

# EMBRACING SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Diana Butler Bass*  
*on the Dynamics of Experiential Faith*

A 5-SESSION STUDY BY DIANA BUTLER BASS WITH TIM SCORER

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“*Embracing Spiritual Awakening* invites participants to examine and understand the changing cultural landscape in North America. Is the oft-heard critique of declining numbers in congregations simply a canard of those who would prefer a world of families with many children and stay-at-home mothers, or is it the consequence of increasing ethnic and cultural and religious diversity around us? Or is it something else? Diana Butler Bass leads a discussion of what it means to be spiritual, to be religious, and how Christians today might be grace-filled witnesses to the reality they know and experience.”

—**The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori**  
Presiding Bishop & Primate of The Episcopal Church

“Led by one of today’s foremost interpreters of Christianity, *Embracing Spiritual Awakening* provides a rich and engaging educational and spiritual experience.”

—**Marcus Borg**  
popular author, and Canon Theologian,  
Trinity Episcopal Church, Portland, OR

“Diana Butler Bass is a great “awakener” among us. She refers to two “awakenings,” a spiritual newness that comes from beyond us, and a sociological recognition of our new social circumstance. More than that, Bass brings her vocation of awakening to concrete practice in ways that make a difference to real people. No more slumbering!”

—**Walter Brueggemann**  
Columbia Theological Seminary

“Filled with both hope and very specific and practical observations, *Embracing Spiritual Awakening* is a tour d’ force by a superb scholar at the top of her game.”

—**Phyllis Tickle**  
author, lecturer, and workshop leader

“Diana Butler Bass is one of the finest thinkers and educators I’ve ever met. She combines the insight of a scholar of religious history with the foresight of a keen social analyst. Groups and individuals who care about the future of their churches will find in *Embracing Spiritual Awakening* a choice and high-quality resource—not only for individual and group study, but also for creating communities of practice who become the change that is needed in our churches.”

—**Brian D. McLaren**  
author/speaker

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# QUICK GUIDE TO THIS HANDBOOK

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## TEN things to know as you begin to work with this resource:

### 1. HANDBOOK + WORKBOOK

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This handbook is a guide to the group process as well as a workbook for everyone in the group.

### 2. A FIVE-SESSION RESOURCE

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Each of the five sessions presents a distinct topic for focused group study and conversation.

### 3. DVD-BASED RESOURCE

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The teaching content in each session comes in the form of input by Diana Butler Bass and response by members of a small group on a DVD recording of just over 30 minutes in length.

### 4. EVERYONE GETS EVERYTHING

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This handbook addresses everyone in the group, not one group leader. There is no separate “Leader’s Guide.”

### 5. GROUP FACILITATION

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The creators of this resource assume that someone will be designated as group facilitator for each session. You may choose the same person or a different person for each of the five sessions.

### 6. TIME FLEXIBILITY

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Each of the five sessions is flexible and can be between one hour and two or more hours in length: however, if you intend to cover all the material presented, you will need the full two hours.

### 7. BUILD YOUR OWN SESSION

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Prior to the session it is advisable for one or more members of the group to determine what to include in the group meeting time. In some cases the session outline presents options from which you can choose. In other cases the material is organized as a progression through the three or four main topics presented by Diana Butler Bass.

### 8. WITHIN EACH TOPIC IN A SESSION

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Each segment in a session features a mix of input from Diana Butler Bass and the other members of the small group in the video, plus questions for discussion or other creative activities to guide individual and group reflection.

### 9. BEFORE THE SESSION

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Each session opens with five activities for participants to use as personal preparation prior to the session.

### 10. CLOSING AND BEYOND

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Each session ends with an option that is a suggestion for ongoing personal engagement with the topic of the session. A closing prayer is provided. Groups are encouraged to follow a prayer practice that reflects their own traditions and experience.

# BEYOND THE “QUICK GUIDE”

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Helpful information and guidance for anyone using this resource:

## 1. HANDBOOK + WORKBOOK

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This handbook is a guide to the group process as well as a workbook for everyone in the group.

- We hope the handbook gives you all the information you need to feel confident in shaping the program to work for you and your fellow group members.
- The workspace provided in the handbook encourages you...
  - to respond to leading questions.
  - to write or draw your own reflections.
  - to note the helpful responses of other group members.

## 2. FIVE-SESSION RESOURCE

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This resource presents Diana Butler Bass’s insights on Spiritual Awakening, framed as five distinct topics of study:

1. Waking Up
2. Believing
3. Behaving
4. Belonging
5. Awakening

## 3. DVD-BASED RESOURCE

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The teaching content in each session comes in the form of input by Diana Butler Bass and response by members of a small group; just over 30 minutes in length.

Diana Butler Bass’s focused presentations and accessible academic authority stimulates thoughtful and heartfelt conversation among her listeners.

The edited conversations present group sharing that builds on Diana’s initial teaching. They are intended to present to you a model of small group interaction that is personal, respectful and engaged.

- You will notice that the participants in the DVD group also become our teachers. In many cases, quotes from the group members enrich the teaching component of this resource. This will also happen in your group—you will become teachers for one another.
- We hope that the DVD presentations spark conversations about those things that matter most to those who are advancing the enterprise of interfaith cooperation in the 21st Century.

## 4. EVERYONE GETS EVERYTHING

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The handbook addresses everyone in the group, not one group leader. There is no separate “Leader’s Guide.”

Unlike many small-group resources, this one makes no distinction between material for the group facilitator and for the participants. Everyone has it all! We believe this empowers you and your fellow group members to share creatively in the leadership.



## 5. GROUP FACILITATION

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We designed this for you to designate a group facilitator for each session. It does not have to be the same person for all five sessions, because everyone has all the material. It is, however, essential that you and the other group members are clear about who is facilitating each session. One or two people still have to be responsible for these kinds of things:

- making arrangements for the meeting space (see notes on Meeting Space, p. 13)
- setting up the space to be conducive to conversations in a diverse, small-group community
- creating and leading an opening to the session (see notes on Opening, p. 13)
- helping the group decide on which elements of the guide to focus on in that session
- facilitating the group conversation for that session
- keeping track of the time
- calling the group members to attend to the standards established for the group life (see notes on Group Standards, p. 13)
- creating space in the conversation for all to participate
- keeping the conversation moving along so that the group covers all that it set out to do
- ensuring that time is taken for a satisfying closing to the session
- making sure that everyone is clear about date, location and focus for the next session
- following up with people who missed the session

## 6. TIME FLEXIBILITY

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Each of the five sessions is flexible and can be between one hour and two or more hours in length: however, if you intend to cover all the material presented, you will need the full two hours.

We designed this resource for your group to tailor it to fit the space available in the life of the congregation or community using it. That might be Sunday morning for an hour before or after worship, two hours on a weekday evening, or 90 minutes on a weekday morning.

Some groups might decide to spend two sessions on one of the five major topics. There's enough material in each of the five outlines to do that. Rushing to get through more than the time comfortably allows, results in people not having the opportunity to speak about the things that matter to them.

## **7. BUILD YOUR OWN SESSION**

---

Prior to the session, it is advisable for one or more members of the group to determine what to include in the group meeting time. In some cases the session outline presents options from which you can choose. In other cases the material is organized as a progression through the three or four main topics presented by Diana Butler Bass.

- One or two people might take on the responsibility of shaping the session based on what they think will appeal to the group members. This responsibility could be shared from week to week.
- The group might take time at the end of one session to look ahead and decide on what they will cover in the next session. In the interest of time, it might be best to assign this planning to a couple of members of the group.
- You might decide to do your personal preparation for the session (the five activities in ‘Before the Session’), and when everyone comes together for the session, proceed on the basis of what topics interested people the most.

## **8. WITHIN EACH TOPIC IN A SESSION**

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Each segment in a session features a mix of input from Diana Butler Bass and the other members of the small group in the video, plus questions for discussion or other creative activities to guide individual and group reflection.

You will recognize that the activities and topics in the study guide emerge both from the structured teaching of Diana as well as the informal and spontaneous conversation of the group members. This parallels the process of your group, which will be initially led by the content of the DVD and the study guide, but then branch off in directions that emerge spontaneously from the particular life of your group.

## 9. BEFORE THE SESSION

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Each session opens with five activities for participants to use as personal preparation prior to the session,

- We intend these activities to open in you some aspect of the topic being considered in the upcoming session. This may lead you to feel more confident when addressing the issue in the group.
- Sometimes these questions are the same as ones raised in the context of the session. They offer the opportunity for you to do some personal reflection both before and/or after engaging in the group conversation on that topic.

## 10. CLOSING AND BEYOND

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Each session has a final reflective option for participants to take from the session and use as an extension of their learning. These offer a disciplined way for each participant to continue to harvest the riches of the group conversation.

A responsive closing prayer is provided at the end of each session. Groups are encouraged to follow a prayer practice that reflects their own traditions and experience.

Another aspect of closing is *evaluation*. This is not included in an intentional way in the design of the sessions; however, evaluation is such a natural and satisfying thing to do that it could be included as part of the discipline of closing each session. It's as simple as taking time to respond to these questions:

- What insights am I taking from this session?
- What contributed to my learning?
- What will I do differently as a result of my being here today?

# POINTERS ON FACILITATION

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## 1. MEETING SPACE

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- Take time to prepare the space for the group. When people come into a space that has been prepared for them, they trust the hospitality, resulting in a willingness to bring the fullness of them into the conversation. Something as simple as playing recorded music as people arrive will contribute to this sense of “a space prepared for you.”
- Think about how the space will encourage a spirit of reverence, intimacy and care. Will there be a table in the center of the circle where a candle can be lit each time the group meets? Is there room for other symbols that emerge from the group’s life?

## 2. OPENING

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- In the opening session, take time to go around the circle and introduce yourselves in some way.
- Every time a group comes together again, it takes each member time to feel fully included. Some take longer than others. An important function of facilitation is to help this happen with ease, so people find themselves participating fully in the conversation as soon as possible. We designed these sessions with this in mind. Encouraging people to share in the activity proposed under *Group Life* is one way of supporting that feeling of inclusion.
- The ritual of opening might include the lighting of a candle, an opening prayer, the singing of a hymn where appropriate, and the naming of each person present.

## 3. GROUP STANDARDS

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- There are basic standards in the life of a group that are helpful to name when a new group begins. Once they are named, you can always come back to them as a point of reference if necessary. Here are two basics:
  - Everything that is said in this group remains in the group. (*confidentiality*)
  - We will begin and end at the time agreed. (*punctuality*)
- Are there any others that you need to name as you begin? Sometimes standards emerge from the life of the group and need to be named when they become evident, otherwise they are just assumed.

I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE  
MAKER OF HEAVEN  
AND EARTH,  
AND IN JESUS CHRIST,  
WHO WAS CONCEIVED  
BY THE POWER OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT AND BORN  
OF THE VIRGIN MARY,  
WHO WAS CRUCIFIED,  
DIED, AND WAS BURIED,  
AND WHO RISES AGAIN  
ON THE THIRD DAY,  
WHO SITS AT THE  
RIGHT HAND OF THE  
FATHER, WHO WILL  
COME AGAIN TO  
JUDGE THE ALIVE  
AND THE DEAD,  
AND WHO IS  
SEATED WITH THE  
FATHER AND THE  
HOLY SPIRIT,  
TOGETHER  
GLORIFIED AND  
CONGLOMERATED,  
WHO SPEAKS  
THROUGH THE  
APOSTLES.

“ The creed could better be rendered as, “I *belove* God, maker of heaven and earth...” Could you imagine if we just switched a couple of letters in the words *believe*—to *belove*—how that would change what happens in worship? ”

—Diana Butler Bass



I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE  
MAKER OF HEAVEN  
AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS  
WHO WAS CONCEIVED  
BY THE VIRGIN MARY  
AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY  
AND LIVED UNDER PONTIUS  
PILATE AND DIED FOR US  
AND WAS BURIED AND  
ROSE AGAIN ON THE THIRD DAY  
AND ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN  
AND SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF  
THE FATHER AND WILL COME AGAIN  
TO JUDGE THE ALIVE AND THE DEAD  
AND HIS KINGDOM SHALL HAVE NO END

# SESSION | 2

## BELIEVING

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### **BEFORE THE SESSION**

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Many participants like to come to the group conversation after considering individually some of the issues that will be raised. The following five reflective activities are intended to open your mind, memories and emotions regarding some aspects of this session's topic. Use the space provided here to note your reflections.

1. Diana says that the specific shape that Christianity is going to be taking in the 21st century is already with us; we can already begin to see its contours. What do you think some of those contours are?

2. Write as many responses as you can to these two questions: *What* do you believe? *How* do you believe?

3. Has someone ever asked you, “How can you possibly believe *that* when *this* is going on?” How was your relationship with belief changed as a result of that question being asked of you?

4. In this session you will hear Diana say, “If we can begin to explain how our belief changes over time, that becomes a much different engagement with people. It’s not just handing them a piece of paper saying ‘This is what Christians are supposed to believe,’ but ‘This is how I have experienced belief over my life.’” Reflect on times in your life when you actually had to speak about the dynamic of faith and belief, when you went way beyond just repeating some aspect of your church’s teaching.

5. Read a favorite psalm. Whenever you come across a word for God, substitute the name *Beloved*. Notice how your relationship with God changes as you do this.



## GROUP LIFE

---

This is the second meeting of the group. There is already a sense of membership carried over from the first session; but there's a good chance there may be people attending for the first time. Make sure everyone is introduced and welcomed.

You might also take a few moments for a check-in on the theme of the session: *How Belief is Changing*. For example, each person might name one way that they live out *belief* now that is different than during an earlier time in their life. This is a quick 30-second check-in, not a time for lengthy storytelling! That will come later in the course of the session.

## ESSENTIAL 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR SEEING THE CHANGE

---

Play the first section of the DVD for Session 2, through Diana's presentation.

In the first part of her presentation, Diana lays out for us a framework for seeing the nature of the change that we as Christians are experiencing. She offers four key points:

1. The tradition of Christianity always changes and at times of awakening the tradition changes very rapidly and very dramatically.
2. The specific shape that Christianity is going to be taking in the 21st century is already with us. We can already begin to see its contours.
3. We're not going to a place where everything is going to be new. Human beings in the 21st century are still going to *believe*, still going to *behave* in ways related to those beliefs, and still going to have a sense of *belonging* relative to believing and behaving. We're not leaving that behind. The whole human enterprise of the "Three B's" (believing, behaving and belonging) is moving with us into the future.
4. What is changing is what the questions are under each category. During this session and the next two, we are going to examine what the questions used to be and what the questions are in the process of becoming.

In introducing herself Diana talks about her comfort with the spiritual and mystical aspect of life as well as with the scientific and academic approach to religion. How have you been involved in both of those aspects of the religious life—the spiritual and the academic? In your experience, when have you noticed that the one sustains the other?

# THE THREE B'S

**BELIEVING** (*understanding*)

Do you believe God exists?

**BEHAVING** (*action*)

Have you attended a religious service in the last week?

**Belonging** (*identity*)

Are you a Protestant, Catholic, Jew or other?

## ESSENTIAL 2: NOT WHAT YOU BELIEVE, BUT HOW

---

Diana lays out for us a powerful historical process of 500 years that has brought us to a very profound personal faith challenge for our time:

*Before the Reformation the “What do you believe?” question wasn’t significant. It was assumed throughout Europe that everybody was Christian and Catholic and that everyone believed the same thing.*

*After 1600, when there were five traditions contending for the loyalty of people, they had to be very clear about what they believed. For 200 years Christians were organizing their belief systems so that it was clear what members of various denominational loyalties believed.*

*The answers were organized into creeds and doctrines so that if somebody asked you what you believed, you could hand them something printed from your denomination about what you believe. Our traditions are very used to responding to the “what” question.*

*A few years ago I realized that hardly anybody in my life had been asking me the question, “What do you believe?” or “What do Christians believe?” The “what” question is almost empty space in my life. People just assume that they know what I think when they hear I’m a Christian.*

*This is the way the question has changed. We’ve moved from the conventional question to an experiential (or spiritual) question that has to do with how we experience belief. People will ask me the question sometimes multiple times in a single day, “How do you believe that?”*

- *“I’d be a Christian like you, but I just don’t know how to believe in Jesus.”*
- *“I’d like to go to church but I don’t know how I could ever recite the creed. How do you do that?”*
- *“I don’t know how to be a Christian and believe science at the same time.”*
- *“How in the world do you believe in the virgin-birth thing and still seem like you’re a rational, intelligent and thoughtful human being in the 21st century?”*

*Ultimately, people are requesting us to tell our experience of being a Christian person and how we put these pieces together in our lives—in our theological and philosophical worldviews. They are not nearly as concerned about what we believe anymore; they are asking how we believe it.*

*When people used to ask what we believe, they weren’t asking us personally anything; they were simply asking us for information. We could hand them something printed that was fairly objective or we could tell them to talk to a priest or minister. We didn’t necessarily have to invest our own selves in the answer.*

*But now people are saying, “How do you do it?”*

- *“How do you make sense of this story that you claim marks your life—this story about Jesus?”*
- *“How does that story connect to your life in the world?”*
- *“How do you think about science, politics and the moral life?”*

*People are asking us, not just for our ideas about God, but are asking us to give them our story about the convictions that form our lives. That can be very intimidating for people to engage in.*

*This is a huge switch.*

*This is the new question.*

*This has become the primary faith question in our time.*

1. What experience have you had personally of the kind of challenge that Diana is describing, namely, being required to speak about the convictions that form your life, not just your ideas about God as expressed in such things as creeds and church teachings?
  
2. Diana suggests that this requirement to be more personal in speaking of one's faith can be intimidating for people. What feelings and/or thoughts do you have about it?

## OPTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

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Before going on to choose from the following options for conversation and reflection, watch the second section of the DVD for Session 2, in which Diana continues to teach, but in the context of her conversation with members of the group.

### OPTION 1: ON HOW TO LIVE THE EXPERIENCE OF BELIEF

---

The conversation that follows and that you have heard on the DVD leads us into profound reflection on the changing nature of belief that Diana has been addressing. Read the conversation and the affirmations that accompany it, then spend time on the reflective questions that follow, which are intended to stimulate similar conversation in your group.

C.J. says:

*When I was faced with answering the “how” question after my wife passed away and my kids asked me directly, “Dad, how can you go to church, how can you pray? Where was God in this?” I have to admit that I had never come to grips with an answer that I felt was satisfactory. The “how” gets into my gut and bothers me because I’m not sure I have an answer and I don’t know what to say.*

#### **Affirmation 1:**

*There are times when we cannot answer the questions that seem to lie at the very heart of our faith.*

Diana says:

*After the children were shot at the school in Newtown, Connecticut, I was on the phone with my best friend who happens to be an atheist. We were talking about the memorial service that was televised and she said to me, "You see, it's things like this that I don't know how it is you can be a Christian. I mean this kind of evil and the answers that I'm hearing from religious people in the world. This makes no sense to me. How does your faith account for the murder of these children?"*

*I feel that I'm pretty able to deal with "how" questions. I'm pretty intentional about thinking in this way. When she said that, I was literally silenced because she said it in such a forceful way. I just confessed to her, "You know, I don't know how, and I have to say I'm pretty upset about this." She replied, "That's actually all I need to hear you say. I don't want to hear the easy answers coming from Christians on this one. I want to hear you say that you don't know how."*

**Affirmation 2:**

*Speaking the truth about our inability to come up with answers is not only the only thing to do, it is the very best thing to do.*

Diana continues:

*She led me to a place to understand my own doubt, which is part of our spiritual lives. I think that the moment that we don't know what to say is the moment we have encountered the "how" questions in a deep sense and that becomes holy ground for being with people or for looking at what it is going to mean to be Christian in the 21st century when we will increasingly be encountered by these how questions.*

**Affirmation 3:**

*Sharing our vulnerability creates a holy ground where relationships can be formed and deepened.*

Marilyn observes:

*The “how” changes. It changes with just living. It changes with our experiences. It changes with time. There were two times when I thought I knew the “how,” and then something impossible happened. First, my husband died. I had gone through all the stages of adjusting—his illness—his dying—and I was living in a place I never thought I would be, living like I thought I would never live and experiencing growth of the “how” in ways that I didn’t think it could grow. I became comfortable with that “how.”*

**Affirmation 4:**

*Life circumstances will constantly offer challenges to the stability of belief we thought would stay forever.*

Marilyn continues:

*Then all of a sudden I found that my kidney was dead and I was going to be a kidney dialysis patient for as long as that would last, which could be three or four years. So now it’s the “how” to prepare for the reality that I might be dying. And then I thought that a lot of the restraints I had on my life didn’t need to be there anymore, because I wouldn’t really be here that long. I didn’t have to think in terms of 20 more years of life. Many of the ways I thought I had to behave I really didn’t have to. It freed me to feel ways that I didn’t think I could feel.*

*Then I got a transplant. So now I had to pull back thinking that I was going to be here for 20 more years. I had to make more adjustments in my thinking. The “how” developed and with it growth I didn’t think I would have to face. It all goes back to what my mother said, “Just keep living and what you don’t understand, you may develop a way to understand it or you may develop a way to live so that you don’t have to understand everything. Put it in the hands of God. God knows.”*

**Affirmation 5:**

*We are saved by our capacity for growth in understanding and in our willingness not to have all the answers.*



Diana responds:

*That's a beautiful testimony to the experience of belief. What I'm talking about is what it is to experience belief not just be able to have a piece of paper so you can give the same answers over and over again. When we think about formalized creeds or doctrines, there's a very real way in which people in the larger cultural context—for example, when we say we believe in Jesus—think of it as a flat creedal statement. If we can begin to explain how our belief changes over time, that becomes a much different engagement with people. It's not just handing them a piece of paper saying this is what Christians are supposed to believe, but this is how I have experienced belief over my life.*

**Affirmation 6:**

*We will find increasing opportunity to speak openly about the dynamic, ever-changing reality of our faith life. It will matter that we speak.*

1. As you read this conversation and the affirmations, where do you find it touching on the experience of your own journey of faith?
2. What new options do you see for yourself after hearing the stories and reflections offered here? If possible, speak about specific situations in your own life.

## OPTION 2: BELOVING THE BELOVED

---

Diana takes time to introduce us to a more accurate sense of our key word in this session: *belief* and *believing*:

*The word belief is a very strange word in English. When you look at the New Testament, the word for believe in Greek is the word pistis or pisteuo which means “to trust” or “to faith.” There’s really no verb in English that means “to faith,” so when the Bible was being translated from Greek into English in the 16th and 17th centuries, translators really struggled with how to take the Greek pisteuo meaning “to faith” and put it in English. They came across the word believe, which in their context did not mean to have ideas or opinions about something. It meant “to believe”—to be devoted to something or to trust something.*

*So the word believe actually holds within its roots this very experiential kind of dimension of “how.” Believing isn’t about signing your name on the dotted line consenting to a group of ideas or having opinions about God. It’s literally our disposition toward that God. In fact the creed could better be rendered as, “I belove God, maker of heaven and earth...” Could you imagine if we just switched a couple of letters in the word believe—to belove—how that would change what happens in worship?*

Sharon picks up this sense of belief by reflecting on the way that spiritual practice shapes her disposition toward the holy—her *beloving* of God:

*I’ve been listening to you all and not thinking so much about events in my life but about intentional spiritual practice. That’s how I believe. I’m a spiritual practice enthusiast. I try lots of different things. I love practices from icon work to meditation, from different types of prayer to reading scripture. That shows me how to believe. It forms me and shapes me. These are times I cherish.*

1. What difference would it make to you if you were to say or think “belove” whenever the word *believe* was given by the text (for example in saying the creed)?

2. What difference does it make to think of God as your Beloved rather than the one in whom you believe? Take a favorite psalm and whenever you come across a word for God, substitute the word *Beloved*.
3. What spiritual practices deepen your relationship with the Beloved?

### **OPTION 3: JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I HAD IT ALL FIGURED OUT...** **(an option for personal reflection following the session)**

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Following the session you will continue to think about issues raised both on the DVD and in your small group. This suggestion for journaling is offered to support you in continuing your reflection beyond the session time.

These are the six affirmation statements from Option 1, changed to make them more personal to you. Choose one or more of them and use it as a starting point either for a journal reflection or for a conversation with a friend over your favorite beverage.

- There are times when I cannot answer the questions that seem to lie at the very heart of my faith.
- Speaking the truth about my inability to come up with answers is not only the only thing to do, it is the very best thing to do.
- Sharing my vulnerability creates a holy ground where my relationships can be formed and deepened.
- Life circumstances will constantly offer challenges to the stability of belief I thought would stay forever.
- I am saved by my capacity for growth in understanding and in my willingness not to have all the answers.
- I will find increasing opportunity to speak openly about the dynamic, ever-changing reality of my faith life. It will matter that I speak.

## CLOSING

---

*One:* Presence of Possibilities,

*All:* Beloved, Spirit Within.

*One:* Presence of Hope,

*All:* Beloved, Eternal Now.

*One:* Presence of Compassion,

*All:* Beloved, Heart of our Hearts.

*One:* Presence of Truth,

*All:* Beloved, Source of all Courage.

*One:* Presence of Life emerging,

*All:* Beloved, Our Holy Ground.

*One:* Presence of Blessing,

*All:* Belove us now and always. *Amen.*