

## BOOK REVIEW

### *No Cure for Being Human* *(And Other Truths I Need to Hear)* by Kate Bowler

Reviewed by Deacon Holly Shipley, CENetwork of the ELCA

While this book stands alone from Bowler's other book, *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved*, this more recent book serves as a bit of a prequel, giving the background to Bowler's diagnosis of Stage IV colon cancer at the age of thirty-five. Both books shine a light on the difficult subject of death, dying and facing our own mortality.

Dr. Bowler, Associate Professor of the History of Christianity at Duke University, shares her story in an honest, gritty and sometimes humorous way. Her first book deals more with how others react to people with a terminal illness and some of the things not to say to someone who is either dying or has lost a loved one. This book focuses more on her own personal story of how she dealt with this terminal diagnosis. Through stories of her doctor's appointments, time with her son, conversations with her husband, parents and friends, the reader gets a glimpse of what it was like to be faced with such devastating news.

Six years later, after being part of an experimental trial including immunotherapy, chemotherapy, and multiple surgeries, she is now considered "stable," it was unclear if that meant remission. Bowler discusses the strangeness of living in "ordinary times" again, when she had thought every moment was precious and had to be lived to its fullest. She shares her struggles to feel at home in her body again and how it isn't possible to go back to the time to before she had cancer. She is forever changed. She writes, "I'm just trying to figure out if I would feel more at home in my body if I didn't have quite so much evidence that it almost tried to kill me."

Bowler's book was published after the pandemic hit, so she discusses the truth of how we all have been faced with our own mortality in ways we may not have before 2020. She discusses the tension of trying to fulfill bucket lists and "live our best lives" in the midst of realizing our own mortality looms large. She states, "We try to outsmart our limitations and our bad, bad luck, but here we are shouting our truth to the abyss. There is no cure for being human."

While there is the possibility of this being a depressing topic or book, Bowler manages to make it honest and hopeful. She doesn't tie it all up in a neat bow for us, but lets the reader sit with the reality of our own finite life here on earth, while giving us glimpses of hope throughout the book. This book would make for a good discussion for a church book group.

Kate also hosts a popular podcast titled "Everything Happens." She has a new Lenten devotion that was just published called *Good Enough* which can be found at [Amazon.com : good enough kate bowler](https://www.amazon.com/good-enough-kate-bowler/dp/1644770000)