

5 LENTEN QUESTIONS

A SERIES WITH BISHOP WRIGHT

Q3: WHAT DOES LOVE LOOK LIKE WHEN NEIGHBOR IS ENEMY? BUILDING BELOVED COMMUNITY

REFLECTION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS/INDIVIDUALS

These reflection guides are designed to supplement the Bishop's videos for use in a small group Bible study. They are created for the leader's ease of use, and with links to free web-based resources.

REFLECTION

Bishop Wright says putting Jesus at the center of your life is learning how to love as God loves, and that when we decenter ourselves...our life becomes agile enough to include those we struggle to love. We can love out of sheer **obedience**, or through **humility**, when we realize we too might be an unlovable enemy to others, or through **empathy**, realizing that some people are trapped and disfigured by their fears, deserving of compassion rather than hate.

ARTICLES

Read Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermon on loving enemies here:

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/deaconsbench/2012/01/martin-luther-king-jr-love-your-enemies-love-has-redemptive-power/>

Read or listen to the full sermon by Dr. King here:

<http://ipoet.com/ARCHIVE/BEYOND/King-Jr/Loving-Your-Enemies.html>

SCRIPTURE

Read Matthew 5:43-48. For context, this is in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus turned upside down many common ways of thinking about the world. A common idea of the day was that "neighbors" were those like them (religion, culture, etc.), and love was reserved for "neighbors" only.

Read Jonah 4. Jonah obeyed when his heart was not in it, and God used it for redemption; however, Jonah missed out on the joy because of his heart's attitude. Jonah did not view the people of Nineveh as deserving of anything good from God. God, however, viewed them as beloved. God wants redemption for all humanity.

Read Ephesians 2:4-9. Humility helps us realize that God has been gracious to us when we did not deserve it, and out of our gratitude, we can give generously to others, too.

Read Luke 10:25-37. Compassion leads to action. The Good Samaritan saw the humanity of his "enemy", his need. And he acted accordingly. Seeing the image of God in someone helps us take neighborly action.

TAKE-AWAY

Explore this guide about "Becoming Beloved Community Wherever You Are", a resource from The Episcopal Church to help us live into Beloved Community:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/02/BBC-Becoming-Beloved-Community-Where-You-Are-2020.pdf>

DISCUSSION

- When have you loved your neighbor even when you didn't feel like it? Or prayed for "enemy" out of sheer obedience? What might that look like in these days?
- How might the humility the Bishop describes help you to love one who seems unlovable?
- How might compassion help you cultivate a love for a seemingly unlovable neighbor?
- Which image from the Bishop's video stood out to you and why?
- Which Scripture passage stuck out to you and what might God be speaking through it to your life circumstances today?

PRAYER

O God, who created all peoples in your own image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races, cultures, orientations, classes, and ethnicities in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of friendship and show us your presence in those who differ most from us. We know that you have made us according to your special plan. May we use our diversity to spread your message of love and peace to all the world. This we ask in the sure knowledge of your love for all of your children through Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Diversity from "Seeing the Face of God in Each Other"