

Directions: Welcome to Week 1, where we will explore the Introduction and Chapter One 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 closing text for deeper reflection will follow the questions.

Introduction

Reflection Questions

1. We live in a time of significant polarization involving demonization of the other. Where in your life do you see polarization manifest, from your attitudes to your communication, or other behaviors? What has made you want to shift how you view or participate in this climate? Why have you chosen to read this book?
2. Boyle maintains two non-negotiables: Everyone is unshakably good (no exceptions) and that we belong to each other (no exceptions) (2). What surfaced for you when you read these claims? What's challenging? What feels refreshing or full of promise?
3. We all want connection and belonging. Our current moment, Boyle says, features severed connection and a lack of full belonging. As we journey towards collective healing (4) what unique gifts, sensibilities, or practices can you, particularly, call upon and offer this conversation and task? In what ways are you also hoping to be healed?
4. Boyle advocates we "be on the lookout for secret wholeness in each other." (7) Think of someone you consider "other." Try to see them as God does. What previously hidden wholeness can your imagination elicit?

For Further Reading: Gen. 1:1- 2:25: [Two Accounts of Creation](#)

As you read, marinate on the goodness of creation and God's special love for us. What stands out for you? What might you have previously overlooked?

Chapter 1: The Wild One

Reflection Questions

1. Many of us carry a judgmental God, one we've created in our image. What benefits you by holding on to this image? How can this understanding be painful or limiting for you- your development, your sensibilities, choices, dreams, and interactions with others?
2. Channeling Meister Eckhart, Boyle advocates a God who "just wants to approach us, remind us of our goodness, and access us... a 'Wild One,' whose care and delight in us is hugely outsized" (15). Have you welcomed God to bask in the wonder of you? What does God delight in, in you? If you could also "align the compass of [your] heart with the energy of this wild God and live in the immediacy of wonder," what would you notice? Be delighted by? Do?
3. Boyle maintains that "the all-loving God is powerful... The power is in the loving" (18). Do you agree? What small and practical or large and encompassing shifts in your life and treatment of self and others would happen if you lived this understanding?
4. "Thomas Merton was gentle with people because God was gentle with him," (19) Boyle writes, and "we receive this sustenance also so that we can sustain each other." How does this orientation to community offer you opportunities to grow? What does "being gentle with others" look like for you- with friends and family? Coworkers? Strangers? Those with whom you've suffered disconnection? (think in specifics if possible).
5. Boyle recommends viewing scripture and life through a "mystical filter" that enables sight of the true invitation (23). Among the learnings: Asking, "How can I be helpful?" loving as God loves, and mercy. Of these invitations, is there one you've honed (or would like to hone) more than others? What could a specific role be for you in this work-convener? Planner? Connector? Host? Greeter? Peacekeeper?
6. If God "does not make things go away [but] helps us find our way through things," (30) how does your understanding of "your work vs. God's work" shift and evolve? What is challenging and what feels like a call or opportunity?

7. Boyle advocates that we aspire to joy and an “evenness” in our sensibilities and reactions (33). What do joy and evenness look like for you in challenging encounters or communication across boundaries? What does it feel like? How can you foster it?

For Further Reading: [Luke 15.](#)

As you read, note the dominant images of God presented: The shepherd, the rejoicing over a lost soul coming home, the father of the prodigal son. How do these images comport with Boyle’s claim’s that God wants to bask in the wonder of us? What are the implications for you- either in how God loves you, or how you might love others?