

Love's Braided Dance Study Guide Week 4

This week's reading: Chapter 7: A Hopeful Architecture

Summary

Chapter 7 explores the relationship between physical environments and the formation of human character, community, and hope. Drawing on Vasily Grossman's "The Hell of Treblinka," Wirzba contrasts the architecture of terror, designed for efficiency, control, and dehumanization, with environments that nurture dignity and belonging. Wirzba also engages Christopher Alexander's, emphasizing that healthy environments emerge from care for life, not from the dynamics of exploitation or efficiency for its own sake.

Spiritual Practice

As we reflect on how our environments shape our sense of hope, this practice invites us to become more aware of the world around us through our senses, helping us notice how even small details of a space can calm, distract, nurture, or inspire us.

[Spiritual Practice: Five Senses Meditation](#)

Scripture

1 Corinthians 3:9-11

For we are God's coworkers, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Let each builder choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

Doctrine & Covenants 162:1b, 2a&b

Listen to the Voice that echoes across the eons of time and yet speaks anew in this moment. Listen to the Voice, for it cannot be stilled, and it calls you once again to the great and marvelous work of building the peaceable kingdom, even Zion, on behalf of the One whose name you claim.

Listen carefully to your own journey as a people, for it is a sacred journey and it has taught you many things you must know for the journey yet to come.

Listen to its teachings and discover anew its principles. Do not yearn for times that are past, but recognize that you have been given a foundation of faithful service, even as you build a foundation for what is yet to be.

Discussion

Reduced to a Resource - "A world reduced to a resource, ready to be exploited, is a world without meaning of its own. Whatever value things have depends entirely on the value people

assign to them. This world lacks the freshness, vitality, and sanctity that might otherwise inspire people to build an abiding and cherished home.” - pg 114

- How does treating the world, or each other, as “resources” diminish hope?
- Where in your life have you experienced a space that felt sacred, life-giving, or deeply humanizing?

A Home Makes Room - *“A home or a neighborhood is not simply a location. It is a dynamic place where the energy of its co-inhabitants is respected and nurtured and where all who live there feel the energy of the place flowing through them ... A home makes room for surprises and for strangers, and for the trepidations and tensions that accompany encounters with the unknown.”* - pg. 116-117

- Where in your life have you experienced a “dynamic place” like this, somewhere the energy of the people and the environment nurtured you rather than drained you? What made that place feel alive, safe, or sustaining?
- Wirzba describes home and neighborhood as places where “the energy of co-inhabitants is respected and nurtured.” How do we create that kind of environment in our congregations, families, workplaces, or online communities?

Beauty and Justice *“Justice is created as people focus on designing and building shared places that nurture life. Working together, not just on hospitals, but on schools, homes, parks ... enables people to feel more fully alive, more deeply appreciated and honored. People do not need to choose between beauty and justice.”* - pg 124

- If you imagine the spaces you inhabit daily—your home, congregation, workplace, or neighborhood—where do you sense the “energy of the place flowing through you”?
- How are we called to become builders of hopeful architecture? What small changes could we make in our homes, congregations, or communities to create spaces that welcome, include, and heal?

Weekly Practices

Reflect & Journal - Think of a space where you felt deeply at peace: safe, seen, and connected. What made that environment nurturing? What would it look like to bring one small element of that place into your daily life or faith community?

Spiritual Practice - Practice tuning into your senses whenever you’re feeling disconnected from a sense of place. Use the [Spiritual Practice: Five Senses Meditation](#) as a way to reconnect.

Attend (or watch online) a City Council or Planning & Zoning Meeting: It may not sound thrilling—but it’s eye-opening. You’ll see: who gets heard, how decisions are made, what values shape your community’s future, and how ordinary people influence public space.

Walk or Drive Your Neighborhood with “Urban Planning Eyes” Take a short walk or drive and notice: Where do people naturally gather? Where does it feel unsafe or unwelcoming? Where is there beauty, care, or creativity? What parts feel designed for cars rather than people?

Pay attention to what the built environment invites you to do: walk, linger, avoid, connect, rush, or rest.

Rearrange One Small Space with Hope in Mind - At home or at church, choose one corner, shelf, table, or gathering space. Ask: How can I make this more welcoming, peaceful, or life-giving? Add a candle, plant, photo, piece of art, or symbol that helps cultivate hope. Reflect afterward: Did the space change my mood or attention?

Closing Poem

Listen to [The Highwomen: Crowded Table \[OFFICIAL VIDEO\]](#)

Other Resources

TBD ...

- [Did This Architect Discover the Key to Beauty?](#)