

### **Intro**

The ancient question, “Who am I?” inevitably leads to a deeper one: “Whose am I?” – because there is no identity outside of relationship. You cannot be a person by yourself. To ask “Whose am I” is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life is your own bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways. *Douglas Steer*

### **Chalice Lighting**

You only are free when you realize you belong no place — you belong every place.  
*Maya Angelou*

### **Spiritual Exercise: Belonging to the Earth**

When talking about belonging, one soon meanders around to the idea that we all share the earth as our home, as the one place to which we all belong. And yet that fact rarely sinks into our daily consciousness. It is a concept stuck in science books rather than a truth that sits at the center of our spirituality. Earthrise is a short documentary that helps us change that. It’s an award-winning short video that tells the story of the Apollo 8 astronauts and the first image captured of Earth from space in 1968. It’s a story about “escaping” earth to realize how deeply we belong to it, and to each other.

Don’t just watch it; turn it into a spiritual exercise by watching it after the sun has gone down and talking a walk afterward. Think of it as a “night walk meditation” and use it to deepen your experience of watching the film. Let the video and night walk take you where it will. Come to your group ready to share the one moment from the film or from your walk that affected you most deeply.

Here’s the link to the video: <https://emergencemagazine.org/story/earthrise-film/>

**Check-in** *Share briefly what’s been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what’s in their hearts.*

### **Quotes for Inspiration/Readings**

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. *Starhawk, from Dreaming the Dark*

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out. *James Baldwin*

Where you belong is where you choose to constantly choose to show up.  
*Karina Antonopoulos*

When you recover or discover something that nourishes your soul and brings joy, care enough about yourself to make room for it in your life. *Jean Shinoda*

As it turns out, men and women who have the deepest sense of true belonging are people who also have the courage to stand alone when called to do that. They are willing to maintain their integrity and risk disconnection in order to stand up for what they believe in... Guess what emerged as the greatest barrier to belonging? Fitting in. Because when we fit in, we assess a situation and acclimate. When we belong, we bring ourselves to it and say this is who I am. *Brené Brown*

**Questions** *Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of vision means for you and your daily living.*

1. For you, what is the opposite of belonging?
2. Who is sitting just outside your circle and needs to be welcomed in?
3. Have you ever had to sacrifice belonging for integrity? How about right now? Is your current source of belonging asking you to compromise your integrity?
4. Is it time to shift the question from "Who am I?" to "Whose am I?" How would your living and loving be different (and better) if it was a bit less about becoming and a bit more about belonging? What if "Am I succeeding?" was replaced with "Who needs me?" "Who loves me? With whose life is my own bound up?"
5. Who taught you that it is safe to show your whole self? That every part of you belongs?
6. Did you find your place of belonging or create it?
7. What if belonging happens when you finally say to yourself "I'm enough"? What if belonging isn't the moment you find your people but instead the moment you stop trying to prove yourself? What if the whole game is about finally belonging to yourself?

**Sitting in Silence** *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

**Sharing/Deep Listening** *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

**Reflection** *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.*

**Singing** Our songs sing back to us something of our essence, something of our truth, something of our uniqueness. When our songs are sung back to us, it is not about approval, but about recognizing our being and our belonging in the human family...  
*JD Salinger, Franny and Zooey*

**Extinguishing the Chalice** May the frames of your belonging be large enough for the dream of your soul. *John O'Donohue*

*Packets are for use only by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle. Learn how to join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>*

