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## Do I Belong Here?

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## Do I Belong Here?

On my worst days as a teacher, when I was tired, had feelings of frustration, and believed myself to be inadequate for the task, the question came to mind: "Do I belong here"? The question deserved an honest answer. A similar question might arise for any of us when circumstances at work or at home become oppressive. Answering the question about whether or not we belong in a particular situation, especially one that is ongoing, can lead to some immediate changes in action, attitude, and feelings.

During times when we are aware only of the pressures upon us, we cannot see options for improving our position. The busier we are, the less inclined we might be to take even a minute to reflect on the purposes, intentions, or desires that underlie our presence and actions. A kind of mental and emotional whirlwind keeps us spinning, so that we feel the power of the forces at work on us, and lose emotional and mental contact with the solid ground upon which we stand.

If we belong in our present circumstances, we have challenges to face, decisions to make, problems to solve, advice to seek. If we do not belong here, we probably will not be able to make positive changes of any significance. For our sakes, as well as for those with whom we work and live, we need to maintain, or at least make occasional contact with, our sense of "calling." If we believe ourselves to be imprisoned by some of the people and events in our lives, the question begs for a realistic answer: "Do I belong here?"

At some time, we made a decision that led us to this job, this relationship, or to this place and this hour. Was that a good decision at the time that we made it? We could only have had access to limited information, but we can probably recall whether or not that decision resonated with our conscience, spirit, or soul – whatever name we use to indicate that part of ourselves where honesty resides, and from which love arises. We "belong" in our present circumstances if our decision was as good as we could make it at the time we made it. If we recall that a particular decision was poorly made, we might want to consider what might now be an appropriate response within our present circumstances.

None of us would stand up and tell people around us that we are God's gift to them, but those who are satisfied about the quality of their decisions can think and act as though they do indeed belong in their

present situation as cooperators with God. And God sets out "the best china," not the everyday tableware, for those into whose lives he guides and leads us. While God can guide and lead us by means of other persons to whom we might owe some level of obedience, we make most of our decisions by consulting our hearts, wherein we most often experience God's spirit enabling us to sense what is better rather than what is less good.

When we take the helpful moment to reflect honestly about how we come to be engaged in our present activity, we can draw forth strong support from the motives that are attached to our basic decisions. We did not decide to take on a major responsibility from mere curiosity. We probably wanted to make a positive difference in the lives of others, to put our talents and gifts to good use, and, ultimately, to fulfill our purpose for existing. When we bring to mind one of our motives or values, we become active participants, not victims. Those who are focused on their agendas utilize energy that is of the spirit, as well as of the body. Children learn quickly that in a water-gun engagement, there is no joy to be found in simply trying to keep dry; while they focus on surprising others with a squirt here and a squirt there, they are participants, not victims, no matter how wet they might become.

Sometimes the best answers to questions about "belonging" are found in consultation with God. The process takes no more time than when we search our memories for recognition of a well or poorly made decision. We can at any time ask of the One who is always present (and who absolutely "belongs" here), for help to either live out more effectively the decisions we made well, or to find the best reforms for decisions that were poorly made.

The ordinary every-day means of becoming "God's gifts" for others is also the best means for obtaining peace of mind and heart. We can answer, with God's help, the question: "Do I belong here?"