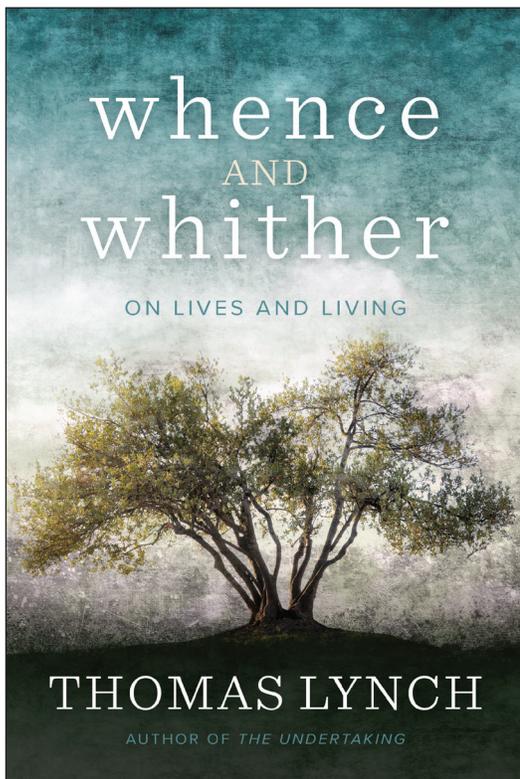


Book Club Questions for Thomas Lynch's *Whence and Whither*



On pages 21-22, Lynch describes a moment at a festival where he suddenly noticed of his fellow festival-goers, writing “I thought I was walking in abundant grace, the ever-present grace of being.” Have you ever had a similar feeling? How did it make you feel?

On page 50 Lynch describes himself as “less a believer than a beholder.” What do you think he means by this? Have you ever had a similar feeling?

In chapter 12, Lynch writes, “For many bereaved North Americans, the ‘celebration of life’ involves a guest list open to everyone except the actual corpse.” Have you noticed an increase in memorial services and celebrations of life as opposed to traditional funerals?

Lynch describes the four elements of a “good funeral”: the presence of the dead, the presence of those to whom the death matters, a narrative to broker some peace between the dead and the living, and the disposition of the body. Do you agree with these four elements? Are there some you would add or eliminate?

Lynch writes on page 221, “It never mattered much to me whether Jesus was really raised from the dead.” Does it matter whether we believe that Jesus was literally raised from the dead?

On page 153, Lynch quotes poet W.H. Auden: “art is what we do to break bread with the dead,” and poet Seamus Heaney adds that “rhyme and meter are the table manners.” What might these poets mean by this?

In his short story “Shilling Life,” one character tells another that he asked his wife, upon his death, “to just cremate me.” Lynch says the word “just” is the telling word in this sentence. What do you think he means by this?

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