



Eternal Echoes

By John O'Donohue
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Plot Summary

A pioneering work of Celtic wisdom, John O'Donohue's *Eternal Echoes* embarks upon a journey in discovering the heart of our postmodern world -- a hungry, lonesome world that suffers from a sense of isolation and fragmentation. There is a divine restlessness in the human heart, our eternal echo of longing that lives deep within us and never lets us settle for what we have or where we are. Now, in this exquisitely crafted, inspirational book, John O'Donohue explores that most basic of human desires - the desire to belong. It is a desire that constantly draws us toward new possibilities of self-discovery, friendship, and creativity.

From this luminous, richly-textured book we can gain insight into our troubled times, drawing inspiration from Ireland's enduring spiritual heritage of Celtic thought and imagination. It is a heritage of profound, mystical wisdom that will open the pathways to peace and contentment, and lead us to love with creativity, honor, and compassion in the one life that has been given to us.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is there such a crisis of belonging in our times? What are the characteristics of our fragmented and broken belonging? What are the voices of longing in your heart at this time in your life? Where do you think you were before you came here? What is the true relationship of longing and belonging? In your childhood, how did longing and belonging relate? In what ways do you actually belong in the world?
2. Human presence is unique, passionate and complex: discuss. What styles of presence do you have? How are you present to people who are angry, indifferent or threatening? Where is your anger? Is there any ascetic dimension to your life? Freedom also consists in keeping the contours of your choices porous: discuss. How do you incarnate longing?
3. What is false belonging? Why are you afraid of freedom? The images others make for us are never sufficient: discuss. How are guilt and shame related? Where is the haunted room in your mind? Where are the walls of your private prisons? Can you identify in your life the gifts brought to you by the angels of attraction and inspiration?
4. Suffering and evil are the most critical evidence against our belief in a good, kind God: discuss. Can there be growth and creativity without darkness? Why are we so vulnerable? Is spontaneity disappearing from our lives? Does suffering eventually give way to transformation? How important is failure in your life? No wound is ever silent: discuss.
5. What is your understanding of prayer? When and how do you pray? How does prayer help us to see things differently? How is wonder related to prayer? Why is wonder so vital to the world of spirituality? How does prayer change our experience of space and time? Write out your own prayer to suit the rhythm of your life and the shape of your soul.
6. What are the absences in your life? How does presence differ from absence? When do you experience real presence? When we talk too easily about ourselves, we cheapen our mystery: discuss. How does the role of participant and observer balance in your life? Discuss a philosophy of loss. What pathways toward new community lie hidden around us? What is the grief in your life? Who are the people you never hear from? What traditions do you really belong to? How can you reclaim the traditions that belong to you?