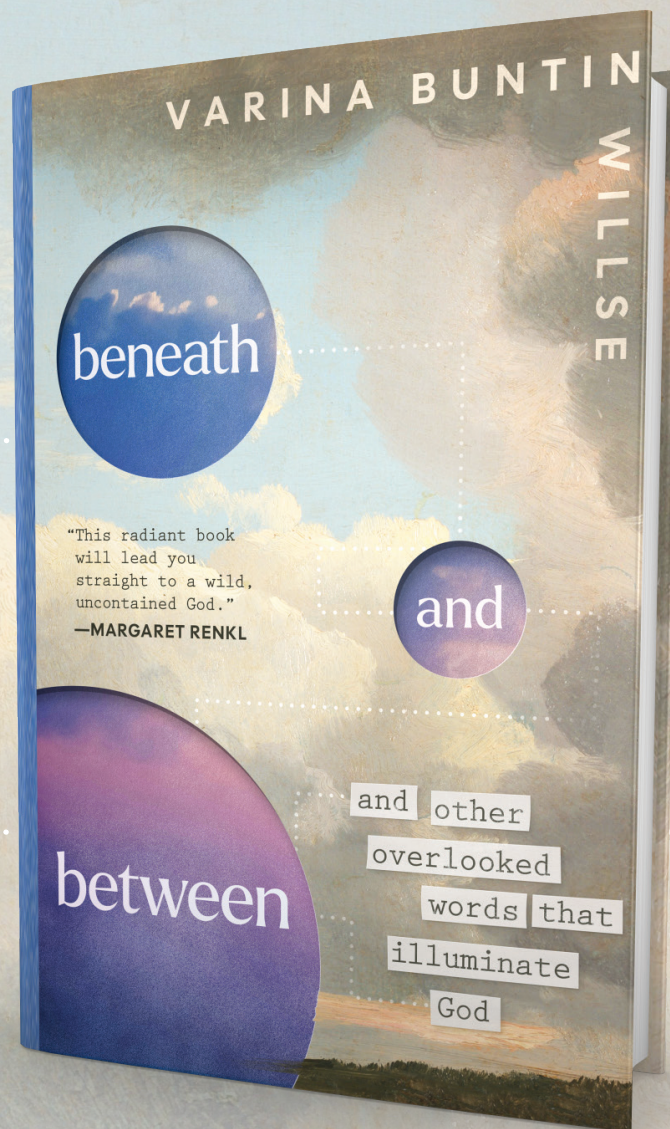


A Resource Guide



Beneath and Between

And Other Overlooked Words
that Illuminate God

Dear Reader,

A warm welcome.

When I attend writing conferences and tune in to publishing webinars, the knowledgeable speakers often tell those of us sitting in the audience (or at our screens) the same nugget of wisdom over and over again: *Find your people*. Well, you are my people. I am so glad that you are here. I am so grateful that you are reading *Beneath and Between*. And I am overjoyed that you want to dig into the ideas more fully.



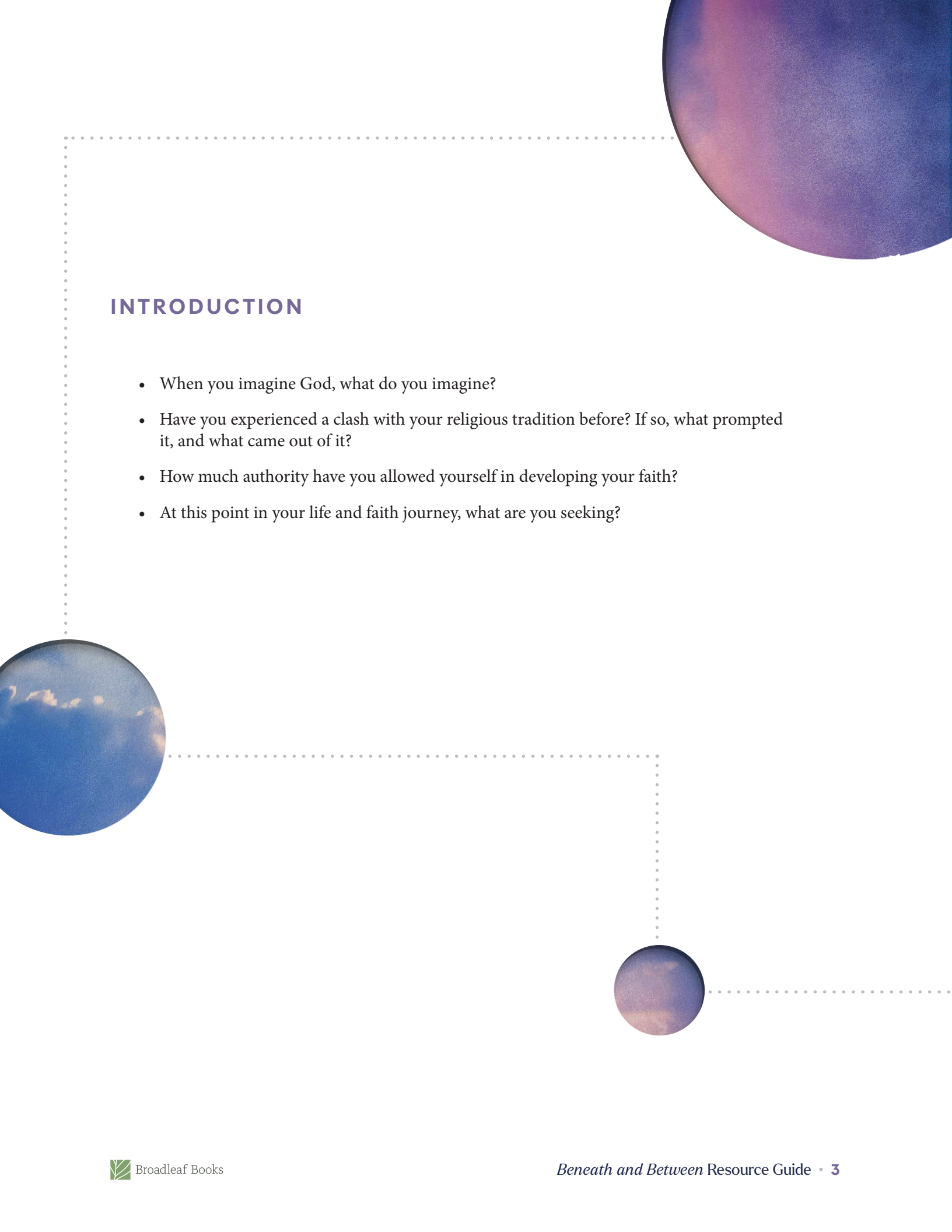
A few things before you get started on this Resource Guide:

1. All Resource Guides have questions, and this one is no different. Generally speaking, we don't really love questions. We think we do or we say we do, but truth be told, we are too busy or too tired for them, especially the open-ended ones that require us to ponder. And yet, we know that a good, probing question is an epiphany waiting to happen. Try not to skip over them (or at least most of them).
2. Writing is your friend here, because it also happens to be a portal. Writing helps us discover what we think and feel as well as what we know. If at all possible (and I do believe it's possible), use writing as a tool to help you ponder these questions. Getting a fresh journal or notebook always helps.
3. Inquiry loves company. Considering these questions in earnest with a trusted companion or in community with other curious folks will enrich your understanding.
4. That being said, a deep solo dive is a thing of courage and fruition. I had to enter my own period of solitary deep welling to write this book. If this leg of your journey is just about you and God and no one else, may this guide help you and serve you well.
5. Some of us are visual learners, so I have included a little diagram to accompany each chapter. There does seem to be something about seeing the preposition illustrated that helps us get it. One of my three exceptionally talented and brilliant daughters created these for us. (That was very kind of her, because she was newly sixteen at the time and could have been at the Sonic drive-through instead. Thanks, MV.)
6. Some of us like a summary, a core takeaway. For each preposition, I offer a statement summing up what I think that preposition reveals about the nature of God, but honestly, I would prefer to know what *you* think. This is about you, and for you. (See how nuanced these stealthy little prepositions can be . . .).

That's it. It's all yours. And, thank you again.

Varina

www.varinabuntinwillse.com // @varinabuntinwillse

A decorative layout featuring a large dotted line forming a square frame. In the top right corner, a large circular image shows a purple and blue nebula. In the bottom left corner, a circular image shows a blue sky with white clouds. In the bottom right corner, a smaller circular image shows a purple and blue nebula. The title 'INTRODUCTION' is positioned within the dotted line frame on the left side.

INTRODUCTION

- When you imagine God, what do you imagine?
- Have you experienced a clash with your religious tradition before? If so, what prompted it, and what came out of it?
- How much authority have you allowed yourself in developing your faith?
- At this point in your life and faith journey, what are you seeking?

ABOVE

AFFIRMS GOD'S
SOVEREIGNTY.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO GLORIFY
AND TO SURRENDER.

- Do you naturally think of God as above? Why might that be the case?
- When in your life have you internalized God's power and sovereignty? How did it fortify you?
- Do you struggle with wanting to "play God" or be in control? What would it require of you to surrender?
- What rituals or activities help you truly glorify God? Have you made those a priority in your life?

BENEATH

AFFIRMS GOD'S
STABILITY AND HUMILITY.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO DEEPEN
AND TO SERVE.

- Why might we ask God to help us look under? Under what? How might we actually do that?
- The chapter presents various metaphors for God Beneath: cornerstone, root, soil, rock. Other symbols could also work, such as wind (beneath our wings). Which of these metaphors most resonates with you as an image of God?
- When in your life have you hit rock bottom? Have you been able to view that descent as holy?
- In what way is the experience of God about deepening?

NEAR

AFFIRMS GOD'S PRESENCE,
ELUSIVE YET REAL.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO ATTUNE
AND TO PRACTICE.

- Were you ever exposed to the term *God the Holy Ghost*? What connotations does that phrase have? What does it reveal?
- Where are you and what are you doing when you most experience God Near? How would you describe that experience? Why is it so powerful, do you think?
- What does the author mean when she says God Near is “the very leaven in which our faith can rise”?
- Why might assurance and uncertainty both be integral to faith?
- What are some ordinary ways that you can practice the presence of God on a regular basis?

WITH

ASSURES US OF
GOD'S COMPANIONSHIP,
GOD'S COMFORT,
AND GOD'S PEACE.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO ACCEPT
AND TO WITNESS.

- What do you think of the argument that the most important word in the Bible is “with”?
- The author presents an alternative reading to Genesis 3 (“The Fall”) than most of us are used to hearing. How does this interpretation strike you? What does it change for you?
- What are some moments in your life when you bore witness to God by showing *witness* to others? Are there any opportunities to live this out that you are missing?
- In what way is the experience of God about companionship?

ALONGSIDE

REVEALS GOD'S
STEADFAST AND
ENDURING PARTNERSHIP.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO JOURNEY.

- What activities, places, or experiences put you “in the zone”? Do those moments feel spiritual to you? If so, how and why?
- When in your life have you felt God alongside you as you journeyed? How did you know God was there?
- What do you think the author means when she talks about life doing itself as opposed to us doing life? What power or agency does life have? Why or how?
- Who in your life exemplifies the spiritual practice of alongsiding? What does that person do, and for whom?

BEFORE

SPEAKS OF GOD'S LEADERSHIP
AND ETERNALITY.

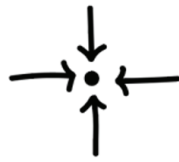


OUR INVITATION IS
TO FOLLOW
AND TO REMEMBER.

- Have you ever thought about the primordial God? What image do you have of God “in the beginning”?
- Does it make sense that God both comes before and goes before? What does this duality reveal?
- How do you react to the author’s claim that “we exist beyond birth, just as we exist beyond death”?
- Do you feel like your life has meaning? How would you articulate what that meaning is and where it comes from?
- In what way is the experience of God about remembering? Remembering what? Remembering how?

FOR

EMBODIES GOD'S ADVOCACY
AND RESOLVE.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO TRUST.

- How does the characterization of God as the Father strike you? In what ways is it comforting? In what ways limiting?
- When, where, and/or how in your life are you an advocate? What does that require of you? What does that provide for you?
- Why is it so important that we have love for ourselves? Do you have love for yourself?
- How is the gospel a “campaign for for-ness”? Can you find evidence in the Bible to support that claim? What counterargument might you make, if any?

THROUGH

REVEALS GOD'S WILL FOR US,
FAITH IN US,
AND ULTIMATE EMPOWERMENT OF US.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO BE OPENED.

- In what ways are we “seconding the motion of God?” What does that mean to you?
- The author offers new definitions of the word “virgin.” How do you respond to those insights?
- What are some of the hardest times you have been through? How did they change you?
- Can you recall a particular moment in your life when God worked through you? What happened?
- How can we position ourselves to be opened to the through-work of God?

INTO

EMBODIES GOD'S CREATIVITY,
PENETRATING, ANIMATING,
AND TRANSFORMING
ALL THINGS.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO RECEIVE.

- What does the author mean when she says Jesus is a parable?
- Have you ever thought about God turning into things or “becoming things” before? How does that idea strike you?
- What rituals do you engage in that demonstrate God’s movement into you and/or your movement into God?
- How do you respond to the author’s mention of penetration? In what ways is it revealing or unsettling?
- We often think of God as the Creator but don’t talk much about God’s creativity. What is creativity? How is it divine?

WITHIN

CONFIRMS THE
INDWELLING NATURE
OF THE DIVINE.

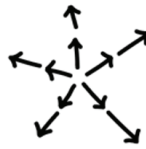


OUR INVITATION IS
TO KNOW.

- Why is the notion of God Within an obvious yet startling revelation? In what ways is it obvious? In what ways startling?
- How might it alter our way of thinking and being to know that God is within us? What is the significance?
- If you think of yourself as a series of nesting dolls, what are those deepening layers of self? Have you encountered the very center? What did you find there?
- Can we mother the Buddha or the Christ? How?

THROUGHOUT

CONVEYS GOD'S ULTIMATE
AND GLORIOUS OMNIPRESENCE.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO SEE.

- Do you believe that God exists throughout all creation? Are there aspects of that idea that are problematic for you?
- Jesus healed a man with the blessing, “Be opened.” What does it mean to “be opened”? What are some tangible ways we can be opened as we go about our lives?
- When we think about “truthful ways of seeing and being in the world,” how do we know what is truthful?
- In what way is the experience of God about developing awareness?
- Why does Henry Miller use the words *joyously*, *drunkenly*, *serenely*, and *divinely* to describe awareness? What does each of those words mean and reveal?

AMONG

REFLECTS GOD'S
VULNERABILITY, EMPATHY,
AND DESIRE FOR COMMUNITY.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO INCLUDE
AND TO STEWARD.

- Is the notion of God Among comforting or threatening to you, or both? How so?
- Have you ever felt a burning in your heart like the one Cleopas claims to have felt? What was your heart trying to tell you?
- Why does the author say that replacing the word “dominion” with the word “stewardship” has radical implications? How does that shift impact the way you think about your role as a human on this earth?
- Why are we called to seek and serve Christ in others? What does that teaching tell us about who God is?

BETWEEN

ILLUMINATES
DIVINE LIMINALITY
AND CONNECTIVITY.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO MIND THE GAP.

- Why might it be important to see negative space or “context”? How do we do that?
- What is one relationship in your life that required you to bridge a gap? How did you forge that relationship, and what has it given you? If you do not have any such relationship, are you open to seeking one?
- When have you experienced liminality? What wisdom did you earn from that “betweening” period?
- Do you agree that we are all connected? If you really think so, how does that impact—or how should that impact—how you go about your life?
- Can you recall other rainbow moments, either from your life or from history?

AROUND

ENCAPSULATES GOD'S
FULLNESS,
WHOLENESS,
AND ONENESS.

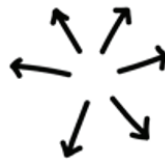


OUR INVITATION IS
TO BELONG.

- When have you gone prospecting for God and been led astray? How did you find your way back to the God you know to be your truest refuge?
- Have you experienced a “transparent eyeball” moment of absolute self-dissolution? Can you describe that experience?
- How are you understanding the “fullness of God” at this point in the book? What knowing are you committing into your heart of hearts?
- What is the distinction between God “all around” and God “around all”?
- In what way is the experience of God an immersion?

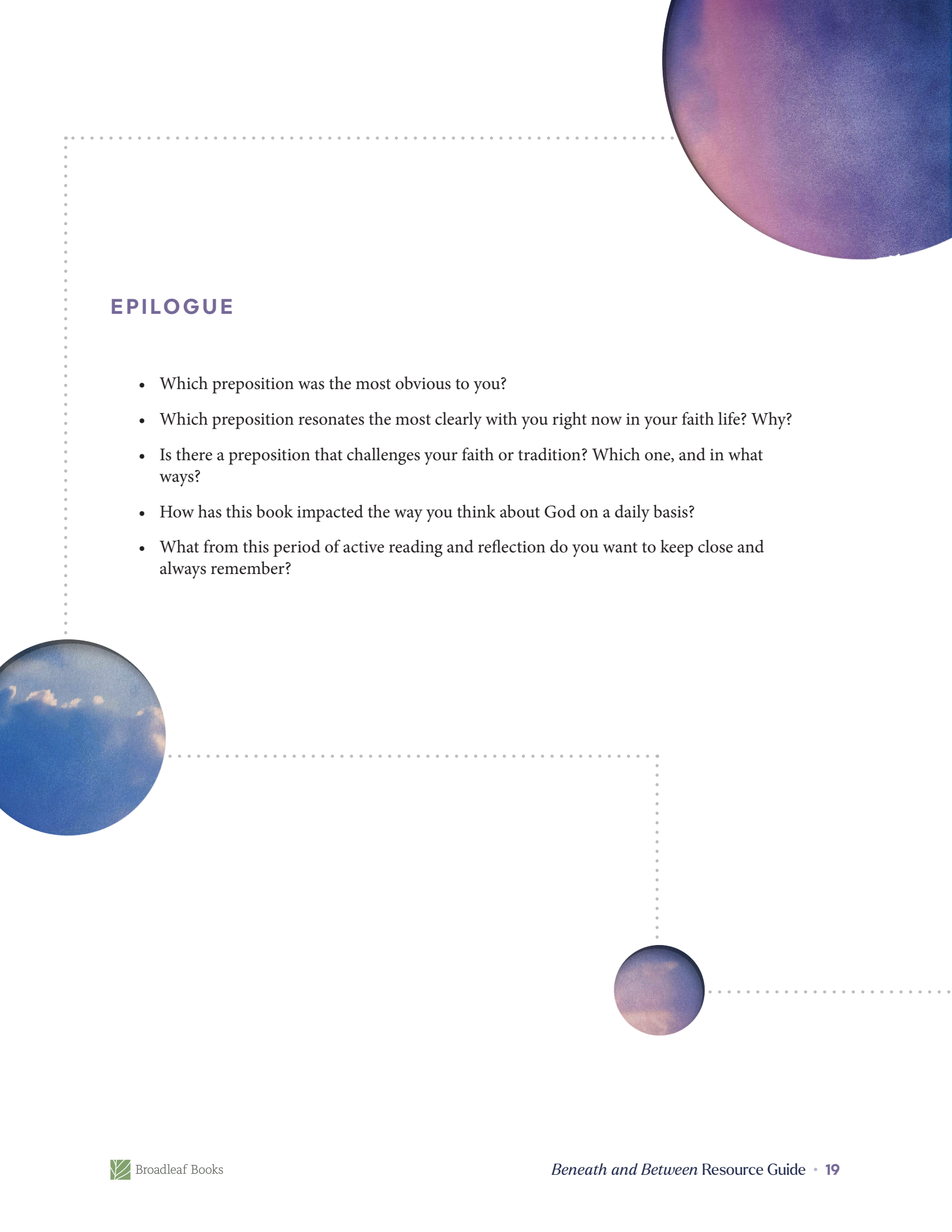
BEYOND

AFFIRMS THE HOLY MYSTERY
OF THE DIVINE.



OUR INVITATION IS
TO TRANSCEND.

- How can we go about calling off the search? What works for you? What doesn't?
- What is faith? How does your religious tradition define it, if you have one? How do you personally define it?
- Do you agree with the author that God is an Almighty Mystery? Where does that leave us?

A decorative layout featuring a dotted line that forms a large L-shape, starting from the top left, extending right, then down, then right again. Three circular images of sky and clouds are placed at the corners: a large one in the top right, a medium one in the middle left, and a small one in the bottom right.

EPILOGUE

- Which preposition was the most obvious to you?
- Which preposition resonates the most clearly with you right now in your faith life? Why?
- Is there a preposition that challenges your faith or tradition? Which one, and in what ways?
- How has this book impacted the way you think about God on a daily basis?
- What from this period of active reading and reflection do you want to keep close and always remember?