

Session on Chapter 3 of Cherished Belonging

1. Welcome & Opening (10 min)

- Greet everyone warmly.
- Remind people of the ground rules (confidentiality, respect, listening with love).

2. Get-to-Know-You Activity (15 min) – “Act of Compassion ”

- Ask participants: *Share a moment when you either extended or received unexpected compassion. How did it impact you or others involved?*
- Have them pair up or form small groups to briefly share their experiences.
- After a few minutes, invite a few volunteers to share with the larger group.

3. Opening Prayer (5 min)

Let us begin, In the name of the Father...

Merciful God, we gather today with open hearts, seeking to understand the depth of Your compassion. Guide our discussions as we explore how to embody this radical love in our lives. May we be instruments of Your peace, extending kindness and understanding to all. Amen.

4. Discussion Questions (30 min) – Based on Chapter Three—The Blindfold

1. The chapter begins with a eulogy that includes the statement, “None of us are well until all of us are well.” What does this mean to you? How does it challenge or affirm your understanding of community and collective healing?
2. Joseph, a homie, describes his transformation as “removing the blindfold.” What do you think he means by this? Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt as if a blindfold had been removed in your own life?
3. Boyle discusses the difference between descriptors and identifiers. Why do you think this distinction is important in his work? How do the labels we use for ourselves and others shape our sense of identity and belonging?
4. Boyle quotes James Allison: “Sin is an addiction to being less than ourselves.” How does this statement resonate with your own experiences or observations? In what ways do people sometimes settle for being “less than themselves”?
5. Boyle learned that gang violence is rooted in a “lethal absence of hope.” What does hope mean to you? How can restoring hope change a person’s life?

6. Father Greg suggests that our stories have the power to save us. Who has truly listened to your story? Do you have more stories to tell? Have you taken the time to deeply listen to someone else's story?
7. Despair, trauma, and mental illness can act as blindfolds, keeping people from seeing their true worth or possibilities. Do you think it's possible to help someone remove their blindfold? How?
8. "What if God's heaven is you?" How does this question make you feel? How might it change the way you see yourself and others?
9. Theresa, a Homeboy therapist, often says, "It's never too late to have a happy childhood." What do you think she means by this? Is there someone in your life who could benefit from that kind of healing?
10. Boyle suggests that everyone is going to heaven, but God also hopes we recognize that heaven is here and now. How are you living heaven in your daily life? What small ways can we bring heaven to others?
11. Mary Oliver said she learned three things: (1) Pay attention. (2) Be astonished. (3) Share your astonishment. How do these three lessons speak to you? Are there things you've learned in life that you would like to share with others?

(Encourage openness, active listening, and understanding. Attempt to learn from one another.)

5. Closing Reflection & Prayer (10 min)

- Invite each person to share one takeaway or a word that summarizes what they received today.
- Close with a short prayer of petition and gratitude for the week ahead.

For whom and what shall we pray? (Allow people to state their petitions.)

Loving Creator, we thank you for the insights shared today. As we depart, may we carry the spirit of compassion into our daily lives, acting as beacons of your love in a divided world. Empower us to defy division through radical acts of kindness and understanding. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

6. Next Steps & Goodbyes (5 min)

- Share a preview of the next session, including the chapter(s) you'll be discussing.
- If you plan to share facilitation, discuss who will lead the next session.

- If refreshments are part of your gatherings, Thank the person who brought the goodies and remind the next volunteer.
- Express gratitude for each person's presence and participation, and close with a warm thank-you.

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Handout 3

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