

Directions: Welcome to Week 4, where we will explore Chapters Six and Seven 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 6: *Visible Entirely*

Reflection Questions

1. Boyle offers one replicable skill immediately: To begin our day by intentionally greeting people. That gesture- and others to indicate kindness- is “about greeting, truly seeing people, and finding yourself anchored in the sure and certain knowledge that ‘the only nondelusional response to everything is kindness’ ” (133). These “greetings” revive our hearts as well as the hearts of others, he maintains. What do you make of the art of greeting as a virtue worthy of attention and one that when practiced, can move or shape our internal responses to others? What “small greetings” do you or can you institute? If you track it, how have you felt?
2. *Healing is different from fixing* (135), and it requires that we be open to standing in community with the unhealed (selves included). How does a call to healing instead of fixing shift you to act in big or small ways?
3. “The traumatized are encased in the defended self,” (135) Boyle notes, and they often spend time defending, rather than accepting kindness. Have you seen this? What does it look like? How do you defend the your “self” to a degree that’s been detrimental to your wellbeing or growth? What would it take for you to truly accept kindness in community in those moments?
4. Constant attention to another is a definition of prayer, Boyle offers: “We are invited to practice Heaven always in this attention to what is right in front of us” (135). How does this vision of prayer challenge or enhance your current practice? What is upsetting about it? What doors open in possibility or opportunity for you? What might you gain?
5. Boyle returns to the importance of joy, a crucial piece of enabling us to home in on what’s in front of us as full of God. What pulls at your soul (136) promoting joy? How can that idea, activity, or outlook permeate your days to make “Holiness, visible, entirely” in your life? Can you share that joy/kindness/holiness more broadly in your relationships?

6. “We settle for happiness when we should hold out for joy. Our longing was to welcome the dreaded thing,” Boyle reflects (137). In what ways does this resonate for you? What joy do you long for, and what is the dreaded thing currently providing something of a roadblock? How can you welcome or be curious about it?
7. “Neuroscience shows us that cherishing activates the prefrontal cortex. So, brain science and the true sense of rehabilitation reveal clearly that it is healthy folks who have impulse control, not moral folks,” Boyle writes (140). Where or in what contexts can you lack impulse control, and how does that manifest in unhealthy conversation, actions, or behaviors? Can this understanding increase your desire to forgive others (and yourself) for shortcomings around impulse control? To what wound(s) do you need to tend?
8. At Homeboy, love is permanent, “or at least habitual. Second nature. This is how we inhabit our dignity and nobility in each other’s presence, and this is exquisitely mutual and eternally replenishing” (143), a decision to surrender, not control. How do you practice such a “habitual” love - with family, friends, self, God? How can you practice it with the “other”?
9. Boyle challenges us to reframe what it means to be a person who cherishes. “When 2 Corinthians tells us, ‘God loves a cheerful giver,’ Saint Paul is not asking us to be perky or even thankful to God. It’s a recognition that indeed, WE ARE the generosity of God” (144). How does this shift relieve you of some burdens in “showing up” and yet also give you additional responsibilities? What does being the embodiment of God’s giving mean for how you see yourself, how you present, and how you react?
10. “Connection is what we strive for and what helps us find our way to joy” (151). With whom are you currently disconnected, and what is one small step you can take to foster connection?

For Further Reflection:

As you listen to the Ada Limon poem, as well as read Luke and Pope Francis’ morning meditation, consider the power of “witnessing” the other. What actions, big or small, can allow someone you greet to feel seen? Cherished? Where can you grow, and where can you lead by example?

[Sanctuary](#), a poem by Ada Limon

[Luke 7: 11-17](#): Jesus Raises the Widow’s Son at Nain

[Pope Francis’ Morning Meditation, September 13, 2016](#)

In this [engaging article](#), Harvard Divinity School Prof. Stephanie Pulsell reflects on a volatile time in American history and her own shifting relationship with St. Therese of Lisieux's "little way". How the saint turned "the smallest of interactions with family and friends into opportunities to cultivate love and holiness," was a source of initial inspiration for Pulsell, then frustration, and finally deep synchronicity with the power of joyful cherishing. How does St. Therese illuminate or deepen for you Boyle's push to cherish by greeting, by taking double, small steps to see the other, and the transformation that can arise from that work?

Chapter 7: *Make Windows*

Reflection Questions

1. When has love- either someone's love for you, or your love for another- helped you to "find a window... Those transparent panes through which we see beyond what confines us, windows help us imagine something *mas alla* our fears and crippling anxiety" (156)? Who was that person and what did they help you to imagine? Can you see yourself extending that love to another, "other"? Who comes to your mind?
2. Boyle suggests love can become a "lens that helps you decide not to have any enemies" (157). Do you agree this view can launch work to dismantle the systems of domination that bell hooks warns against (incarceration, racism, sexism)? Is this practical? Feasible for you? What might you have to ignore or unlearn to accomplish this orientation?
3. "Proximity to love," (157) as opposed to distance from hate, is the measure of progress for Boyle. What's your measure? How does it compare to his? Boyle suggests that proximity to love is gained any time we take even small, concrete (though potentially challenging) steps to "Just. Love." (158). What does that look like to you?
4. "Healthy people love, not good people. Whole people. Well people. When folks aren't healthy, they want to dominate," Boyle notes (159). What are some ways to increase wellness, and decrease domination? What within our Catholic tradition offers us resources for wellness?
5. "Whole does not mean unbroken," Boyle notes. "It means welcoming and growing more and more at home with yourself" (161). Is this a journey you welcome? In what ways have you become more at home with yourself, and where are you still journeying?
6. "God breaks the heart again and again... until it stays open" (163), Boyle notes. What are the events or people that have broken your heart, and what has helped it to open? Where does it hurt and remain closed? Is your heart able, as Boyle promotes, to offer mercy (166), which can be an act of "freeing ourselves constantly from tight shoes" (167)?
7. Curiosity "neutralizes judgement" (167). Where or about what are you judgmental? Try turning your judgement into a question or two. What are you asking?
8. This chapter concludes with Boyle noting the crumpets, "like love, are aspirational, living in our mind's eye and connective to our longing. We find ourselves never homesick and indeed, there is nothing missing here" (170). What does aspirational love look like for you? To what end(s) can your unbounded love aspire?

For Further Reflection:

As you read Corinthians, consider the aspirational nature of the boundlessness of enduring love. Put that aspiration into context with what Boyle is asking us: to take just.one.step.

[1 Corinthians 13](#)

For the next two scripture meditations, ponder the inner lives (not expressed in the story) of either the tax collector Zacchaeus ([Luke 19](#)) or Martha ([Luke 10: 38-42](#))

When you read the story of Zacchaeus, marinate on what Zacchaeus must have been thinking when he woke up that morning. What was driving him to see Jesus? What inner monologue was he having as he climbed the tree? What was the window Jesus was able to help Zacchaeus see through? Finally, how can we harness the enthusiasm and willingness to transform of Zacchaeus- where do we begin?

When you read the story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha, take on the role of Martha. What was Martha worried about before Jesus arrived? What did Martha feel she needed to do to show love? How does Martha step into defending herself, rather than opening her heart? If you were Martha what would you be feeling at this moment? How might you react to this breaking of the heart? Why does Jesus “break her heart” if even just a little bit? What is Martha’s best next step?

If you want a little bit more...

Some folks wonder what Boyle’s “cherishing” looks like in action. [In this short video](#), we see it- the beholding of the other, the small steps to beholding. What did you take away from seeing Boyle and others loving in action?