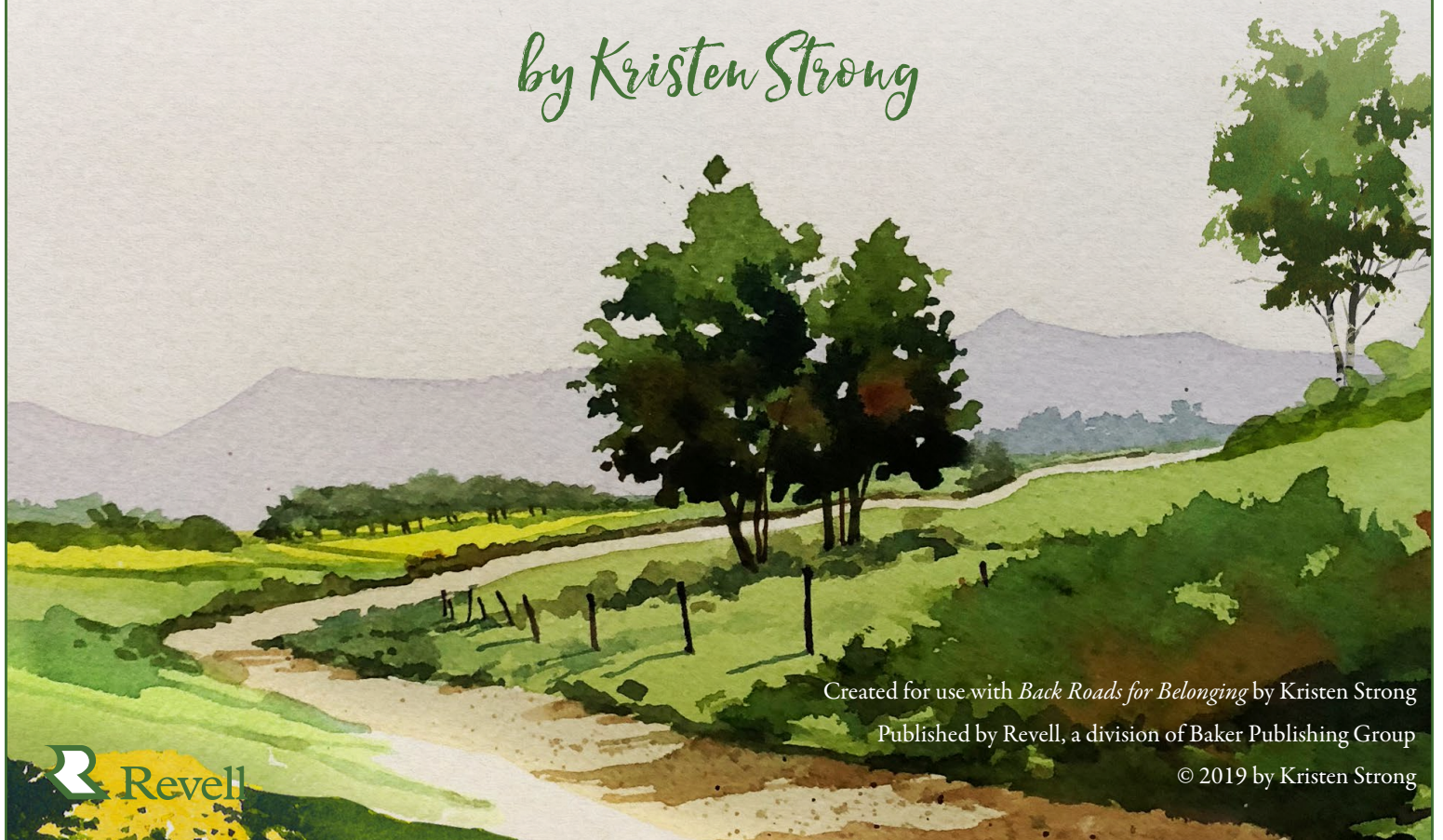


# Back Roads to Belonging

SMALL GROUP COMPANION GUIDE

by Kristen Strong



Created for use with *Back Roads for Belonging* by Kristen Strong

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# Introduction

## HELLO THERE, DEAR ONE!

Thank you to the moon and back for choosing *Back Roads to Belonging* to read with your small group! I wish I could meet with you and your people at your favorite gathering spot—be it a coffee shop, corner lobby, or cozy living room. I'd love to learn from you and your life experiences as we read along together.

While this book's purpose is to encourage each person as she travels her own back road to belonging, other people's experiences of finding a place and a people encourage us on our own journeys. Within their stories, we see glimpses of our own. Within their stories, we see ways we can get off the loud, crowded boulevards in favor of the quieter byways where we may be seen less, but we sense our belonging more.

I love the idea of reading *Back Roads to Belonging* within a small group because it means you're beautifully set up to begin your journey with your own traveling companions. Yes, our truest belonging place is in Christ, but God wants us to know belonging within our current environment. It's my prayer that when you finish the last pages of this book, you'll feel like you're a good deal closer to finding just that.

A few notes about the study itself:

- **I have broken this study into eight gatherings.** Of course, you and your people are the boss of your own small group, so feel free to discuss more or fewer chapters each time you get together!
- **After each chapter's "Questions to Consider," I've included space for journaling and reflection.** Feel free to journal in the lines provided within the companion guide or in another favorite space.
- **Each gathering closes with prayer.** Make that time as loose or structured as you desire. The group may pray together out loud, one member may pray for all, or each member may keep the conversation private between herself and God. Whatever method you choose, be sensitive to the fact that not everyone is comfortable praying out loud.

I'd love to connect with you at my blog, [www.kristenstrong.com](http://www.kristenstrong.com), on Facebook [@chasingblueskies](https://www.facebook.com/chasingblueskies), and on Instagram (my favorite!) [@kristenstrong](https://www.instagram.com/kristenstrong).

Finally, if you'd like to receive additional encouragement as you travel your own back road to belonging, post a photo depicting your thoughts on your journey thus far. Tag it with #backroadstobelonging on Instagram or Facebook.

Thank you for being my traveling companion, dear one. I'm so thankful to have you along for the ride.

Much love to you,

Kristen

## FIRST GATHERING:

Part I: Wandering

Intro + Chapters 1–3

## FIFTH GATHERING:

Part II: Finding

Chapters 8–10

## SECOND GATHERING:

Part I: Wandering

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## SIXTH GATHERING:

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## SEVENTH GATHERING:

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## FOURTH GATHERING:

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Part III: Inviting

Chapters 17–19

# First Gathering

## Part 1: Wandering

### INTRO + CHAPTERS 1–3

In the introduction and first chapter, I tell two stories that are rather similar but have different outcomes. In the story about the potluck where I knew a fair amount of folks, I packed up early and went home. In the story involving a different event where I didn't know many people, I didn't let my insecurity over not belonging send me home. Instead, I evaluated my position and remembered Jesus' presence. This made it easier to walk up to a couple gals and initiate a conversation.

In short, I chose to extend an offer toward friendship and not demand any kind of response.

In each and every coffee date with an old friend or gathering with strangers, all you and I can do is be where God has placed us and where Christ stands beside us.

Read the book of Ruth in the Old Testament. How does Ruth's life encourage you to be where God has placed you and where Christ stands beside you? Ruth 2:10–12 at least partially explains why offering friendship to another without demanding any kind of particular response is a favorable thing to do.

### FIRST GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

#### CHAPTER 1: SITTING OUT

1. Share about a time you were with others and felt insecurity rise up and bubble over. How did you respond?
2. Sometimes we struggle to belong because belonging takes longer than we want it to. Sometimes we struggle to belong because we're just not meant to belong in that place or with those people. Once you evaluate your position within your environment, what's one way you can move from evaluation to action? In other words, what is one way you can move toward others rather than away—regardless of the outcome?

## CHAPTER 2 QUESTIONS: TRAVELING EXTREMES

1. When it comes to pride and fear as a root cause for not belonging, which one do you lean toward?
2. When we struggle to belong, pride and fear tell us extremes are the only way to travel toward meaningful belonging places. For example, pride tells us to do whatever it takes to get people's attention. Fear tells us to do the opposite, to just stay home so we're protected from rejection. To combat this way of thinking, I mentioned one small thing I did to travel the back road way toward a middle ground of possibilities toward a more meaningful belonging place. What's one small thing you can do to fight fear and pride and explore the middle ground?

## CHAPTER 3 QUESTIONS: GETTING YOU

1. Share about a setback or dead end that led you to lose your sense of belonging. If that was in the past, did you find that it masqueraded as a season of wandering toward a deeper sense of belonging? Or are you still residing in the mystery as you wonder and wait?
2. Back roads are often wandered as we journey toward the places and people God has for us. Read The Message translation of Acts 16:6–8. Has there been a time in your own life—like was the case with Paul, Silas, and Timothy—when a closed door didn't mean you weren't following the Lord's direction but only that that direction changed or the path was refined?

*Share which Traveling Companion's story resonated the most with you and why. Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

## JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Evaluate your position within your belonging place today. What is one thing you can do to deepen relationships with the people around you?
- Evaluate the closed doors in your life. Did fear or pride cause you to consider a closed door a dead end too soon? Instead, could it have been a change in direction?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- As you name your frustrations over not belonging, continue to bless the Lord's good name.
- Pray for the places you want to belong and where God calls you to belong to be the same.
- Ask God to help you have peace in being seen less so you sense your belonging more.
- Ask God to help you find purpose and patience in your own season of wandering.
- Thank God for sending His Son as your traveling companion who understands what it's like to wander—and is with you every step of your travels.

# Second Gathering

## Part 1: Wandering

### CHAPTERS 4–5

If there's a theme to chapters 4 and 5, it's this: be you and be you well. Not by giving in to every feeling or whim. We do need to exercise self-control. Rather, be you in the way that encourages you to be the person God created you to be with kindness and intention. You will flub up and fall and have days where you want a dozen do-overs in your quest to belong in a deeper way, but you can keep coming back to Christ as you leave your struggles with Him and pick up His grace.

Read 1 John 3:19–20. How does this passage encourage you to “be you and be you well”?

## SECOND GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

### CHAPTER 4 QUESTIONS: EXTENDING KINDNESS TO YOURSELF

1. Many of us have a strong inner critic who stands sentinel in our minds to notify us each time we fall short. It's easy to listen to that critical voice for far too long, and this leads us to being terribly unkind to ourselves. Do you have a habit of second-guessing yourself or over-apologizing? Or both?
2. Read Colossians 2:20 and write it out in the journaling section below. How can dwelling on the gift of your fullness in Christ help you release false notions or expectations of perfection?

## CHAPTER 5 QUESTIONS: SINGING LOUDLY

1. You and I want to belong where we're supposed to belong as the unique people we are. What is one part of yourself that makes you nervous to share because you think it's something people won't like you for? (I'll go first. On a superficial level, I'll admit I don't like coffee. I don't like the way it smells and I definitely don't like the way it tastes. On a deeper level, I admit to sometimes being a helicopter parent. And in the interest of total honesty, I'll tell you that I can sometimes be a Chinook helicopter mama—the kind of helicopter with two rotors instead of just one.)
2. Read Galatians 5:24 in The Message translation. How does it encourage you to celebrate the quirks and perks of your personality and to let go of what isn't a part of your wiring?

*Share which Traveling Companion's story resonated the most with you and why. Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

# JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Be kind to yourself by journaling what Scripture says about you. Some good verses to start with include Zephaniah 3:17, Psalm 139:14, and Colossians 1:22.
- Write about a time you were rejected (or you perceived rejection) because of something about you. If thinking about this brings up any *shouldities*, ask God to help you heave those into the ditch without apology as you walk along the back road He's picked for you.

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# PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask God to help replace your inner critic with His soothing voice that says, *You, dear one, are not too much and you are enough.*
- Ask God to fill you with fresh realization that God is truly pleased with you because of Jesus's saving work done for you.
- Ask God to help you know you're beloved and you belong. Ask for His help to remove any unbelief that speaks to the contrary.
- Ask God for His help in burying the *shouldities* and for Christ's desires to rise up within us.
- Thank God for making you as the singular creation you are, and thank Jesus for His ever-faithful presence with you on your back road.

# Third Gathering

## Part 1: Wandering

### CHAPTERS 6

Chapter 6 gets a spot all by itself because, quite frankly, change is a big contributor to our sense of belonging (or lack thereof). Change can act like a rug that's pulled out from under us, taking our sense of belonging as we're left sitting on our backsides.

Considering your own struggles, is a big change responsible for removing a measure of your own belonging? Read Luke 22:31–32. In context of the change we've experienced and our removed sense of belonging, what should be our ultimate prayer?

### THIRD GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### CHAPTER 6 QUESTIONS: BELONGING TO CHANGE

1. Share about a time in the present or past when a change removed your sense of belonging. Do/did you struggle to accept the change and your lost sense of belonging?
2. When defeated thinking tries to take over, what is one thing that helps you find hope again?
3. One thing I've discovered within change is that its arrival usually signifies not a dead end but rather a different way of getting where God intends. It means the places where we belong will change. Read Deuteronomy 29:29. Have you seen any secret things revealed—either immediately or over time—with the change in your belonging? In other words, did God shine a light on something valuable through the change that you might never have known otherwise?
4. Refresh your memory with Connie's story beginning on page 73. How did her dark time of immense change bring her a deeper belonging place?

*Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

## JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Detail a time a big change removed your sense of belonging.
- Read Deuteronomy 6:23 and ask God to help you to really believe that if He is bringing you out of a belonging place, He's bringing you into a better one.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal green ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask God to help you keep your heart open to the new road where God intends you to belong.
- Thank God for all He's given you—both from Himself, from His Son Jesus, and from others who can walk with you down unfamiliar roads.
- When the journey feels long and the wait never-ending, ask God to blow breezes of encouragement to refresh and strengthen you on the journey.

# Fourth Gathering

## Part II: Finding

### CHAPTER 7

This past year, we had 14 inches of snow on May 20<sup>th</sup> that gifted our daughter with a snow day during finals week. Yes, we live in the snowy pines of Colorado, but that's extreme even for my neck of the woods.

When we have to wait a while to belong, the landscape around us can feel like a winter season that overstays its welcome. We wonder if the bleak, cold, and dark time will ever be over so we can begin seeing some kind of new growth and some sign that we belong.

In this chapter, "Growing in the Dark," we explore this notion that growth in our belonging place indeed happens in the dark of a winter season. We may not see it happening, but that doesn't mean it isn't.

Read The Message translation of Psalm 45:4 and Psalm 119:105. What is our glow-in-the-dark lamp unto our feet as we walk through dark seasons when our place and people aren't as present as we want?

#### FOURTH GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### CHAPTER 7 QUESTIONS: GROWING IN THE DARK

5. Turn to page 80 and read the excerpt from Northern Woodlands at the top of the page. What hopeful message does it hold regarding dark times?
  
6. Nature rests during winter, and without the rest of this darker season we wouldn't have the growth we see during spring and summer. What is one way you can intentionally rest during the darker season of winter?

7. In times of rest, we're better prepared to draw near to Christ who gives of Himself so we can belong in the dark. How can this fact keep you relaxing where God has you today?

8. Review what unexpected ways Aundrea grew downward in her own season of dark. Can you, too, recall some ways your own roots were strengthened in your dark season brought on by a lack of belonging?

*Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

## JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. There’s a time for everything, including a time to sing and a time to take inventory, as this chapter’s story of the chickadee lays out for us. Journal about your past seasons when the darkness ended and you were able to sing once again. Let it encourage you that your current season of winter—of taking inventory—will end, too.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal green ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask God to remove your frustration when you can't see your own belonging place growing in dark seasons. Ask Him to replace frustration with hope that indeed, growth is still happening.
- Ask God to help you see and know His mercy and presence in fresh ways.
- Thank God that like Jesus growing within the darkness of Mary's womb, He grows good things within the dark times of our life.

# Fifth Gathering

## Part II: Finding

### CHAPTERS 8–10

When we feel like we're on the outside looking in, it's okay to keep looking in. We just have to be mindful and choosy about where we're looking in. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 detail the three wisest places to look in always, but especially when we feel most left out. Looking back over chapters 8–10, what are these three places that, when regularly visited, renew and magnify your own sense of belonging?

Read John 6:37. What steady reassurance does it offer you about your belonging place?

## FIFTH GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

### CHAPTER 8 QUESTIONS: EATING WELL

1. How often do you find yourself taking in unhealthy thoughts, words, or actions about your own lack of belonging? To combat the notion that you'll always be on the outside, what do you need to dine on instead? Refresh yourself with Romans 8:1 and remember that while the enemy condemns, God never does.
2. We read the Word of God so we don't dine on the enemy's accusations but instead on the Lord's affirmation. Read Romans 8:37. What is one other reason we are wise to dine regularly on God's Word?

## CHAPTER 9 QUESTIONS: LOOKING IN THE QUIET

1. In any season of life, dozens of roadblocks can make listening for the Lord's direction in the quiet difficult. Given your own life stage and responsibilities, what's one way you can remove yourself from the noise and give yourself (at least) a few moments of intentional time of quiet?
2. On page 99, read the paragraph taken from Gary Thomas's book *Sacred Parenting*. In your own quest to gain a deeper sense of belonging, what's one way you can allow your emotions an appropriate seat at the table without giving them the freedom to spin into panic?

## CHAPTER 10 QUESTIONS: LOOKING INTO YOUR PEOPLE

1. This is the chapter where we evaluate a tendency to overlook those closest to us as a valuable belonging place. Refer to page 104 and fill in these blanks: "\_\_\_\_\_, dear one, and expand your sense of belonging." If I ask you to narrow your focus right now, where—and with whom—do you know you belong with today?
2. Read Exodus 9:5–6 to see one example of God working in intentional, purposeful ways. Take some time to name the places and people with whom you already belong. As you wait for your own larger belonging place to make itself known, what beauty and purpose do you find within those current belonging places and people?

*Share which Traveling Companion's story resonated the most with you and why. Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

## JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Take some time to narrow your focus right now so you can expand your sense of belonging. Journal the names and places you belong today. Share with the group what you thought of the list. Is it longer or skimpier than you thought?
- If you'd like to spend more time in the quiet with God's Word, write out a plan to help hold you accountable to do just that.

[illegible]

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask for God's help in banishing the critical voices so you hear His voice loudest of all.
- Within your own season of ever-present responsibilities and distractions, ask for God's help creating a quiet space for you to read the Word and hear from Him.
- Ask for the Lord to help you pray more and panic less.
- Ask the Lord to give you patience and perseverance to stay at the eyepiece.
- Thank God for the places and people where you belong at this moment.

# Sixth Gathering

## Part II: Finding

### CHAPTERS 11–13

Even though writing is my job and I share all kinds of personal stories and tidbits, I still struggle with vulnerability. Part of that is because generally speaking, I'm a very private person. Part of that is because sharing my struggles and brokenness is scary. If you've ever done so and were rejected at least in part because of it, you know what I'm talking about.

In our desire to deepen our belonging, we want to move forward in ways that don't sabotage ourselves. And while it may seem that the opposite is true, rejecting vulnerability with our people is one way we sabotage our own sense of belonging.

Read Philemon 1:6. As you review these three chapters in *Back Roads to Belonging*, consider how the message of each one—specifically the vulnerability required to expand our sense of belonging—aligns with what God's Word says.

### SIXTH GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### CHAPTER 11 QUESTIONS: GROWING UP AND OUT

1. As you consider your desire to connect with more people, do you have any self-sabotaging behaviors that need a long, hard look?
2. One of our most basic psychological needs is to know we belong. Read Romans 15:7. What's one small thing you can do to welcome another—and grow your own sense of belonging—without worrying about how it turns out?

## CHAPTER 12 QUESTIONS: TALKING MORE, LISTENING LESS

1. At the beginning of chapter 12, I mention one of my favorite Instagram follows because her encouraging words reflect the Word alive to me. Now read the excerpt by Charles Spurgeon on page 125. Who is someone you follow who has gone ahead of you and drilled the well that provided/provides you a long, cool drink in your desire to belong?
2. Research shows us that speaking what we want to learn out loud helps us remember it. How can this fact help us in our desire to expand our belonging place?

## CHAPTER 13 QUESTIONS: HELPING THE HARD (BUT WORTH IT) WAY

1. Within this chapter, I share with you how it's been my experience that when the vulnerability that belonging requires is tamped down, it will still come out. It'll just come out in less desirable ways. Have you found this to be true for yourself or your loved ones?
2. Read Proverbs 18:1. How do the words "I'm fine" contribute to isolation? When appropriate, what is an alternative to "I'm fine" we can consider?

*Share which Traveling Companion's story resonated the most with you and why. Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

# JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Look “through the eyepiece” of your current place and people from the journal entry of last week. With that list in mind, write the names of two or three folks who could potentially provide new or deeper friendships. Schedule a coffee date or lunch date at your house or out-and-about with that person or persons.
- Write a personal prayer to God and ask for His courage to share your hard stuff with just one other person.

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# PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask for God’s help to take one small step toward others.
- Ask for God to show you some positive encouragement as a result of your follow-through in reaching out to others.
- Ask God to show you a Scripture verse to say out loud as a way to rehearse and remember truth. Page 195 in the back of the book has lots of Scripture verses that affirm our belonging, and something from this resource is a possible place to start.
- Pray for God’s help to refuse the urge to cover and conceal when something removes your sense of belonging. Instead, ask for His help to be vulnerable with a few.
- Thank God for the people with whom you already belong and for His ever-ready ear to hear your struggles and brokenness.

# Seventh Gathering

## Part II: Finding-Part III: Inviting

### CHAPTERS 14–16

For the most part, we're giving time and contemplation to the places and people our own back road leads us to. But in our travels toward our own back road to belonging, we'd be remiss to not give attention to where we do not belong. Because as important as it is to know where we do belong, it's also important to consider where we do not.

Part of the necessary work involved in becoming okay with the places and people we don't belong is refusing to compare your belonging place with someone else's. Within these chapters, we'll explore one thing that not only fights that "compare and despair" tendency of ours but also spurs us on to welcome others in by making a belonging place for others.

Read Romans 15:7. Brainstorm some ways you can welcome another in. No example is too small! After all, in the gospel's way of success, small things are the big, important things!

## SEVENTH GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

### CHAPTER 14 QUESTIONS: BELONGING ISN'T FOR YOU

1. From time to time, each of us will need to be mature and self-aware enough to listen and receive a painful rebuke from someone—someone who is for us. But if we find ourselves on the receiving end of words that repeatedly offer more sabotage than support from someone whose motives are not for you, it may be time to place a boundary between you and them. Within chapter 12, what Old Testament parallel do I draw as a visual for not allowing unsafe people access to your heart? Describe a time you needed to lovingly but definitively put up a boundary between you and someone else.
2. Just as we need to be careful of whom we allow access to our heart, we must be careful to not take it personally when someone doesn't allow us access to theirs. From this chapter, from your own experience or from Scripture, what have you learned to hold on to when you can't belong where you wish you could?

## CHAPTER 15 QUESTIONS: SPEAKING UP AND OUT

1. Read Proverbs 11:25. What does this verse say about what happens to us when we encourage someone? Why should this motivate us to encourage others?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 as it's printed at the bottom of page 149. Why does Paul ask us to encourage one another—to give courage to one another?

## CHAPTER 16 QUESTIONS: BEING BELONG-MAKERS

1. At the beginning of this chapter, I told the story of a (very) cranky someone I felt God urging me to reach toward when my first inclination was to stay far, far away. Can you share a time when you listened to a similar urging and also found Jesus used your anemic fish and less-than-stellar loaves to yield a larger belonging place?
2. When we release expectations, go first, and receive Jesus in our midst through welcoming another in, we ourselves receive the blessing of belonging. Drawing on your own experience, what are some easy ways you've found that helped you be a belong-maker in a meaningful way?

*Share which Traveling Companion's story resonated the most with you and why. Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

# JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Write down the names of a few people, both those who are easy to encourage and not-so-easy, and write down the good you see in them. Make a point to name that goodness to those people either face-to-face or through a text, message, or phone call.
- Write about one thing you can do to go first and be a belong-maker. If you need a few ideas, check out pages 191–193 of the book to find examples of organization that bring others in. And if you were able to claim my preorder bonus that included an exhaustive resource of belonging ideas, check it out for practical ways to enlarge your belonging within your people and community.

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# PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask the Lord to grant you peace and wisdom about the places you do belong and the places you do not.
- Ask God to give you the courage to choose encouragement and blessing over comparison and jealousy.
- Ask God for eyes to see just one or two people you could welcome in through one small act of love this week.
- Thank Jesus for being our example of the ultimate belong-maker, the One who is truly and wholly *for* us always and forever.

# Eighth Gathering

## Part III: Inviting

### CHAPTERS 17–19

As you review the tail-end of this book, I fear that if you're still struggling to find your belonging place and people, you'll be tempted to quit looking altogether. I want you to know afresh that God intends for each and every one of us to know real belonging while here on this earth. You're not the exception to the rule. If you don't believe me, read Hebrews 10:19–25, 35–36. Stay confident, dear one. Your back road will lead to a pathway with your belonging place at the end. But two things are key to finding it: perseverance and endurance (read v. 36 again).

As we see in Chapter 17, persevering may look like traveling outside your typical avenues to find your place and your people.

## EIGHTH GATHERING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

### CHAPTER 17 QUESTIONS: GOING THERE ANYWAY

1. Share about a time you may have written off real friendship with someone who seemed too different from you. I mention some personal examples in the book, but I'll add another one here. As an avid Oklahoma State fan (I'm telling you, my family bleeds our school colors of orange and black), I've blown off people simply because they were fans of our rival school, the Oklahoma University Sooners. For real. I'm not proud of that, but there ya go. It's always right to consider a person a person and not a platform or ideology (or school choice)!
2. On pages 167–168, I list some biblical examples of folks from various backgrounds who hung out in close proximity and/or helped one another. Which of those examples—or perhaps a different one altogether—resonate most with you?

## CHAPTER 18 QUESTIONS: PERSEVERING ON THE PATH

3. It's always worth it to keep on keepin' on moving down our back road to belonging. In your own traveling, have you run into circumstances that took away what you thought would be a most meaningful belonging place?
4. If you're in a season like that now, how can your why questions turn into what answers as is discussed on page 174?

## CHAPTER 19: ARRIVING AT YOUR PATHWAY'S END

1. As I mentioned earlier, once we reach the end of our own back road, you and I will find it leads toward our specific belonging place. Considering what you know and what you enjoy, what do you envision your own belonging place might be like?
2. Read Psalm 81:6. In its truest form, our belonging place is not something to achieve but to receive. God doesn't ask us to give of ourselves until we're bone dry and haggard. He asks us to simply mind our own place at the end of our pathway. What does that look like in your own life?

*Share which Traveling Companion's story resonated the most with you and why. Name one or two other folks you might know or have read about who would also be good traveling companions for this chapter.*

## JOURNAL

In the space provided or in a journal of your own, let your pen help you process the following:

- Christ chose to cross paths with folks from all walks of life. Journal to the Lord your desire for Him to open the door for you to consider expanding your belonging place to someone who is different from you.
- As the traveling companion for Chapter 19, write your own list detailing what you know and what you enjoy. Brainstorm and pray about where those two things might intersect. How can you be a belong-maker in a way that fits well within your life?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal green ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, consider these final thoughts:

- Ask God to remove any blind spots or hard-heartedness that may be preventing you from seeing some folks as Jesus sees them.
- When your sense of belonging shifts suddenly, ask God for flexibility of spirit and the desire to see things from His perspective rather than your own.
- Ask Jesus to help you remain in Him and for God's direction as you relax into the roles He has for you today.
- Thank God that He always makes a way for you to belong.
- Thank Jesus for His presence as He walks alongside you toward your own belonging place.