



LESSONS IN BELONGING FROM A CHURCH-GOING COMMITMENT PHOBE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY
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Lesson I: The Importance of Being Earnest

A group of middle schoolers made a distinction between fitting in and belonging. Describe a time when it was clear you were trying to fit in. Now describe a time when you experienced a sense of belonging. How do you discern the difference?

What illusions keep you from feeling a sense of belonging with the church? In this first section, Erin names the illusion of difference - feeling "other" than those Christians, the illusion of control - that productivity on Sunday is more important than presence, and the illusion of alienation - that it isn't in her nature to belong.

In the past, how did you know when you'd found the One - church or partner? What were you looking for? What did you find? What, if anything, was "earnest" about your search?

Lesson II: The Art of Reading Charitably

The cynic believes that there can be no new possibilities, only a rehearsal of what has already been. In what relationship in your life do you doubt change can happen? Who in your life do you want to practice charity toward?



"Opposition," John O'Donohue wrote, "forces our abilities to awaken; it tests the temper and substance of who we are." Have you experienced opposition as a gift in your relationship with the church? Why or why not?

What might it mean for you to believe that trust is something that happens with you rather than to you? Name 1-2 things that you might start doing differently if you actually believed this.





Lesson III: The Discipline of Showing Up

What does it mean to go to church “past the point of feeling and into the realm of habit”? Erin names a few habits – like regularly showing up at worship, accepting invitations, and learning the names of strangers. What habits help you sustain your involvement at church?

What did your parents, teachers, church, etc. teach you about strangers growing up? Tell a story about a time you interacted with a stranger that has been formational – positive or negative – in your faith journey.

How did you get your name? What do your parents call you? What does God call you? What do you like to call yourself? How does your name make you feel like you do or don't belong?

Lesson IV: The Risk of Vulnerability

What do you know about vulnerable bodies? What might these bodies teach us about the church body? How do these bodies elicit a deeper embrace of each other?

Take a moment to write down one need you currently have. Who will you speak that need to? Does speaking that need feel like a risk? Why or why not?

Make a list of the people or organizations you'd consider yourself to be a member of. What do they have in common? How is membership in the local church distinct? Why have you joined or not joined a local church?



Lesson V: The Edge of Discernment

When have you lost yourself in a relationship? How did you regain your edge – that boundary between the individual self and the communal one?

When discerning whether to belong to a church, Erin wants to feel as if her gifts are both needed and valued. How have you discerned the balance between choosing a faith community in which you are both stretched and nurtured?

A healthy community is a realistic community. What one practice, if done faithfully by your church, would allow you to be real in that setting and help others to do the same?



Lesson VI: Offering My Portion

Do you need the church? How do you think the church needs you and your gifts in particular?

What is your vision of "kingdom come"? Who have you tested your vision with? How will you begin to make your vision a reality?

What helps you hold the tension of longing and belonging? What signs are there that your belonging is already settled? What signs are there that your longing is leading you home?



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