

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Interactive Reader & Reflection Workbook

for

**In My Father's House,
There Are Many Mansions**

Rethinking God, Science, and the Future of Our Shared World

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WELCOME

A Place to Think Honestly

This workbook is an invitation to examine, listen, and act—not a test of whether you agree with every argument in the book.

Use it privately, with a reading partner, or in a family, book club, classroom, congregation, interfaith group, or community organization. Move slowly. A meaningful response is more valuable than completing every page.

Reader name (optional)

Date or season of reading

How to Use This Workbook

- Read the corresponding chapter before completing its module.
- Distinguish evidence, interpretation, belief, and personal experience.
- Write what you actually think—not what you believe you are expected to say.
- Return to earlier responses when later chapters change your understanding.
- Use the book's Notes and Selected Sources when you want to investigate a claim further.

CONVERSATION COVENANT

Practices for a Constructive Conversation

1. Speak from your own experience rather than claiming to represent an entire religion or community.
2. Describe another person's position fairly before criticizing it.
3. Distinguish among evidence, interpretation, belief, and personal experience.
4. Allow sincere questions without treating them as attacks.
5. Do not pressure anyone to reveal personal experiences they wish to keep private.
6. Criticize ideas and institutions without denying the dignity of the people associated with them.
7. When harm is described, listen before defending the intention of the person or institution responsible.
8. Accept that the conversation may end with important disagreements.

Unity does not require uniformity. The goal is greater truthfulness, understanding, and responsibility.

A SHARED METHOD

Five Practices for the Journey

Examine. Notice what you inherited and what you have assumed.

Distinguish. Separate evidence, interpretation, belief, and experience.

Listen. Understand another person accurately before answering.

Repair. Let changed understanding produce changed conduct.

Cooperate. Join others in practical work that protects life.

Four Ways of Knowing

Scientific: What can observation, testing, and revisable evidence establish?

Historical: How have time, culture, power, and circumstance shaped understanding?

Philosophical: What assumptions are being made about truth, knowledge, value, or logic?

Theological or Spiritual: What questions arise about meaning, purpose, love, and responsibility?

The lenses can inform one another without becoming interchangeable. Honest conversation depends upon keeping both their contributions and their limits visible.

CHAPTER 1

A Child Looking for God

Our earliest ideas about God usually arrive through family, place, worship, and emotion before we are able to examine them.

Pause and Reflect

1. What is your earliest remembered idea or feeling about God?

2. Which people, places, or events most shaped that image?

3. What in your early formation felt loving or life-giving?

4. What produced fear, confusion, or unanswered questions?

CHAPTER 1 PRACTICE

A Spiritual Autobiography Timeline

Mark five moments that shaped your understanding of God or the source of life. Include both affirming moments and moments of tension.

1. What happened?

2. What did I believe then?

3. What do I understand differently now?

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 2

The God We Inherit

A tradition can carry wisdom while also carrying human assumptions formed by history, culture, authority, and survival.

Pause and Reflect

1. Which beliefs about God did you inherit before you could evaluate them?

2. Which inherited beliefs still nourish compassion, courage, or responsibility?

3. Which beliefs now require closer examination?

4. How did belonging or fear of exclusion affect what could be questioned?

CHAPTER 2 PRACTICE

Trace One Inherited Belief

Choose one inherited belief and trace it without contempt for the people who taught it.

1. Where did I receive it?

2. What fruit has it produced?

3. What evidence, experience, or wisdom might refine it?

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 3

When Faith and Experience Collide

Disillusionment can become discernment when conflict between belief and experience leads to honest, patient inquiry.

Pause and Reflect

1. When has lived experience challenged a belief you held?

2. Did your community welcome the question, avoid it, or punish it?

3. What did the tension teach you about faith and authority?

4. What remains unresolved without needing a premature answer?

CHAPTER 3 PRACTICE

Belief, Experience, Learning

Describe one collision between a belief and an experience. Separate what happened from the meaning you first assigned to it.

1. The belief I carried

2. The experience that challenged it

3. The learning or open question that followed

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 4

Human Language and the Mystery of God

Language about God is necessary, but every image and metaphor reveals something while concealing something else.

Pause and Reflect

1. Which metaphors for God are most meaningful to you?

2. What does each metaphor illuminate?

3. What might it distort if treated as a complete description?

4. How can conviction and humility coexist in spiritual language?

CHAPTER 4 PRACTICE

Rewrite with Humility

Choose one absolute statement about God and rewrite it so that it remains meaningful while acknowledging the limits of human language.

1. Original claim

2. What the claim is trying to protect

3. A more precise and humble expression

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 5

Fear, Punishment, and the Limits of Ancient Understanding

Fear may regulate behavior, but moral maturity asks whether our images of justice are consistent with love, truth, dignity, and restoration.

Pause and Reflect

1. Where have fear and reverence been confused in your formation?

2. Can consequences protect life without becoming revenge?

3. What happens when suffering is automatically interpreted as punishment?

4. What kind of moral growth does fear produce—and what can it not produce?

CHAPTER 5 PRACTICE

The Character Test

Test one teaching about punishment through love, life, justice, truth, and fruit.

1. Where the teaching appears strong

2. Where it raises concern

3. What further investigation is needed

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 6

Love as the Character of the Source

Unconditional love is not passivity. It creates, protects, corrects, restores, and expands the conditions in which life can flourish.

Pause and Reflect

1. How do you distinguish unconditional love from unlimited permission?

2. Which movement of love—creating, protecting, correcting, restoring, or expanding—is hardest for you?

3. Where has loving accountability helped you grow?

4. What would it mean to judge a belief by what it helps life become?

CHAPTER 6 PRACTICE

Five Movements of Love

Apply the five movements of love to one relationship, conflict, community, or institution.

1. What should be protected or created?

2. What must be corrected or repaired?

3. What new possibility could be opened?

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 7

What Science Can Tell Us About Life

Science investigates the living world through observation, testing, shared criticism, and revision; its strength includes its willingness to correct itself.

Pause and Reflect

1. What scientific understanding has changed the way you see life?

2. What makes a claim scientifically testable?

3. Why is revision a strength rather than a failure?

4. How might biological interdependence enlarge moral responsibility?

CHAPTER 7 PRACTICE

Known, Inferred, Unknown

Choose one question about life and sort your current understanding into three categories.

1. What evidence establishes

2. What I reasonably infer

3. What remains unknown or outside scientific testing

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 8

What Science Cannot Decide for Us

Evidence can describe conditions and consequences, but it cannot by itself decide what is sacred, meaningful, loving, or morally required.

Pause and Reflect

1. What question of meaning matters deeply to you?

2. What part of that question can evidence illuminate?

3. What value judgment remains after the facts are known?

4. Are you equally willing to say “I do not know” in science and theology?

CHAPTER 8 PRACTICE

Four Ways of Knowing

Examine one issue through scientific, historical, philosophical, and theological or spiritual lenses without collapsing their boundaries.

1. What each lens can contribute

2. Where each lens reaches its limit

3. Where the lenses can responsibly converse

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 9

Interconnection, Evolution, and Responsibility

Life's interdependence does not erase conflict, but it reveals that flourishing depends upon relationships, systems, and responsibilities larger than the isolated self.

Pause and Reflect

1. Where do you most clearly experience interdependence?

2. What do competition and cooperation each explain—and fail to explain?

3. Which people or ecosystems bear costs you rarely see?

4. How does shared dependence change the meaning of responsibility?

CHAPTER 9 PRACTICE

Your Sphere of Responsibility

Name what you control, what you can influence, and what exceeds your individual power but invites coordinated action.

1. One action within my control

2. One influence I can use

3. One trustworthy group I can join

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 10

When Faith Becomes Humble Enough to Learn

Faith becomes more resilient when it can distinguish enduring spiritual insight from human interpretation and allow truth to correct understanding.

Pause and Reflect

1. What belief have you revised without abandoning your spiritual life?

2. What makes a community safe enough for honest correction?

3. How can sacred texts be honored without treating every interpretation as final?

4. What would intellectual repentance look like in practice?

CHAPTER 10 PRACTICE

Revise Without Contempt

Identify a belief that may need refinement. Preserve the truth or value it was trying to serve while correcting what no longer holds.

1. What deserves to be preserved

2. What evidence or harm requires correction

3. How I would now express the belief

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 11

Truth Without Religious Domination

People can hold serious convictions without coercion; the dignity and freedom of conscience of others are not threats to truth.

Pause and Reflect

1. When does persuasion become pressure or domination?

2. Can you describe an opposing view in terms its holder would recognize as fair?

3. Would you defend another person's freedom of conscience as strongly as your own?

4. What fruits should reveal whether religious power is serving life?

CHAPTER 11 PRACTICE

A Dialogue Without Domination

Prepare for a respectful conversation with someone who differs from you. Your first task is accurate understanding, not victory.

1. A sincere question I can ask

2. How I will summarize before responding

3. A shared concern on which we might cooperate

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 12

Unity Without Uniformity

Human unity does not require identical beliefs. It requires a shared moral floor: dignity, truthfulness, freedom of conscience, nonviolence, and responsibility.

Pause and Reflect

1. What difference can you respect without pretending to agree?

2. What moral commitments should cross religious and cultural lines?

3. What stereotype about another group do you need to investigate?

4. What common work is possible before theological agreement?

CHAPTER 12 PRACTICE

Enter Another Mansion

Learn from a tradition different from your own using reliable sources and, if possible, a respectful conversation with a practitioner.

1. Wisdom I encountered

2. A stereotype that became less accurate

3. A real disagreement I can now express more fairly

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

CHAPTER 13

Building a Life-Centered Human Future

A life-centered civilization evaluates education, economics, technology, leadership, and stewardship by the life they protect and the future they make possible.

Pause and Reflect

1. What does flourishing mean beyond consumption, status, or survival?

2. Which institution most shapes your daily choices?

3. Who receives its benefits, who carries its risks, and who can challenge mistakes?

4. What future consequence is being ignored for immediate advantage?

CHAPTER 13 PRACTICE

The Five-Test Audit

Evaluate one institutional decision through the life, dignity, truth, power, and future tests.

1. Where the decision supports life

2. Where it fails or transfers harm

3. A more life-centered alternative

One action, question, or conversation I will carry forward

INTEGRATION

From Chapters to a Larger Practice

Use these pages after each part of the book or return to them after completing all thirteen chapters.

Each integration page asks you to bring several chapters into one honest assessment. You do not need to force certainty. Name what is strong, what is changing, and what remains open.

The idea in the book that most enlarged my understanding

The idea I most need to investigate or challenge

A way my conduct should change if I take this inquiry seriously

PART INTEGRATION

Part I Integration — Examining What We Inherited

Map what you received, what you have examined, and what remains open. An open question is not a failure; it is a form of honesty.

What I now see more clearly

What remains difficult or unresolved

A responsible next step

PART INTEGRATION

Part II Integration — Testing Our Image of God

Apply the love, life, justice, truth, and fruit tests to one belief about the character of God.

What I now see more clearly

What remains difficult or unresolved

A responsible next step

PART INTEGRATION

Part III Integration — Science and Theology in Conversation

Use the scientific, historical, philosophical, and theological or spiritual lenses on one issue. Keep both their contributions and boundaries visible.

What I now see more clearly

What remains difficult or unresolved

A responsible next step

PART INTEGRATION

Part IV Integration — Living Among the Many Mansions

Practice informed respect: understand another tradition accurately, name real differences fairly, and identify common work.

What I now see more clearly

What remains difficult or unresolved

A responsible next step

PART INTEGRATION

Part V Integration — A Life-Centered Future

Move from concern to responsibility by naming what you control, what you influence, and where coordinated action is needed.

What I now see more clearly

What remains difficult or unresolved

A responsible next step

PRACTICE

A Thirty-Day Life-Centered Practice

The goal is not perfection. It is to let examination, listening, repair, and cooperation become visible in ordinary life.

Complete one weekly practice at a pace suited to your circumstances. The work may take thirty days or longer. What matters is that insight becomes conduct.

WEEK 1

Examination

Notice one belief or reaction you normally leave unquestioned.

Where did this come from?

Is it supported by evidence?

Does it reflect love or fear?

What effect does it have upon others?

End-of-week reflection: What changed in my understanding or conduct?

WEEK 2

Listening

Have one conversation with someone whose religious, cultural, or philosophical outlook differs from yours. Your task is accurate understanding, not persuasion.

What sincere question will I ask?

What human experience did I hear beneath the position?

How did the other person correct my summary?

End-of-week reflection: What changed in my understanding or conduct?

WEEK 3

Repair

Identify one relationship, practice, or institutional habit that causes avoidable harm. Take one realistic step toward repair.

What harm or rupture needs attention?

What is within my responsibility?

What concrete change will show that direction has changed?

End-of-week reflection: What changed in my understanding or conduct?

WEEK 4

Cooperation

Join at least one other person in an action that protects or strengthens life.

What need or possibility will we address?

Who will join me?

What did our action teach us about shared responsibility?

End-of-week reflection: What changed in my understanding or conduct?

COMMITMENT

What I Am Adding to the House

Complete these statements in your own words. Revisit them after thirty days.

I believe the source of life is...

My understanding remains uncertain about...

The inherited belief I most need to examine is...

The people I need to understand more honestly are...

The part of the living world I feel responsible for protecting is...

The power or influence I must use more responsibly is...

The action I will begin within the next thirty days is...

The person or community I will ask to join me is...

CLOSING REFLECTION

A Wall or a Doorway?

Every belief enters the world through conduct. Every institution reveals its values through the lives it protects or neglects. Every generation adds something to the house that future generations will inherit.

What am I adding?

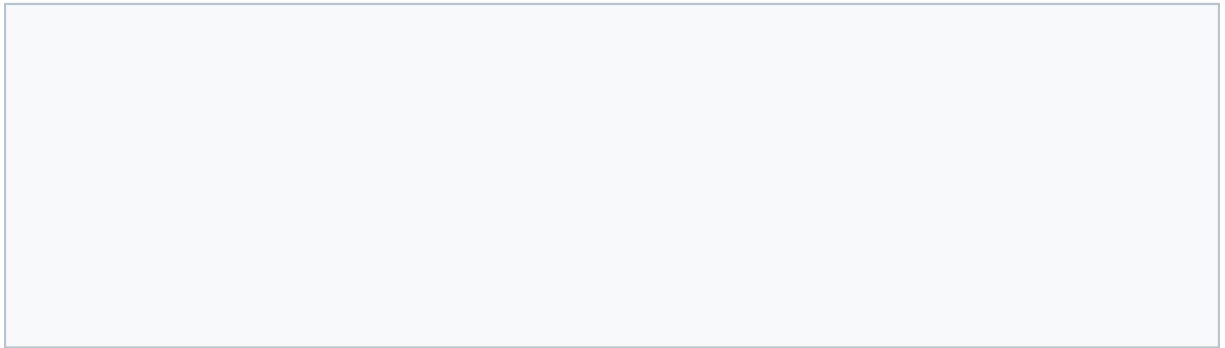
A wall or a doorway?

Fear or understanding?

Domination or service?

Indifference or responsibility?

My closing response



There are many mansions. There is one human family. There is one living house.