

Based on the book "An Altar in the World" by Barbara Brown Taylor  
Week Seven Reading - Chapter 12

### Week Seven Discussion Questions

*"To give someone a blessing is the most significant affirmation we can offer."* – Henri Nouwen

1. Begin by sharing any insight or benefit you gained from engaging the homework practices last week.
2. Taylor begins this chapter by stating, "I think it is a big mistake to perpetuate the illusion that only certain people can bless things." (P. 193). David Spangler says it this way, "A blessing is not the function of a particular role. It is the natural expression of the fiery love and inclusiveness of our inner spirit. It is the manifestation of a soulfire, and each of us can be its hearth. To bless us is not the prerogative only of ministers, priests, and rabbis; it is not the exclusive domain of saints and holy people. It is a natural human ability, and anyone can do it." How do you relate to this idea? Do you have a practice of pronouncing or conveying blessings? Please explain.
3. On what occasions in your life have you been formally blessed? What did it mean to you?
4. Have you made the mistake of judging whether certain people or things "deserve" blessing? Please discuss.
5. What things/people do you bless, if any? How do you decide what to bless? (Grace at meals, bedtime prayers, someone who sneezes, homeless person, etc.)
6. Is there something or someone in your life you feel might need to be blessed—even if it's something sad or makes you uncomfortable (like the man with the recurring dream about the demon at his door)? What is it? What would you say if given the chance to bless them/it?
7. Take a moment to quietly reflect; then list 2 things that you have found enriching and useful from your participation in this book study. Please share and then pronounce a blessing to your study group.

## Notes

Please take time over the next week to bestow your blessings *and* count your blessings. Continue this practice as long as possible. Notice what happens.

*"Blessed are they who know how to bless and how to be blessed!"* - Rev. Darlene

Thank you for your participation in this study series.