

Session 1 Introduction

Discovering Our Cherished Belonging

1. Welcome & Opening (10 min)

- Greet everyone warmly.
- Briefly introduce the purpose of the group: growing in faith, deepening relationships, discovering how we are united in faith.
- Share ground rules (confidentiality, respect, listening with love).

2. Get-to-Know-You Activity (15 min) – “Two Truths and a Blessing”

- Each person shares **two true things about themselves**, and **one way God has blessed them recently**.
 - I live in Alhambra
 - I love my job
 - I have a grandson(I guess they are all blessings, but the biggest one is being a grandma)
- Others try to guess which one is the blessing.
- This allows for lighthearted connection while reflecting on God's presence in daily life.

3. Opening Prayer (5 min)

Let us begin, In the name of the Father...

God of Unity, thank you for bringing us together. We open our hearts to your presence. Help us to grow in faith and friendship, and may this time together deepen our understanding of how you cherish and call us into belonging. We ask this in your holy name, Amen.

4. Discussion Questions (30 min) – Based on the Introduction of *Cherished Belonging*

- What does the word “belonging” mean to you, and how have you experienced (or longed for) belonging in your life?
- The book talks about being “cherished” by God. How does that idea challenge or affirm the way you see yourself in relation to God?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider—either in faith, community, or relationships? How did that experience shape your understanding of belonging?

- What are some of the barriers that keep people from fully embracing their belonging in Christ? Have you personally encountered any of these?
- The introduction explores God's invitation to belonging. When have you felt most aware of this invitation in your life? How did you respond?
- In what ways can we help create a sense of belonging for others in our faith communities and everyday lives?

(Encourage openness, active listening, and understanding. Attempt to learn from one another.)

5. Closing Reflection & Prayer (10 min)

- Invite each person to share one takeaway or a word that summarizes what they received today.
- Close with a short prayer of petition and gratitude for the week ahead.

For whom and what shall we pray? (Allow people to state their petitions.)

Loving God of unity, thank you for speaking to us today and for the gift of these companions on our Lenten journey. Help us to live in the truth that we are cherished and that we belong to you. May we never forget that your love extends to all, and may we reflect that love in how we welcome and care for others. Strengthen us to carry this truth into the week ahead, sharing your grace with those we meet.

Amen.

6. Next Steps & Goodbyes (5 min)

- Share a preview of the next session, including the chapter(s) you'll be discussing. If the reading plan is flexible, take a moment to decide together as a group what chapter(s) will be addressed next time.
- If you plan to share facilitation, discuss who will lead which session and create a simple schedule.
- If refreshments are part of your gatherings, consider passing around a sign-up sheet for volunteers.
- Encourage everyone to read the next section of *Cherished Belonging* in preparation for the discussion.
- Express gratitude for each person's presence and participation, and close with a warm thank-you.