

Stand For What is Right Even If It Means Standing Alone

What do you think of when you think of belonging? Is it to a social group? PTA? Bridge Club? Recreation Group?

Does belonging mean a fan of a pro-sports team? How about your college alma mater?

Does belonging mean your local political party? The national political party?

A church group? Your nuclear family? Extended family? Your place of work?

We can belong in a variety of ways at the same time to different groups or organizations. Sometimes our belonging to one group or organization might be at cross purposes to another group or organization.

Stand for what is right even if it means standing alone. Can you name some individuals who act or acted this way?

We heard a reading from Brené Brown, *Finding our Way to True Belonging*. This is an important part of the reading, "True belonging is not passive. It's not the belonging that comes with just joining a group. It's not fitting in or pretending or selling out because it's safer.

It's a practice that requires us to be vulnerable, get uncomfortable and learn how to be present with people — without sacrificing who we are. We want true belonging, but it takes tremendous courage to knowingly walk into hard moments.

...True belonging is not something you negotiate externally, it's what you carry in your heart. It's finding the sacredness in being a part of something. When we reach this place, even momentarily, we belong everywhere and nowhere. That seems absurd, but it's true. Carl Jung argued that a paradox is one of our most valued spiritual possessions and a great witness to the truth."

This passage speaks to me about soul-searching and contemplation. It speaks of taking time to learn and make decisions based on long held beliefs and facts. This passage informs me that we are not to be swayed by the moment. It also instructs me that the idea of paradox is so important.

The both/and rather the either/or approach to life is key. It is the holding of opposites together that is what helps us to become deeply human and not surface creatures. It is about self-awareness.

Most importantly, it is not for show. We know of individuals in our own lives as well as in the public realm who live their lives for show. We know that in the end they are hollow individuals, devoid of true meaning and substance.

Often, they are led astray by those who take advantage of their shallowness. Without and firm belief system, they are easily manipulated and follow marching orders that lead them into harm's way.



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- The person who truly belongs is a person who is a considered person. She or he takes time to contemplate and meditate. This person is other focused. This means that she or he is concerned how outcomes will affect others more than oneself. She or he is mindful in what they do.
- The person who truly belongs has a sense of the Common Good. She or he believes that there is a greater purpose to serve than just one's own needs.
- The person who truly belongs senses injustice even when it cannot be articulated. She or he has a sense of outrage that "this is not right". The person who belongs usually will fight for justice causes.
- The person who truly belongs will research and educate herself or himself. She or he will want to know all the facts. Once awakened, she or he realizes that there is so much more to learn and grasp.

The person who truly belongs yearns to become and ally even when she or he are afraid that they might say or do the wrong thing.

Another passage of Brown's reading is helpful to me,

"Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance."



*...True belonging is not something
you negotiate externally,
it's what you carry in your heart.*

I would add to this that not only our own self-acceptance, but the unconditional love of one other human being in our life. If we present ourselves to the world and to another with all of our flaws and are accepted by at least one person, we are then able to accept ourselves. We are able to believe in ourselves and have a deeper conviction in what we are doing.

When we find this unconditional love and acceptance in the form of a faith community, we are strengthened in many ways. We are able to stand for what is right even if it means standing alone when it comes to our families, when it comes to our friends, when it comes to our church, when it comes to our acquaintances, when it comes to acting, when it comes to taking the next step in becoming an anti-racist.

When we find individuals, who are yearning to belong to something greater than themselves, we are encouraged to reach beyond ourselves.

When we find individuals, who share our belief system that comes after considered thought and contemplation, we are renewed and fulfilled.

When we find individuals, who challenge us to become more of who we are becoming – who love us so much that they do not want us to remain where we are – we are truly blessed.