

A warm, intimate photograph of a person lying down, reading a book. The person's face is partially visible, with their hand resting on the pages. A white mug filled with dark coffee sits on a soft, textured blanket in the foreground. The background is dark and out of focus, with some bokeh light spots. The overall mood is cozy and contemplative.

# STEP ONE

Devotions for people  
who don't do devotions.

Day Six

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# DAY SIX

## Belonging

### *Mark 11-12*

**A human being will do anything they need to do to belong.**

God made us for intimacy and community and so the impulse to belong isn't a sign we are broken. On the contrary, it is an indication we are broken when we stop trying to belong and when we don't care if we are accepted. Trading the greater pain of rejection for the smaller hurt of isolation is understandable but still a compromise of our humanity.

*To be human is to want to belong. To be a healthy human being is to belong to a healthy community.*

**This is why God gave us the church.**

To provide a place where people belong. But unlike so many other places where your belonging hinges on your behavior, you belong in a church long before you learn how to behave or what to believe. Belonging before believing and behaving. This is God's intention, and really, how could it be otherwise? Is anyone going to be interested in believing the "right" churchy things and behaving the "right" churchy way if the church is a bunch of exclusive jerks? No.

Think of your own story. Consider how belonging is something that is probably already happening for you. You showed up at church, or a church event, and couldn't believe how kind everyone was to you. They invited you to stuff. They brought you a meal when they heard about your miscarriage and they hardly even knew you! You accidentally dropped an "fbomb" and they didn't flinch. You quickly realized that with these people you didn't have to hide your tattoo. For that matter, you didn't have to hide your past or the real you.

**This felt like a new family.**

Maybe like a family you never experienced, but always hoped existed. You love it despite not having a clue what they technically believe about the identity of Jesus, the nuances of baptism, or what actually happens during communion. You have no idea, yet you feel included and loved.

You see how belonging comes first? You wouldn't be asking questions about behaving and believing if you didn't already sense the grace, acceptance, and hope of this new family. You wouldn't care what they believe if you didn't first experience how they care first. You wouldn't want to know how to behave if you didn't already belong. Right? These aren't the first Christians you've known in your life, but they are the first ones to welcome you as you are.

Maybe you would have started this journey earlier if others had been more welcoming. Maybe you wouldn't have experienced some of the hurt or made some of the mistakes you did if you had started earlier with Jesus.

*What might have been different in your life if they had let you come as you are and loved you as you are?*

As you piece together more and more what it means to follow Jesus, please don't forget that belonging comes before behaving and believing. The stakes are high. No one cares at all what Christians believe until they know how much we care. Be someone who creates a place for people to belong before you try to sort out how they behave or straighten out what they believe.

**When you love people before you try to fix them you are on the Jesus path.**

# Journal:

1. Admiration
2. Confession (this was not a “one off” from yesterday; daily confession is essential)
3. Prayers for Family and Friends
4. Belonging Exercise:
  - a. Write down the names of people you have excluded in one way or another. Ask Jesus to show you how to include them in your new life with Jesus.
  - b. Write down the names of people who have made you feel excluded in your life. Ask Jesus to help you forgive them.

# Calibrating prayer:

*Jesus, I thank you that there is no one who you don't invite to be a part of your family. This means two things for me. First, it means I received an invitation. Thank you. Second, it means I must offer an invitation to everyone as well. Help me to live my life as an invitation to all.*