

## Week 22 Practice

In the last few weeks, we have focused on understanding the reasons we feel lonely and the ways we hide and protect. Also, we have begun to identify people with whom true belonging might actually be possible, if we can risk the adventure of revealing ourselves. This week, we are going to take that a step further. The decision about whether or not to form a place of belonging with someone is not, “Do they agree with me on this or that particular issue?” Here are better questions to ask:

- 1. Are they willing to step graciously into disagreement with me?*
- 2. Do they have the courage to go deeper than the surface of their opinions and risk sharing the story that lies underneath them?*
- 3. Do they have the patience and tenderness to be an audience for my story?*

Some people will not be willing to share their story or to hear yours—some people will hide behind their opinions. Others, in contrast, will share your hunger for authentic belonging. This week, choose one person about whom you can answer “yes” to all three questions above. Invite them out for a meal or a cup of coffee or a beer. Tell them you are specifically interested in hearing more of their story, especially the parts that have shaped their opinion about the big things, like religion and politics, etc. Assure them you will not judge them or argue with them. Let them know you are interested in the kind of relationship that transcends such things. When they are done, ask them if you can summarize what you heard, because their story is important, and you want to make sure you understand it as clearly as possible. Give it the attention and care it deserves.

If they are interested in reciprocating, it’s quite possible you have discovered a place of belonging.