

Session on Chapter 6 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) – “Acts of Compassion ”

- Ask participants: *Share a recent act of compassion you experienced or witnessed, whether big or small.*
- 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...

Loving Creator, we gather with open hearts, seeking to understand and embody the principles of compassion and kinship. Guide our discussions today, helping us to visualize entirely the inherent goodness in ourselves and others. May we be instruments of your love, building communities where everyone feels they belong. Amen.

4. Discussion Questions (30 min) – Based on Chapter Six Visible Entirely

1. George Saunders says, “*The only non-delusional response to everything is kindness.*” Who has shown you kindness in a way that deeply impacted you? How can you grow in your ability to respond to life with kindness?
2. Boyle suggests that “*loneliness is not about being alone, but largely about belonging.*” If loneliness is really about belonging, where do you find your sense of belonging? Who are the people or communities that make you feel at home?
3. A homie once texted Father Greg, “*God is good, Poppa. I didn’t know that all these years.*” When did you first come to understand that God is good? How do you share that goodness with others in your daily life?
4. Father Greg teaches that “*joy is a decision.*” If joy is something we actively choose, why do you think so many people struggle to find it? What gets in the way of choosing joy, and how can we overcome those obstacles?
5. Boyle encourages us to “*practice heaven right now*” as a way to discover what God is working on. What might it look like for you to practice heaven in your life?

- today? What small, intentional actions could bring more love, peace, and connection into the world around you?
6. Boyle reflects, *“If only happiness is the goal, it diminishes our tolerance for the dreadful and those things that distress us daily. All the worst adult coping mechanisms merely seek to numb our dread. Our goal, instead, is to be curious about the distress. We let it in, and we become more sturdy as we welcome it. We don’t eliminate it, but we can watch it be relieved of its power.”* How does shifting from numbing pain to welcoming it with curiosity change how we navigate life’s challenges? In what ways have you seen distress lose its power when faced with awareness and acceptance?
 7. The United States has *5% of the world’s population but accounts for 25% of the world’s prisoners*. What does this statistic say about our approach to justice? How might our communities change if we focused more on healing and restoration rather than punishment?
 8. A Montana tribal lawyer once said, *“We put folks in prison because we’re mad at them, not because they’re a danger.”* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? How does this perspective challenge or affirm your beliefs about the justice system?
 9. One of the homies describes Homeboy Industries as a place where he finds mental health. Where do you find your own sense of wellness? What practices, relationships, or spaces help you stay mentally and emotionally grounded?
 10. A homie shares that *“receiving love is transformational.”* How has receiving love changed you? In what ways has love—whether from others, from God, or from within—helped you heal, grow, or see yourself differently?

(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.)

Gracious God, we thank You for the wisdom and love shared in our time together. As we go forth, open our eyes to see each person as You see them—worthy, beloved, and cherished. Fill our hearts with compassion and courage, that we may be instruments of Your love and peace in the world. 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 6

Opening Prayer

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