourselves as she enters into herself in this memoir that bears the compelling marks of a spiritual classic of our time. Already one of the true voices of the post-Vatican II age, she speaks to us as Woman, as Church, as Spiritual Guide but, most of all, following the mystical poet Blake, in a voice that cleanses the doors of perception so that we may see the universe as it is, infinite. Joan understands that religion is not the work of the will but of the imagination and that the Church is the sacrament of the world, just as it is. Read this to know Joan Chittister better, to know yourself more truly, and to grasp the meaning of sacramental faith more deeply. (Eugene Kennedy, Ph.D., award-winning author, syndicated columnist, and professor emeritus of psychology at Loyola University)This candid memoir takes us immediately back to the challenging spirit of the gospels. Sister Joan reminds us that we have a religious duty to question any authority, however august, and to overturn the idols of orthodoxy. This wise, charitable, and humane book will give hope to anybody who has felt diminished by institutionalized religion. (Karen Armstrong, bestselling author of A History of God)Chittister expertly and succinctly discusses the differences between religion, which she sees as an institution, and spirituality, which transcends dogma and creed, she says, and dwells in the heart. She reflects upon love and friendship, solitude and contemplation, power and evil, ecology and nature, and ultimately promotes a feminist spirituality to save the world from looming mass destruction. (Booklist)The book maps Chittister's 'conscious, perilous journey from religion to spirituality.' (Shirley Ragsdale)For Sister Joan Chittister, defiance is a form of obedience. And silence in the face of injustice is a sin. (USA Today)Inspiring and edifying spiritual memoir. Consider this work as an example of the growth and transformation that can come from reading and savoring the spiritual words of others. (Spirituality and Health)The powerhouse sister may come packaged like a powder puffÃ¢â ¬â ¢a powder-blue suit matching her powder-blue eyes. But her out spoken ways challenge any tired stereotypes of women religious, as catholic sisters and nuns are known. (Cathy Grossman Norwich Bulletin)This spiritual memoir is not only the story of how Chittister discovered that she was 'called to question,' but a prompting for all of us to discover that vocation within ourselves as well. (Heidi Schlumpf U.S. Catholic)Sister Joan's

book is an inner journey of the soul. (Owen Phelps Messenger)

What does Jimmy Carter have in common with Joan Chittister? So far not much -- unless Sr. Joan someday wins the Nobel Peace Prize. Anyway, Sr. Joan does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God. Carter quoted these words from the biblical passage Micah 6:8 in the opening lines of his Presidential Inaugural Address in 1977.Sr. Joan has been an activist for at least as long, representing women religious and speaking up for a more inclusive Church since the pontificate of Paul VI. In her book "Called to Question", she writes: "Unless we begin to be the church we want, that church will never come ... I for one must simply go on -- and let the seeds bloom where they can, the chips fall where they may, and life take whatever turn for better or worse that befalls me." What inspiring words -- and very much needed! Speaking up requires courage, but suffering in silence helps perpetuate any dysfunction.In "Called to Question", Sr. Joan calls for a fuller image of God, one that liberates men as well as women, those who would live the Christ-like gospel life. She calls for a Church to more fully embrace Vatican II's spirit of openness and vision of a larger tent. We ought not to conform to the world's gender stereotypes. Vivre la difference, but let's not go overboard with false machismo and such like. Sr. Joan quotes the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world." The more we claim our spiritual empowerment, the freer we will be to transform into who we were meant to be.In "Called to Question", Sr. Joan shows her mettle in the face of controversy. "Whatever the ridicule, whatever the criticism, I must say so. Loudly, clearly, always. Then maybe someday I will find myself lost in a chorus of voices all shouting 'no' together. And then the world will change. The real spiritual question is, Do I have the courage to say no to it?" Should a monastic person be so overt an activist? Is this dangerous liberalism? I don't think so. A priest friend of mine recently lamented about being thought of as "disobedient." Perhaps Sr. Joan is progressive like this, not being radical in the sense of making a mockery of the sacred, but open-minded enough to envision and help bring about a healthier Church. With Pope Francis now in place (2013), we may live to see it. Fr. Dennis

This book is an easy read, but it's full of good, and sometimes, "uneasy" questions. And Chittister is right: "Clearly the function of answers is to preserve what is. It locks up the world, calls it finished, brooks no disturbance of its sureties....But, social psychologists know, as soon as an institution, an organization, or a culture has no more questions, it has no more possibilities." We need to ask good, hard questions of our culture, our religions, and ourselves. Joan Chittister asks a number of hard questions and shares thoughts from her journal and elsewhere, including the thoughts of

others, about those questions. She asks questions about prayer, church doctrine, change in spiritual life, environmental issues, and many other sensitive and "hot button" topics. She discusses the difference between religion and spirituality, and some of her thoughts and questions will offend readers who want comforting conclusions. So, although the book is, as I said earlier, "an easy read," it will not be easy to read for the person who wants easy answers to timid questions. I have a few pages left but already have concluded that it is my duty as a religious/spiritual person to ask myself and my God hard questions. Maybe asking these hard questions is a necessary part of a spiritual practice. Maybe asking hard questions of self and God is a form of prayer.

I"ve always loved the style and content of Joan Chittister. This item reaches right inside my soul and affirms me for all the times in the past when others would have ’shushed’ me. How can I thank you enough, Joan?This read begins each chapter citing a famous woman source coupled with a short reflection by Joan. The chapter then develops Joan’s personal perspective from experience and insight gleaned from many years of faithfully living a Benedictine spiritual path. Joan grew from the ranks to a woman of leadership. She seemingly has a prophetic compulsion to address topics that encourage women in the church and oftentimes set her at odds with church leadership. Happily, we are recipients of her courage and perseverence. By no means is her audience limited to vowed women religious. I’ve shared her sources with many friends who’ve also come to love her.If you are an ’answer’ person, you may approach this book with a readiness to be offended. If you’ve come to love the questions you will be most excited, even impelled to reconsider your own questions in the light of affirmation.If you feel protective of the church you may take umbrage when the content appears to disparage long held beliefs and traditions you may be unwilling or unready to retire. Take heart, reader, you can consider these ideas dispassionately. You can observe and withhold response. If it has any merit for the ’answer’ person, it may just quicken their appreciation for unexplored areas of one’s spirituality. You may even find those treasured beliefs affirmed and infused with new meaning and life.I’m confused when I read reviews by others who would think Joan unfaithful. Indeed, in my books, a more faithful servant would be hard to find. To maximize your benefit, follow each visit to the book with a visit to your journal and enjoy some reflective thinking about the concepts she’s delivered for your consideration.

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