

## Forgive Everyone Everything

**Gregory Boyle**

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Loyola Press

978-0-8294-5024-8

*Confronting violence with hope, the illustrated memoir Forgive Everyone Everything collects grace-filled moments from a Los Angeles ministry.*

Gregory Boyle's inspirational book *Forgive Everyone Everything* is filled with wisdom gleaned from working with gang members in Los Angeles.

Boyle's essays reflect on his work with Los Angeles's Homeboy Industries, through which he interacted with gang members and former gang members. He visited prisoners at Pelican Bay; when a man whose face was covered in tattoos asked why he was there, Boyle responded with "Because you are worth it." Glimpses of grace and peace accompany each anecdote to convey Boyle's Christian message—one that is refreshing and progressive and that sees God among widows, orphans, and strangers. Faith, Boyle says, is needed in difficult spaces, and people of faith should be willing to walk beside people who are poor or forgotten.

The stories are illustrated with rich, colorful, graffiti-style art—images of life in the barrio—and each is accompanied by a scriptural reference for context. There's an image of father holding his son that evokes attentiveness, and another of sneakers tied together and hanging from a wire to evoke guilt and shame. Their vibrant colors trend toward thoughtful blues, as well as reds used to reflect the blood of Jesus. In its pictures of individuals, the art's bold colors exist in striking contrast to the humble faith represented in Boyle's words.

Throughout, Boyle's penetrating anecdotes are embellished with clear summary phrases. Each acts as a testimony to a world wherein living is difficult but the promise of God is available all the same. Occasional references to the work of other Christian thinkers, including Dorothy Day, further ground the text in theological context, taking it beyond the immediacy of its select moments.

The prose is marked by awe and wonder. The tales are variously somber and optimistic, trading between accounts of funerals, baptisms, and people sharing their stories of shaking off past negativity to go about their days. In "Poetry in Pain," a large man is read to by his therapist and curls up on a couch to sob through lines from Dr. Seuss: "He told me once, 'I've found poetry in my pain.'"

Representative of muscular faith that confronts violence with hope, *Forgive Everyone Everything* is an illustrated, anecdotal memoir that collects grace-filled moments from a ministry connected to Los Angeles gangs.

JEREMIAH ROOD (August 2, 2022)

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