

Session on Chapter 8 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) – “Household of God”

- Ask participants: *Think of a time when they experience a religious place of welcome where everyone belongs, without condition or exception. It could be a church or somewhere else where God’s acceptance is present.*
- 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 God, You welcome us all into Your household, where no one is a stranger and all are cherished. Open our hearts today to embrace this belonging, both for ourselves and for others. May we learn to love without barriers and build a community where Your grace flows freely. Amen.

4. Discussion Questions (30 min) – Based on Chapter Eight—Household of God.

1. This chapter explores how exclusion and division prevent us from experiencing the fullness of God’s kingdom. In what ways do churches, communities, or society create barriers to belonging? How can we actively work to dismantle those barriers?
2. Richard Rohr says, *“Only the false self is ever offended by anything.”* Are there things that easily offend you? Have you ever unintentionally offended someone? How can being anchored in love help us navigate these moments with grace?
3. Are some modern ideological movements acting as pseudo-religious replacements or rivals to traditional Christian beliefs? How do we discern what aligns with the Gospel?
4. The Irish don’t say *“the Word of God”*—they say *“the Verb of God.”* How does this subtle change shape your understanding of God’s presence and action in the world?
5. Are Catholic values different from Gospel values? Where do they align, and where might they diverge?
6. What do you believe God truly cares about? Are there things we focus on that God might not give *“two toots”* about?

7. Boyle suggests that *love is how we practice God's religion*. Would you say you are a practicing person? In what ways do you live out this practice in your daily life?
8. Boyle describes God as the One who fills the empty spaces in us. In what areas of your life do you feel empty or depleted? How can you invite God into those spaces for renewal and healing?
9. Flags and movements highlight causes such as Pride and Black Lives Matter. How can we ensure that women's voices and gifts are equally recognized and celebrated in faith communities?
10. Boyle says that *our faith makes its way to our feet*. Where are your "sneakers" taking you? How does your faith influence your actions and choices?
11. Boyle reminds us that *God is still speaking—through the beloved, through kindness, and through gentle moments*. In what ways has God spoken through you recently? How can you be more attentive to God's voice in your daily interactions?
12. Much of the news today thrives on fear and division. However, the Gospel calls us to *love and fearlessness*. What can this community do to help you live with less fear and more courage?
13. Boyle suggests that *we are all walking wounded, and that tenderness is transformative*. How can you awaken your heart to deeper tenderness and compassion for yourself and others?
14. A principal in New Zealand once said, "*The students come here for healing. Why would we waste our time just educating them?*" Does this perspective resonate with you? How might this idea apply to churches, workplaces, and other spaces where people gather?

(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.)

God of boundless love, thank You for the gift of belonging in Your household. Help us to extend that same love to everyone we encounter, especially those who feel unseen or excluded. May we build a world where no one is a stranger and all are cherished. Send us forth as people of radical kinship, reflecting Your heart in all we do. 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 8

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