



Insane for the Light, A Spirituality for Our Wisdom Years, by Ronald Rolheiser

Week 7- Chapter 6: Forest Dwelling and Preparing to Find Our Beggars Hut

- **Check in Question:** As a forest dweller, if you knew you could not fail, how would you bring God's compassion and smile to the world?

Opening Prayer

Loving and ever-present God,
you call us to lives of reflection, honesty, and transformation.
As we gather,
invite us into the wisdom of pondering—
not only to think about our lives,
but to hold them gently before you,
allowing what is broken, conflicted, or unfinished within us
to be shaped by your grace.

Give us courage to face what is difficult without turning away,
wisdom to transform tension rather than pass it on,
and hearts large enough to carry love where there is misunderstanding.
Teach us the way of your Son—
who names truth with compassion,
who blesses rather than condemns,
and who calls us into peace that is not afraid of honesty.
May this time together form us as peacemakers,
prophets of love, and people who reflect your mercy in the world.
We ask this in your holy name.
Amen.

Reflection questions:

As you read through the following questions, select one or two that speak to you and be ready to share your reflection.

Chapter 6

1. When speaking of “ponder”. The Greeks taught that *the unexamined life is not worth living*, while the Hebrew say, *ponder is to hold, carry, and transform tension so as not to give back in kind, knowing that whatever energies we do not transform we will transmit*. Which understanding of pondering speaks more deeply to you, and why?
2. How willing are you to hold and transform experiences such as conflict, misunderstanding, bitterness, polarization, immaturity, or sin rather than simply returning them to others in kind? What helps you respond with empathy, grace, and maturity?
3. Ronald Rolheiser writes, *I will be the scapegoat who helps take away the tension inside a community by absorbing it*. What does it mean to help others carry tension in a healthy way? How can we absorb the toxins within our communities?
4. Rolheiser describes a prophet as someone who:
 - a. names reality as God sees it,
 - b. makes a vow of love rather than alienation, and
 - c. is never partisan, yet never privateIn what ways are you living a prophetic life? Who inspires you as a modern prophet?
5. When faced with conflict or injustice, are you more naturally drawn to carrying a placard in protest or offering a basin and towel? Why?
6. Rolheiser reminds us that God’s love reaches both saints and sinners. How can we love others with compassion and mercy while still remaining faithful to our values and convictions?
7. Rolheiser says that “the heart of an elder can love across differences.” Is this capacity something that comes naturally to you, or is it a practice you are still learning?
8. Rolheiser suggests, “Whatever else you do in your pastoral practice and preaching, try not to make God look stupid.” What do you think he means by that? Have you ever encountered presentations of faith that made God seem small, harsh, condemning, or unloving?
9. Rolheiser describes God as having no favorites, being radically compassionate, never defensive, and bringing good news especially to the poor. What draws you toward this image of God? What challenges you about it?
10. Anthropologists suggest that blessing involves three things: truly seeing another person, speaking well of them, and giving something of ourselves for them. Which of these comes most naturally to you? Which is hardest?
11. Rolheiser speaks about surrendering fear and learning to live more freely and trustfully. What fears are you currently working to let go of in your own life?
12. Rolheiser suggests that aging gradually breaks down our illusion of self-sufficiency so that our souls can emerge more fully. Where do you see yourself in that journey of humility, dependence, and spiritual deepening?

Closing Prayer

For whom and what shall we pray...

God of mercy and truth,
we thank you for the gift of this time together.
For the questions that stretched us,
for the silence that spoke, for the word that enriched us
and for the insights still forming within us—
we are grateful.
As we leave this place,
help us not to pass on tension, fear, or division,
but to carry instead what you have planted in us:
compassion, patience, courage, and understanding.
Make us instruments of your peace in our families, communities, and world.
Shape us into people who see others deeply,
speak with love,
and give of ourselves freely for the good of all.
And when fear rises within us,
remind us of your unshakable compassion—
a love that has no favorites and no limits.
Stay with us now and always.
We ask this in your holy name.
Amen.

Overview of our meetings

Week 8- Chapter 7: Finding Beggar's Hut and Giving our Deaths Away (p. 111-131)

Week 9- Chapter 8: Thoughts on the Afterlife (p 132-150)

Week 10- Chapter 9: A Paradigm from a Christian Mystic (p. 153-174)