



DISCUSSION GUIDE

“When ordinary people **connect**, truly **seeing, knowing, and loving** one another, extraordinary moments come to life.”

INTRODUCTION

It is my sincerest hope that anyone who encounters *Love Big* will be changed for the better. This labor of love is a gift for all seeking to fall deeper in love with themselves and with others for the purpose of individual and communal transformation and healing.

But my hope for *Love Big* goes a step further. My goal is to provide another rendering of who God is and how God loves. In today’s world, the Christian story and imagination of God is often marred by warring interest and personal politics. The God that I believe in—the God who became human in the person of Jesus; the God who promised to never leave or forsake us; the God who gave us the Holy Spirit—is not a God of fear, scarcity, or oppression. I believe that God created us to live and love in ways that transform us continually. Transformation doesn’t just happen once. It happens again and again, taking us deeper and wider, so that we experience restoration, healing, and wholeness.

This discussion guide has been created to foster your curiosity and encourage you to wonder as you delve deeper into your story. It is not for the faint of heart; self-love and neighbor love generally aren’t. This discussion guide is for those who are committed to living courageously and loving vulnerably.

As you are reading and reflecting on this work, let me know! I’d love to follow along with your conversations and musings on social media using the #LoveBigBook hashtag. Feel free to connect with me on Twitter and Instagram at @rozellahw and on Facebook @rozellahwhite. You are also welcome to send me an email about how you are experiencing this book at lovebigbook@gmail.com.

In the words of my dearly beloved friend Rachel Held Evans, “everyone deserves the chance to be loved.” Take a chance on loving yourself and others. To love big is to honor who God is and who God created us to be.

“ To **Love Big** is to trust that another way of being is possible and that this new way has the power to heal us all. ”

CHAPTER 1: FAITH IN GOD AS A LOVER

There aren't many books or writings that describe God as the Divine Lover. I found that thinking of God in this way was liberating and gave me new language for how I understand the relationship that God seeks with each of us. I didn't come to this description lightly or without reflection. This chapter invites us to consider how we understand who God is and how God shows up. It asks us to reflect on who the people, experiences, and places are that have informed our understanding.

1. What is your faith story?
2. Who are the major characters in your faith story?
3. What do you believe in?
4. How do you envision God?
5. What does God teach you about relationships?

“ The more love we lavish on **ourselves**, the more love we have to share with **others**. ”

CHAPTER 2: IT ALL BEGINS WITH SELF-LOVE

If you thought that I would write a book without delving into self-love, well you don't know me very well! My faith journey has led me to understand that loving yourself is necessary to loving others. The more that I have leaned into God's love for me, the more that I understand how revolutionary and absolutely necessary it is to love myself, without apology. And when I love myself and my God, I can love others in ways that I didn't even know were possible. This chapter looks at what Christians understand to be the greatest two commandments and how we might need to rework their order: love God, love yourself, love your neighbor.

1. What messages have you gotten about self-love?
2. Do you love yourself or are you in love with yourself? What keeps you from fully loving you?
3. How has your faith informed your view of yourself?
4. What does loving yourself look like?
5. How might your relationships benefit from you having a love affair with YOU?

“ It’s never about what you **do** for another.
It’s always about how you **are** with another. ”

CHAPTER 3: ROUSE YOUR MIND

This book is not just about loving holistically from an emotive sense; it’s about coming alive and loving in ways that seek out justice. To love big means being open-minded and revisiting long-held beliefs and ideas that keep us from fully loving our neighbors. This chapter introduces the first of many relationships that have called me out from myself and led me on a journey of critical inquiry and reflection that is absolutely essential to the loving enterprise.

1. What keeps you from seeing?
2. Who in your life helps you see?
3. When was the last time you really considered a global perspective?
4. What spaces do you engage that invite you to see—to see your neighbor, to see the issues present in your community, to see a perspective outside of your context?
5. How are you being called to wake up and do something about the injustice you see in the world?

“ When you live life from your brokenness and haven’t sought healing, you’re not really living. You’re simply existing. And I don’t believe that our Creator desires for us to merely survive. We were created to **thrive**. ”

CHAPTER 4: REPAIR YOUR HEART

So many people are walking wounded, having experienced all the hardships of life that break our hearts. And so many people have not done the work of healing. To begin the healing process requires us to revisit some of the most painful experiences of our lives. By doing this, we are able to live from our scars and not from our wounds. This chapter bares my heart, my favorite organ, to you. It has experienced so much heartbreak and is on the journey of being restored each and every day. In the words of Glennon Doyle, “First the pain. Then the rising.”

1. What experiences of your life have broken your heart?
2. What relationships have caused you pain?
3. How has your broken heart impacted your life?
4. What and/or who has brought you healing?
5. How might God be inviting you to look within for all that you have sought without?

“ Each body reflects an aspect of the **Divine**, with our diverse skin tones, abilities, identities, shapes, and sizes. ”

CHAPTER 5: REFORM YOUR BODY

The body is a topic that we have shied away from in faith spaces. Actually, when we do talk about it, it's cast in negative terms or burdened with shame. I reject this way of thinking. My Christian faith tells me that God chose the ordinary human form to enact an extraordinary story. The body matters and not just in some esoteric way but in an actual way. This chapter invites us to think about our own bodies and the messages we were given about our bodies. Then, it invites us to consider other's bodies and why they matter.

1. What is your relationship with your body?
2. What messages were you given about your body?
3. Why is it important to love and care for your physical body?
4. What does being created in the image of God mean to you?
5. How would your relationships be different if you viewed every body as being formed in the image of God?

“ In order for my soul to be restored, I had to be restored. I had to delve into the depths of who I was, how I loved, and what mattered most to me. ”

CHAPTER 6: RESTORE YOUR SOUL

To be out of touch with our soul is to be disconnected from our God. It's that serious. What we are experiencing in our personal and collective lives is a crisis of faith and spirituality. We can participate in specific actions to address the injustices we see in this world, but we must also embody a new way of being. To be attentive to our souls, our spiritual lives, I believe, would make a cosmic difference in our world today. This chapter delves into our relationship with our souls and what it might look like if we lived a soulful life.

1. How is it with your soul?
2. When was the last time you listened to your soul?
3. What can you do to encourage your soul to come out of its hiding place?
4. What does living a soulful life look like to you?
5. Who are your soulmates?

“**Revolutionary relationships are life-giving, risk-taking, vulnerable, gracious, forgiving, and diverse and hold us accountable.**”

CHAPTER 7: REVOLUTIONARY RELATIONSHIPS DEFINED

Finally, we get to what many thought to be the crux of the book! Revolutionary relationships come out of loving big—first loving God, then loving ourselves, and finally, loving others. And this is an ongoing cycle. We never stop. The more we love, the more love there is. That’s what’s so incredible about love—it never decreases, and it always expands. This chapter explores the nature of our relationships and how we might engage in revolutionary relationships.

1. Who or what in your life has informed your understanding of relationships?
2. What has been your pattern of engaging in relationships?
3. What relationships in your life are life-giving? What relationships are life-taking?
4. What characteristics of revolutionary relationships resonate with you? Which ones do you struggle with?
5. Do you have examples of revolutionary relationships in your life?

“**Our wellness is directly tied to the wellness of each member of humanity. When one is sick, we all are sick. When one suffers, we all suffer. When one is well, we all are well.**”

CHAPTER 8: LOVE BIG, HEAL THE WORLD

When we engage in this journey of loving God, loving ourselves, and loving others, something happens. There is a shift in the energy around us, and the people we encounter are also changed. This chapter is about recognizing our woundedness and seeing what’s on the other side of our pain.

1. What wounds do you see in the world today?
2. How might you use the wound-healing process to engage the wounds you see?
3. Why do you think it’s difficult to love big?
4. Where can you practice loving big in your life?
5. What revolutionary relationships have brought about healing for you?