

Tattoos on the Heart – Gregory Boyle

Summary:

This book is the first memoir by Jesuit Priest, Gregory Boyle, who founded Homeboy Industries, the largest gang-intervention program in the world. The text is an account of his experiences about compassion and how it can change all communities, including the marginalized.

Key concepts of compassion:

1. Joy is vast (chapter one).
2. Our true selves are often masked by shame and disgrace (chapter two).
3. A beloved community of equals (chapter three).
4. You are Light (chapter four).
5. It is slow work (chapter five).
6. Infinite love (chapter six).
7. Finding shared jurisdiction resides in kinship (chapter seven).
8. Success is not always a product of outcomes (chapter eight).
9. Stand in and with the circle of compassion (chapter nine).

Notable Quotes

“Out of the wreck of our disfigured, misshapen selves, so darkened by shame and disgrace, indeed the Lord comes to us disguised as ourselves.” (60)

“Here is what we seek: A compassion that can stand in awe at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment how they carry it.” (67)

“The strategy...is not centered in taking the right stand on issues, but rather standing in the right place – with the outcast and those relegated to the margins.” (72)

Pema Chodron: “You are the sky. Everything else, it’s just weather.” (100)

“There is nothing ‘once and for all’ in any decision to change.” (121)

“Possessing flashlights and occasionally knowing where to aim them has to be enough for us. Fortunately, none of us can save anybody. But we all find ourselves in this dark, windowless room, fumbling for grace and flashlights. You aim the light this time, and I’ll do it next time.” (128)

“Close both eyes; see with the other one. Then, we are no longer saddled by the burden of our persistent judgements, our ceaseless withholding, our constant exclusion.” (145)

“You actually abolish slavery by accompanying the slave. We don’t strategize our way out of slavery, we solidarize, if you will, our way toward its demise. We stand in solidarity with the slave, and by so doing, we diminish slavery’s ability to stand.” (173)

“At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop.” (190)