

Directions: Welcome to Week 2, where we will explore Chapters Two and Three of *Cherished Belonging*. Each week we will pose several questions related to the text that encourage you to apply ideas to your personal development. Think about, pray about, annotate, and reflect on the questions that stir and challenge you, in a method of reflection that works for you, and leave questions that do not resonate.

A short text for further reflection will follow each set of questions.

Chapter 2: The Cruelty Points

Reflection Questions

1. Boyle begins this chapter with a significant, countercultural challenge to us: “Othering is the opposite of who God is. It says there are some folks who don’t belong to us, or they will belong only if they change their behavior” (38). Have you ever felt this way? What was the context? What did that orientation provide you and why can that be challenging to let go? How did that orientation hurt you?
2. According to Boyle, “it isn’t that ‘cruelty is the point,’ but that the cruelty...points.” (40). Think about the behaviors of others that you find evil or hateful. To what do those behaviors point? If you consider underlying trauma as a motivator for unsavory behaviors, what new options for treatment present? When you demonize or engage negatively with the “other,” what pain in your own life is emerging? How might you begin to address that pain in a healthier way?
3. When dialogue is stalled, sometimes it’s about “finding the right questions to ask. Consider the Zen concept of Mu. When one is asked a yes-or-no question, you “Mu.” Which is to say, un-ask that question, find another question, or ask it in another way” (40). Can you *Mu*? When and where might it be effective and door-opening?
4. Boyle notes that “Isaac the Syrian, who died in AD 700, said that the Incarnation is not about sin. It’s about God’s love needing to become tender” (57). As you scan your own heart, where can you become more tender? What is the work that needs to be done to get there?

For Further Reading

This week Boyle asks us to consider a crucial question: To what does the cruelty point?

To give us some practice searching for the injury below the cruelty, we have two readings. The first, an exploration of what made the popular Christmas Carol antagonist/protagonist “Scrooge” the man he became. As you read the first text, think about the underlying pain,

trauma, and injuries that inflame all of us and so often emerge in conflict. How might you have approached Scrooge, should you have encountered him, but more important, how can you today approach people who are expressing cruelty?

Christmas According to Dickens: What Made Scrooge Scrooge?

The second reading is from Exodus Five- a particularly cruel demonstration from pharaoh against the enslaved Israelites. Although Pharaoh's psyche is not explored in the passage, how might you "diagnose" pharaoh after reading Boyle? How might you approach pharaoh if you were Moses?

Ex 5: Bricks without Straw

Chapter 3: The Blindfold

Reflection Questions

1. Boyle begins this chapter reminding us that “none of us are well until all of us are” (63). What is your responsibility for making “us” well? For accepting support in your own healing? What blindfolds do you wear that can prevent clarity in this process?
2. At Homeboy Industries, the work of healing begins by cherishing the unwell. “Behavior changes when people are cherished,” Boyle writes. “It doesn’t mean you don’t teach things... You cherish character into flourishing. You don’t build it or train for it (64)... the true measure of our love is to love without measure” (67). What are the implications of this for your interactions with strangers? Family? Community members? People in line at the grocery store? What specific group, person, and/or action(s) surface for you as you contemplate this and what are some steps you can take?
3. Boyle maintains that “one could label racism as evil, but then that would mean we have decided not to make progress... ‘Sin’ and ‘evil’ don’t get you to comprehension. If it’s evil, end of decision- there’s nothing more to do, except, I suppose, shake our fists at bad people who don’t belong to us” (69). Do you agree with this assessment of diagnosis and progress? Have you done this? Consider language you use or ways you describe a group you consider “other.” What concrete shifts in language, tone, or understanding can you implement that can enable progress, for whom, and where?
4. Boyle recenters our focus on vocation and salvation to work that we do on earth, maintaining that “the goal is not to save our soul but to spend it. Our authentic discipleship, then, is to grow in love, not goodness” (70). What understandings and practices are challenged here for you? What is refreshing and what opportunities arise? Upon what can you (re)focus if you live this understanding of discipleship?
5. Boyle continuously encourages us to see ourselves as God does and to share ourselves and our stories courageously and loudly, as we revel in wonder at the stories of others. What might you do, or say, or believe if you fully honored your story and pondered, “what message does my life send” (73)? Who is someone you wish to hear more about their life from? Who is someone you should seek out to swap stories?

For Further Reflection: The Power of Story-Sharing

At Boyle's Homeboy Industries, women and men share their stories daily as one way to heal and deepen community. As you watch the short videos below, marinate on the power of dropping the blindfold:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP1qUdXdqeE>

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8qt9pv>