



HI!

First of all, I'm thrilled you've chosen to read *Not All Who Wander (Spiritually) Are Lost* in your group. Truly, I thought about these kinds of discussions and about each person who would participate as I wrote the book. And I prayed for you.

Church is complicated because a group of humans coming together is always complicated. What we have going for us is Jesus! He sits at the head of the table and there's room for every kind of Christian there.

I'm a reader too and I know how many great books there are available to us (if I were there with you I could give you a dozen off the top of my head). It was reading books that started me on this church journey. I discovered that wandering from church to church, from spiritual practice to spiritual practice, left me in wonder and awe of a God who is that big.

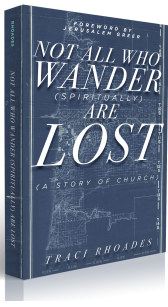
Enjoy your own journey through this book as you learn my own church story, and parts of others. I'll leave you with this quote:

"None of us have God figured out, though God doesn't seem to mind this one bit. But together, we can seek more."

- traci

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Not All Who Wander (Spiritually) Are Lost: A Story of Church **By Traci Rhoades**

Introduction

- “[The silence] feels like something I have been missing all my life without even knowing it” (p. xii). What is your reaction to the opening story about the author visiting her first Ash Wednesday service?
- Priest: “It’s OK. We can still be friends” (p. xiii). Do you agree with the priest - can Christians in different traditions be friends?
- In our tumultuous (defined as full of confusion, change or uncertainty) times, what are some ways Christians can live in genuine friendship? Brainstorm about what might be potential barriers to Christian friendships.

Memorable Quote: “Church, I believe it deep within me, even in these tumultuous times, we can still be friends” (page xiii).

Chapter One

- “Jesse, about four years old at the time, said he had an anniversary every week. When you’re a toddler, some jokes never get old” (p. 3). What are some funny things that you have experienced in church?
- The author shares about her granddad’s Alzheimer’s disease diagnosis on page 5. As your mind fades with age someday, what do you think your subconscious utterances (such as Bible verses, hymns, prayers) might be?
- Meet Colleen (pages 8-10); What are some of your experiences with Lord’s supper or communion?
- Meet Ronne (pages 11-12); Did church play a role in your childhood? How does it look different now?
- “Much of my childhood theology was developed at the week-long Vacation Bible Schools [VBS] we’d attend each summer” (page 14). What were your VBS experiences? Have you ever considered the impact it might have on unchurched children or the community as a whole?
- Meet Donnie (pages 20-23); Do you have a family member who influenced your faith?

Memorable Quote: “If you’re in the church long enough it will disappoint you, I promise. The way I always saw it, disappointment left me with choices. I could stick it out and try to make a positive change in the church I attended. I could determine the fellowship was broken enough I needed to find a new church home. Or I could ultimately decide God was to blame for the hurt and suffering, causing me to abandon church altogether. This last choice never seemed a viable option to me” (page 23).

Chapter Two

- “Pastor Gene resigned. In the interim, we had a few men take the pulpit as guests. There was talk of another search committee” (page 26). Describe your experience with church leadership changes.
- Discuss how a family might determine when it’s time to break fellowship with a church and look for a new one.
- Meet Crystal (pages 27-28); Have you visited an Amish community? What did you think about the Amish tradition of *Rumspringa*?
- In this chapter, the author shares about a number of Christian friends she has made over the years who vary in worship traditions, ethnicity and sexual orientation. How diverse are your Christian friendships?
- Meet Reba (pages 33-34); Do you have any experiences with charismatic/Pentecostal denominations?
- Meet Bailey (pages 37-39); In what ways are your church experiences different from that of your parents?
- From potlucks to Wednesday night dinners, the author has good memories about the relationship between church and food. What are your own memories?
- Meet Leslie (pages 44-46); Share about ways you have seen churches partner together in a community.

Memorable Quote: “You’re not going to find the perfect church experience. In fact, the more involved you get, you’re sure to find flaws in these all-too-human establishments. Yet, the local church is where Christ chooses to do his work on this earth, through the Holy Spirit who lives in the body of believers as a whole” (page 36).

Chapter Three

- Meet Amy (48-51); Tell about the buildings where you’ve gone to church.
- Meet Quantrilla (pages 55-56); What legalistic (defined as excessive and improper use of the law) rules have you seen enforced among blood and church families?
- The author writes about her experiences finding a church home as a single woman in a new city. Do you have experiences with finding a new church as a single person and/or due to a move?
- Meet Sarah (pages 63-65); We as people need to remember that churches are comprised of people — sinners. Occasionally, deception can occur in the church. If you’re willing, share about ways you’ve experienced deception in the church.

Memorable Quote: “Talk with anyone who’s been in a church for a number of years, and they’ll share their stories about church discipline, fallen pastors, and church splits. Or maybe they won’t talk to you about these times. They are some of the rawest moments a person experiences in the church. Often times, it seems we don’t want to talk about it. But maybe we’d all be better off if we did” (page 63).

Chapter Four

- “We called our neighbors, who were caretakers for the Mt. Olive Church of my childhood, and they graciously told us we could have our wedding there” (page 67). Have you returned to a former church for a visit after some years away? How was it?
- The author chronicles the journey her and her husband went on to find a church to call “home.” What are some of your discussion points when looking for a church as a married couple?
- How do you and your spouse live a shared faith life (if you do)? What traditions did you bring individually from your faiths? What traditions have you established together?
- Meet Pauline (pages 72-76); If you have have switched church traditions, think about, reflect and tell your group about that experience.
- “The people who surrounded us as we mourned our dad and laid him to rest there at Mt. Olive Church cemetery were the loved ones of my childhood” (page 77). When has the church ministered to you in times of grief or tragedy?

Memorable Quotes: “The more I examine the ways we worship Jesus, the more I’m convinced God is big enough to embrace our differences” (page 71).

Chapter Five

- “It never occurred to me to look beyond evangelicals for a home church... The doctrines in these churches, although differences do exist, overall line up with what we believe” (page 80). What is your criteria when looking for a new church? If you have never had to look for a new church, what would your dream church look like?
- “For more than ten years now, Pastor Jason has been my pastor, longer than any other pastor” (page 87). Share a story about one of your pastors.
- Meet Aaron (pages 88-92); If you’re comfortable doing so, tell about a time when you felt alienated from the church. Did you find there were still ways to have Christian fellowship? What brought you back?
- The author describes how her long-time pastor, Jason, took a “vacation” due to his feelings of burn out. How can we as a local church care for our pastor’s well-being in a nurturing way?
- There is a common quote attributed to Marco Antonio de Dominis way back in 1617 “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.” Give your response to this idea.
- The author has attended churches of all sizes. If you have attended churches of different sizes, what are some unique characteristics of each?

Memorable Quote: “I thought I’d arrived at what God had been preparing me to do my whole life” (page 87).

Chapter Six

- “[My daughter’s first opportunity to take communion] was one example of a time when I offered lip service to how open I was in learning about the various ways Christians observed their faith but what would I choose to do when it came time to put it to action in my own personal life” (page 97)? What are some things you have had to explain to your child about church?
- Meet Rhonda (pages 98-99); Share a few things you’d like your children to learn about church from a young age. Do you want their church experience to mirror yours? In what ways would you like it to differ?
- How willing are you to expose your kids to different spiritual practices? Think of various ways parents could do this.
- On page 102 the author mentions the phrase “remember your baptism.” What do you think this means?
- Meet Ed (pages 103-106); Have you experienced a wide variety of local church experiences in your own life? What effects do you think this has on an individual’s faith?

Memorable Quote: “My daughter is forging a relationship with Jesus in her own way... I want her to find a home church but also to love her Christian brothers and sisters worldwide” (page 108-109).

Chapter Seven & Epilogue

- Meet Nicole (pages 111-112); What is the most unique worship experience you’ve had? How’d you feel?
- In the final chapter the author expresses her excitement over new things she has already done, as well as things on her spiritual bucket list. What is a new spiritual practice or worship service you’d like to try?
- Have you read books about people of other faith traditions? Create a reading list with your group.
- Meet Phoebe (pages 118-120); What do you know about the Orthodox tradition? What’s something unique to Coptic Orthodox believers you learned from Phoebe’s story in the book?
- The author attended an Orthodox Forgiveness Vespers service. After reflecting on this experience and being sorrowful for having misjudged other Christian denominations over the years, she asked, “Who would you stand before and ask forgiveness (page 122)?” Who comes to mind as you read this?
- Has your assessment of what it means to be a Christian changed at all as a result of reading this book?
- From the epilogue, spend a few minutes brainstorming what it might look like to be a more unified, worldwide Church.
- After reading this book, what are some next steps you’ll commit to doing, hoping that you might experience more of Jesus?

Memorable Quote: “The more I interact with the church, my heart longs for a unity, even when we don’t agree. A healing” (page 127).