

# RADICAL HOSPITALITY

A 40-DAY LISTENING GUIDE





# INTRODUCTION

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Several months ago, I found myself agitated, angry, and frustrated each morning as I arrived at the office to begin my day. My routine had not changed. I would get up, get ready, grab some breakfast, take my son to school, grab coffee, and go in to the office all while listening to various morning talk radio shows. This was the schedule I had followed for nearly two years.

What I discovered was that while my routine had not changed, what I was listening to had. Through talk radio I was bombarded with opinions, some that I agreed with and some that I didn't. I heard the division, the political discourse, and the general sense of alienation that is going on in our country and in our communities. More so, I allowed these voices on the radio to inform or reinforce my opinions on a number of issues.

Instead of allowing God to speak into my opinions, I let someone behind a microphone in D.C. or New York do so. I allowed myself to get angry when one of those far away voices disagreed with my views. It wasn't healthy, and it didn't help with my own spiritual development. God wasn't speaking to me, because I was allowing others to speak in his place.

I still take time to catch up on the news, but it is not the first thing I take in each day. As I get ready for the morning and as I make my commute to drop off my kid and get to work, I instead listen to scripture\* or God's voice, which he has made available to us anytime and anywhere. Before I look into what is going on in my community and in our world, God is helping me to orient my views to his through the Bible. He is shifting my opinions to be closer to his, and in doing so he is helping me to see others (both close by and those in distant places) as he sees them.

I still can be grumpy in the morning, but it isn't because of who I am listening to. It's just that the coffee is still kicking in.

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\*[www.streetlightsbible.com](http://www.streetlightsbible.com)

Through this 40-day guide we hope God will speak to you and reveal what he desires you to hear. The passages and devotionals focus on biblical hospitality, caring for immigrants, and loving your neighbor. As with most things in our current culture, anything can be seen as divisive (including these topics). With this guide, our desire isn't to shift your beliefs. Rather, we want to help you listen to what God has said and still says on these issues.

Over the next 40 days, allow God to speak through his word, through the daily devotionals, and through his Spirit as you pray and reflect each day.

The idea for this listening guide came from a sermon series we went through as a church called "Ask to Listen." At the beginning of the series, Pastor Steve DeNeff challenged us to adopt four practices that he called the "Listening Cycle." The practices were Posturing, Scripturing, Discerning, and Obeying. While one could begin at any of the four practices, he encouraged us to go through them in sequence each day. In this guide, we will begin Scripturing, then move into Discerning, followed by Obeying, and wrapping up with Posturing.

Again, each day in the study will begin with Scripturing. Take time to read the passage, meditate on the words, and allow God to speak to you. Each day's study will come with a devotional written by individuals who work with immigrants, those who are immigrants themselves, people who display biblical hospitality, and/or those who exude neighborly love to all individuals God puts in their path. Ask God to speak to you through the words written. In the Obeying practice, you'll be given a series of questions to reflect upon and answer. The goal of the questions is to help you respond to what God is saying to you. Finally, in Posturing, you'll be asked to meditate on a name of God. As you meditate on the name, ask God what he wants you to learn about himself through his name. Then you'll be given two simple prayer prompts to help guide you. We wrote out part of each prayer, but we want to leave space for you and God to complete the prayer.

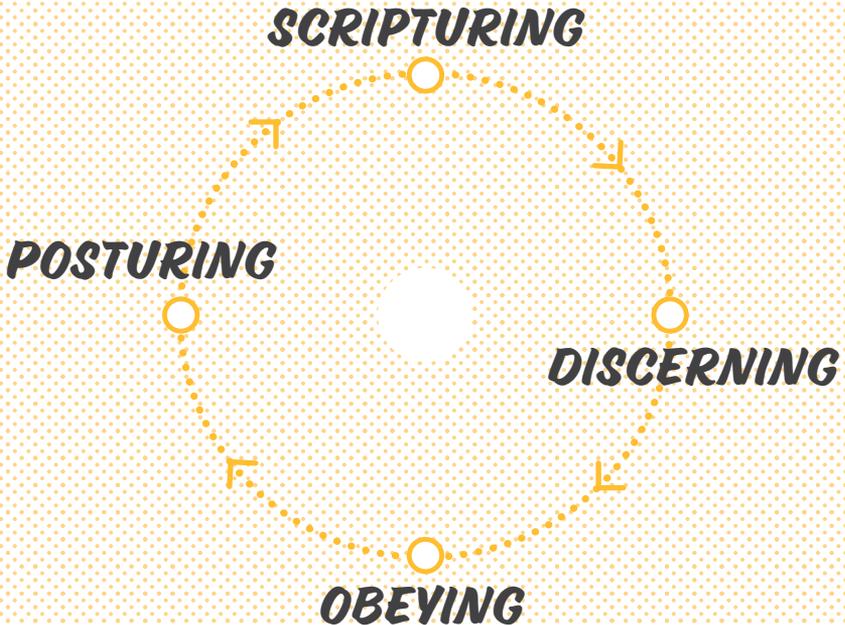
We hope the rhythm of each day's practices will help you hear what God has for you. My desire is that at the end of the 40 days God will have spoken to you and that you will have heard his voice.

What our community, country, and world needs isn't people who have strong opinions. Rather, we need Christ-followers who are posturing themselves to listen to God through his word, through his Spirit, and through his community of believers and who then respond accordingly.

**Blessings,  
Beau Hamner**

Outreach Pastor at College Wesleyan Church

**ASK-TO-LISTEN  
"LISTENING CYCLE"**





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## SCRIPTURING

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*Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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*“...To make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.”*

T.S. Eliot, in *Four Quartets*

**E** “The end is near.”  
Every generation flatters itself by thinking it is the first or the last to come along. The end-timers are everywhere, only most aren’t wearing sandwich boards and preaching on the street.

They're more sophisticated today, and they have even more followers. They speak of war and famine, disease and natural disasters. "A meteorite could hit us at any moment," said another, "and that would be the end." When I was a kid, it was nuclear war. Then it was Y2K. Today it's global warming. If you don't believe it and worry about it, you're thought to be uninformed, even careless.

The picture that emerges in Revelation is very different. "The end is near," says John, "but it isn't what it used to be." The end of the world is not its destruction, but the restoration of all things. Former things have disappeared, and God is making all things new (v.1). The writer of Hebrews says, "They will all wear out like a garment . . . . Like a garment they will be changed" (1:11-12). The kingdom of God will come down from heaven, like a bride comes down an aisle, and be united with the kingdom of earth (Rev. 21:2). God will not steal His people away to heaven but will relocate His throne to earth and live among His people (v.3). Every idol that we have made through the years will be abandoned, exposed as the phantom it always was, and God Himself will be our God (v.3). The pain and injustice that we've inflicted on each other will be over because "the old order of things has passed away" (v.4).

But the end of the world is not the end of everything we know of or the end of everything we're doing. It is simply the shaking of the present order until only the elements of eternal value remain. "Write this down," says John. "God is making everything new" (v.5).

And did you notice that the last five words are in the present tense? "All things new" is not something God is going to do but something He is already doing. Right now. Before our eyes, God is at work restoring the order of things. Every day, through little acts done by invisible people, God is resurrecting Eden, putting the finishing touches on something He started long ago. This means that the end is not coming. It's already here. In courtrooms, locker rooms, boardrooms, and dorm rooms all over, God is restoring the beginning in the end.

Dear Christian, your work in this world matters. In fact, God is doing His work through yours. What you do in the Lord is not in vain. "Every act of love, gratitude and kindness; every work of art or

music inspired by the love of God . . . every minute spent teaching a handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support for one's fellow human beings or even for one's animals . . . Every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption making Jesus more famous in the world . . . All of this will find its way into the new creation that God will one day make.”

In fact, He has already started . . . through you.

**Steve DeNeff**

Lead Pastor

College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**In what ways can you see God making things new in and around you?**

**What are some things that need to be made new in you (habits, views of others, relationships, etc)?**

**What is something that embodies God's holiness in what you are already doing?**

**Who might you be able to sit down and talk with to help you better live out holiness like God's?**

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## POSTURING

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Meditate on God's name:

**Alpha kai Omega (the Beginning and the End)**

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**Alpha kai Omega**, make new in me...

**Eternal God**, as you are making all things new, use me to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”*

Acts 2: 5-12 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**D**o you speak another language? Do you understand when you are spoken to in another language?

Learning a new language, one that is foreign to us is a stretching experience. I’ve tried to learn three “foreign” languages. Did I get frustrated? Yes! Like the time my daughter and I tried to enter public facilities in a train station - without the coins for entry. (She ended up needing a change of clothes!) Was it amusing? Yes!

Or the time I tried to tell someone that my sister-in-law worked in a hospital. I said she worked in a shoe. Those are only 2 of my bloopers. But what a great opportunity these were.

I found that people are happy that you are making the effort to learn their language, and they give you grace as you mispronounce words. Or put words in the wrong order. I think part of caring for immigrants, and even part of Biblical hospitality, is to return that grace to others who are trying to speak English in our country, or are trying to fit in to our culture.

What does the second great commandment say? It is found in Matthew 22:39, “And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” How does that apply when we are talking about love in the context of immigrant care? Do we make fun of the way they talk? Do we think their mistakes show that they don’t deserve our respect? No, No, No. How do we love and take care of ourselves? We don’t ridicule ourselves when we don’t get something right. Do we treat immigrants in our community with the same care we show ourselves?

How does this relate to the scriptures for today? God loves us so much that He wants to understand. On Pentecost He made it possible for everyone to understand—in their own language. So even if you don’t speak another language, you can still offer hospitality and care to others, and thus fulfill the second great commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself.

**Pat Shingledecker**

Retired Missionary  
World Gospel Mission

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OBEYING

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**What does God want you to understand about others?**

**What has kept you from understanding this in the past?**

**What are some first steps you might take in your journey to understanding others better?**

**Who is someone you can sit down and have a conversation with to help you in your understanding of others?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name:

**Jehovah Jireh (the Lord will Provide)**

**Jehovah Jireh**, show me what you want me to understand about myself...

**Provider**, show me what you want me to understand about others.



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

1 John 4:7-8 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**O**ften times people ask, “Who is God?” But rarely do they ask, “What is God?” He is love and His love is everlasting. This is the kind of love that we all desire. However, in order to have that love, we must come to know Him and have an intimate relationship with Him in order to grasp His love. Only in this way can His love transcend through us.

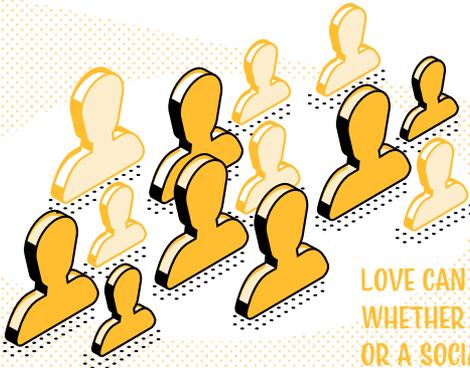
This was especially accurate in my experience as a new immigrant to the U.S. Growing up in a different culture presented some learning opportunities when I tried to adjust to a new life and culture in California. In the collective culture that I grew up in, people seemed to focus more on their immediate family and friends, but often neglected their neighbors. Comparing this to American

Christian culture, I learned that people value their community. For me, this has been evident through individual believers reaching out to me by building relationships. The friendships that started with simple questions about my background and culture gave me opportunities to connect with others and to be included in the community. Genuine interests and discussions led me to believe that I was welcomed. Continuous investment of these believers' time and resources further convinced me that this kind of love was the love of Christ, that I so much desired.

It is rather obvious that our neighbors are part of the community. Matthew 22:39 says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus told us to love Him and our neighbors. How do we love our neighbors? How do we make them feel loved? Love from God that is instilled in us propels us to love others. As 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Love can be shown in various ways, whether it is inviting a neighbor to church or a social gathering, adopting someone into your family, or showing interest in and listening to others' stories. These are all very powerful ways to include your neighbors and make them feel loved.

### Shawn Yang

Director of International Students  
and Scholar Programs  
Indiana Wesleyan University



**LOVE CAN BE SHOWN IN VARIOUS WAYS,  
WHETHER IT IS INVITING A NEIGHBOR TO CHURCH  
OR A SOCIAL GATHERING, ADOPTING SOMEONE  
INTO YOUR FAMILY, OR SHOWING INTEREST IN  
AND LISTENING TO OTHERS' STORIES.**

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OBEYING

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**Which neighbors is God calling you to love more completely?**

**What is currently keeping you from doing so?**

**How can you intentionally invest in your neighbors and learn their stories?**

Who can you ask to help as you begin to live out God's love with these neighbors?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name:

**Jehovah M'Kaddesh (The Lord Who Sanctifies)**

**Jehovah M'Kaddesh**, through Your love sanctify in me...

**Sanctifier**, you are revealing that I need to begin loving...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understand all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.”*

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**I**n the midst of talking about the importance of love, Paul lists many important abilities and godly actions. These good works can be done with no deeper motivation or love for God. What is supposed to set Christians apart? In Colossians 1:10, Paul teaches that we must “bear fruit in every good work.” Fruit is the final product of a deeply rooted and healthy plant. We also can “bear fruit” when we are deeply rooted in Christ, allowing those roots to motivate us towards doing good.

Pursuing impressive talents and good deeds can lead us to a life of disconnection from God and others. If we’re honest, our own pride and a craving for self-fulfillment often motivate us to do ad-

mirable things, which can lead to great harm or emptiness. Instead, our motivation should be love. Real love doesn't strive to feel good or be comfortable; its focus is outside of itself. Dallas Willard says "Love is not desire — it is to will the good of others. We say, "I love chocolate cake!" But really we want to eat it. We love something or someone when we promote its good for its own sake."

I can get distracted with a lot of good things in pursuit of love. If I can quote scripture in every conversation, but can't offer a cranky waiter a genuine smile, then what am I really filling myself with? Paul takes it a step further when he mentions giving to the poor. Paul is telling us to go ahead and be generous; but don't stop there. Love should motivate us to work for the good of someone else, and often a person's deepest need is personal connection.

While sharing our talents and being generous are important things to do, it is even more important to build genuine relationships with people who are different than us. Love needs others; it can't exist in solitude. A relationship will take us deeper than just being an unengaged provider who stands on the sidelines. A relationship can change us and make us more like Christ. More like love.

As you reflect during this 40-Day season, I encourage you to pursue kinship with someone you'd otherwise ignore. Learn from them. Grow with them. Blend your lives so love can blossom.

**Roger Younce**

Director  
Kinwell Academy



**LEARN FROM THEM.  
GROW WITH THEM.**

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OBEYING

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**Who is God showing you that you have been ignoring?**

**How is God wanting you to lean in more with them?**

**What habits will allow the fruit of the Spirit to flourish in your life?**

Who can you identify that could help accomplish what God is calling you to do?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Immanuel (God with Us)**

**Immanuel**, you are present in my life through...

**Present God**, you are calling me to live presently with...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.*

Acts 17:24-26 (NIV) Read verses 16-34 for the whole story.

*Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.”*

Acts 17:18b (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**hile reading the description of Athens in Acts 17:21 where everyone “spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas,” one might imagine a university coffee shop or even a Twitter feed. Perhaps to modernize the setting, one might picture Paul eating food truck tacos while debating a crowd in front of a downtown mural that reads: “Keep Athens Weird” (to borrow the motto of several U.S. cities).

Why, then, in a city that celebrates the strange and new, are Paul's ideas considered to be too strange and new? For one, Paul was "babbling" on about Jesus, the so-called "Messiah," who supposedly had returned from the dead. But resurrection from the dead and the hope of Israel were only part of it.

Paul, greatly distressed by all the idols in the city, reasoned with literally anyone and everyone he saw—both in the synagogue and on street corners—that God had a new idea. Namely, that God doesn't live in temples built by hands. The Creator of the cosmos cannot be contained within any geographic boundary or by objects of worship controlled by any particular group of people—not by philosophers of Athens or even Israel!

God is "not far from any one of us!" Paul proclaimed in verse 27 to what would have been a multicultural, multi-ethnic crowd in Athens. So Paul wasn't "advocating foreign gods" as some had first mistaken; rather he was advocating a God for the foreigner. Through Jesus, God "made all the nations," he argued. So God could not be bound to the local (idols, temples, borders). Instead, God was global. In other words, Paul was preaching "a God foreign to no one."

If Paul is right and there is a God foreign to no one, then there should be no one foreign to us. "We are his offspring," the Athenian poet wrote and Paul affirmed. Offspring, image-bearers, children of God, we all "live and move and have our being" in the resurrected Jesus. This is good news: that God belongs to no one and the Gospel is for everyone.

**Matthew Beck**

Family Ministries Pastor  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**From the passage, what is one phrase or word that stands out to you?**

**How might Paul's articulation of the Gospel in the passage shape the way you view and interact with those outside of your cultural, ethnic, religious, or national boundaries?**

**What could you do to connect with someone outside of your cultural, ethnic, or religious boundaries?**

Who could you talk to concerning possible boundaries you have placed in front of others?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Elohim (Creator God)**

**Elohim**, the ways you still remain foreign to me are...

**Creator**, you are calling me to live out your Gospel in front of...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty.*

Malachi 3:5 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**T**he book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It is placed strategically in the Christian canon because it announces the coming of the one who will prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Lord. The Gospel of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, begins with the story of John the Baptist, whose ministry is focused on declaring the imminent coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

Malachi writes at the time when the Israelites have already resettled in their homeland after 70 years of exile. Yet, even back in the Promised Land, the Israelites believe that they are in theological exile because this land is occupied by a foreign power and they are ruled by a foreign king. The people of Israel live in high expectations of finding freedom when God comes back and puts

everything in order, but Malachi suggests that the coming of the Lord will bring judgment to the house of Israel (v.5).

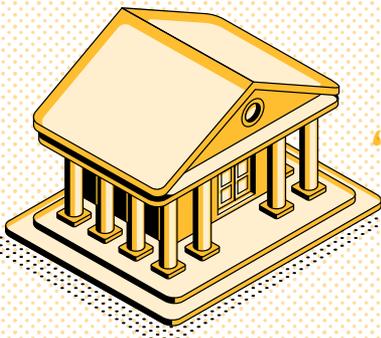
Such words would be shocking to hear. After the exile the Israelites have strived hard to obey the Law and worship the Lord alone. Yet, in this desire to adhere to the Law as closely as possible, Malachi suggests that the people have forgotten the purpose of the Law – to shape a loving and hospitable community that takes care of its own as well as foreigners. They have forgotten that mistreating God’s people means mistreating God himself.

It seems that the Israelites lack contentment in serving the Lord; they seek new ways to God through sorcerers. They feel insecure about God’s provision for them; they seek to provide for themselves through cheating and abusing the destitute. They feel unsatisfied in their lives; they seek satisfaction through adultery. Malachi demonstrates that keeping the first commandment and breaking the rest of them brings God’s judgment. It is impossible to love God and obey him with one’s whole heart, yet allow abuse and mistreatment of his people.

In verse 6, God reminds the Israelites that he is the God who does not change. It means that he requires obedience to the Law and hospitality to others at all times. True love for God is demonstrated in caring for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger.

### Larisa Levicheva

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies  
Wesley Seminary



**“SO I WILL COME TO PUT  
YOU ON TRIAL,”  
says the Lord Almighty.**

## OBEYING

**Reading Malachi today should prompt us to question the extent to which we are willing to walk in obedience to God's Word. What does it mean for us to love the Lord by welcoming the poor, the widow, the stranger?**

**What will it take for you to look for God in the right places and live for him wholeheartedly?**

**What actions can you take today to live wholeheartedly for God by caring for the poor, the widow, or the stranger?**

Who is someone that shows wholehearted love that you should take time to learn from?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Shophet (Judge)**

**Shophet**, I have been unjust with others when...

**Righteous Judge**, you are calling me to begin practicing justice by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.”*

Genesis 12:1 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**A**braham was an immigrant. Along with his father, he and his wife had left the country of Ur (modern-day Iraq) and had settled hundreds of miles away in Haran in what is today the country of Turkey. The transition to this new place and a new culture must have been a challenge for his family. Having settled there (Genesis 11:31), Abraham no doubt assumed he would remain in this place for the rest of his life. But at the senior citizen age of 75, a message came from the Lord: “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.” Another journey, another place, another adjustment. This

must have been as unsettling to Abraham thousands of years ago as it is to persons who find themselves moving to new locations in our migrating society today. How does one handle an unsettling event, whether by human circumstances or divine direction?

- We should view unsettling as an opportunity and challenge for growth in our lives. Our story might not be as dramatic as Abraham's, but we can discover new things about ourselves and our God when we are in periods of transition.
- God is more interested in people than places. Yes, God had a destination in mind when he spoke to Abraham; but God's call was focused more on faith and obedience than an unnamed land. Even so, God can be with immigrants, refugees, or citizens who find themselves on the move wherever they may go.
- What promise is given to those who demonstrate faithful obedience? To Abraham and all unsettled wanderers who respond to God's call, a double-dipper: "I will bless you...and you will be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2 NIV).

**Bud Bence**

Professor Emeritus  
Indiana Wesleyan University



The Lord had said to Abram,  
**"GO FROM YOUR COUNTRY,  
YOUR PEOPLE AND YOUR  
FATHER'S HOUSEHOLD TO THE  
LAND I WILL SHOW YOU."**

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## OBEYING

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**Can you recall an unsettled time in your life when God blessed you and turned your situation into an opportunity for blessing others?**

**Can you think of someone in our community who is unsettled—an immigrant, a new arrival in your community, a person in transition?**

**What positive action could you take to help them feel more settled and blessed by your kindness?**

Who is someone with experience in this area that you could ask to come alongside you as you strive to be a blessing to others?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Olam (The Everlasting God)**

**El Olam**, someone who is unsettled around me is...

**Everlasting God**, You are leading me to leave my comfort in order to be a blessing to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:17-18 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**hen I was 13 years old, my parents moved from Oklahoma to Illinois in September—yes, after school started. I was thrust into a new junior high school with an Oklahoma accent, from a small rural school, didn't know anything about soccer. I played softball and basketball with the boys and realized that the girls had fashions I had never seen, insider words and phrases were used that I did not understand... The list goes on. Yes, I was an outsider and was told so in various messages the very first day and beyond.

This is exactly the predicament the Gentiles found themselves in as new believers in Jesus. The Jewish believers knew all the history, had rules that needed to be followed, certain behavioral codes that displayed one's spiritual superiority. Of course, circumcision was the big one that determined whether you were on the inside.

Paul simply hits this straight on. Jesus is the great equalizer. There are now no insiders or outsiders—through Jesus we both have “access to the Father by one Spirit.”

Curiously, Paul also uses the word peace in this text. He talks about preaching peace to those on the inside and those on the outside. Both insiders and outsiders in various situations are fearfully striving for acceptance by certain groups. Much of this is never named out loud. It becomes an internal drive that separates us instead of unites us.

Jesus is our peace. Jesus is the unifier.

Back to my “foreign” junior high school journey. I worked hard to rid myself of the Oklahoma accent. I learned to play soccer. My basketball work in my previous school proved positive for this new school, although I had to stay in my “girls” lane. Yes, I found some unifying experiences.

Throughout Paul’s writings we find the Jewish and Gentile believers always working at unifying and centering on Jesus. These are great words for us today.

**Jo Anne Lyon**

Founder, World Hope International  
General Superintendent Emerita & Ambassador  
The Wesleyan Church

**JESUS IS OUR PEACE.  
JESUS IS THE UNIFIER.**

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OBEYING

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**What is God telling you to do to become a better peacemaker?**

**Are you afraid of peacemaking?**

**During these forty days, how can you focus on Jesus as the unifier with those of whom you sense distance? Does this bring a new focus for unity?**

**Who is someone you know that models peacemaking well? Would you be willing to have a conversation with them in order to learn from them?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Yahweh Shalom (The Lord is Peace)**

**Yahweh Shalom**, you have shown me your peace by...

**Peaceful Lord**, allow me to create peace for others by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*If we claim to be in the light and hate someone, we are still in the dark. But if we love others, we are in the light, and we don't cause problems for them. If we hate others, we are living and walking in the dark. We don't know where we are going, because we can't see in the dark.*

1 John 2:9-11 (CEV)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**hen my younger sister, Hannah, was in kindergarten, she got in trouble for repeatedly telling her Sunday School class that she, “hated Filipinos.” The teacher was concerned about Hannah’s averse language and angry disposition. The great irony is that my family is Filipino... Hannah *is* Filipino. How can you hate something that you are?

Yet humans *can* hate other humans, or else John wouldn’t have written such a warning. But it’s this very hate that takes away our humanity. When we hate each other, we don’t have the light of Christ which leads to life. Rather, we are left in the dark—unaware

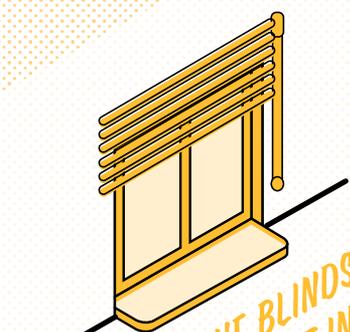
of our surroundings and our identity, afraid of what could be out there, of what we cannot see. Hate is a blinder.

But John reminds us that love opens the blinds and lets the light in. When we love someone else, we know God and our own self more. When we love another human, we become more human. When we live in the light, we can't help but see the multitudes around us who are hurting, needing, and wanting. In the dark—when our eyes are closed—we can pretend those people aren't there and live concerned for our own diminishing lives. But it's a great mystery that only when we open our eyes and face the realities of the world around us and respond to them in love, do we actually come alive and witness abundant life increase.

Jesus takes the command of love to a whole other level. He says, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them... But love your enemies, [and] do good to them” (Luke 6:32-33, 35).

**Jordan Rife**

Co-Worship Arts Director  
College Wesleyan Church



LOVE OPENS THE BLINDS  
AND LETS THE LIGHT IN

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OBEYING

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**It's been said that "love is the living evidence of new birth and eternal life." What evidence of love is currently present in your life and in your relationships?**

**Write down three people who you are loving well.**

**Write down three people who are more difficult to love.**

What are you learning about God and yourself through these relationships?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name:

**El Roi (The God who Sees)**

**El Roi**, I have seen your love through...

**Seeing God**, you desire me to bring light to dark areas by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*God's curse on anyone who interferes with justice  
due the foreigner, orphan, or widow.*

*All respond: Yes. Absolutely.*

Deuteronomy 27:19 (MSG)

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## DISCERNING

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**S**uch strong words for a loving God! What would possibly prompt God to place a curse on an Israelite, one of His chosen people? Love. And why would the Israelites strongly agree? Justice.

To understand these harsh words, we have to remember the essential order of God and His creation. All people, everywhere, are made in the image of God. And each person is loved by Him. God loves each person so much that He put a plan in motion that would deliver every single person who accepts His plan. During this 40-Day Season, we consider what it was like to live before His plan was finished and offered to all.

Before Jesus gave His life for all, God was already loving all. And God hated to see people with power harm those without protection. When the social structure made it possible for the strong to control the weak, God stepped in and said, “Enough!” To the powerful, He declared that if they neglected to treat foreigners, orphans, and widows with honor and care, then they would be given consequences for their behaviors of dishonor. So, it was God’s love that produced a curse for anyone who abused others who were weak and without protection. And at that moment, the Israelites strongly agreed that this was good and right because they knew what it was like to be treated horribly by the people in power. They themselves had been foreigners, so they understood the importance of God’s rescuing hand. The Israelites delighted in God’s call for justice.

Today, can we dismiss this as no longer relevant since Christ’s death and resurrection brought the new way for people to be redeemed? No! Because we are God’s children, He wants us to act like Him. He wants us to be His ambassadors, His agents of grace and love for all. And all still includes those who are without power or voice. We are challenged to live alert to the needs of men and women, boys and girls who need an advocate. We get to actively love and lovingly seek justice for those who are foreigners, widows, and orphans in our world today.

**Judy Crossman**

Professor of Pastoral Counseling  
Indiana Wesleyan University

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## OBEYING

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**Pause and ask God to show you who the foreigners, widows, and orphans are that are in your life.**

**Have you cared for those God has helped identify up to this point?  
If not, what has kept you from doing so?**

**What can you do this week to care for those God has revealed to you?**

**Who can help you process how to best care for the foreigners, widows, and orphans God has helped you identify?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Elyon (Most High)**

**El Elyon**, I have harmed my relationship with You by acting unjustly to...

**Most High**, You are calling me to practice justice with...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understand all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.”*

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**T**here are probably few devotions that begin with a Minute Maid ad, but that’s exactly where it all started. My husband and I were two years into retirement when the contest ad from the orange juice company appeared in our mailbox. It was a bed and breakfast giveaway in a central Florida orange grove. I quickly submitted our name, not knowing what this would mean for our future. Over the following months, I dreamed and planned and prayed. But, as the contest deadline came and went, it was apparent that we hadn’t won.

But my head and heart could not let go. God was clearly calling for something from us. That summer we heard that one of the pastors in our community was struggling. My heart went out to

him; wishing there was a way we could be an encouragement. As I talked to God about this, questioning why He had so clearly put this on my heart, I was struck by the thought, “what if there was a way we could open up our home for people to rest and refresh?” We only had a simple ranch house, but it did have a separate great room attached to the breezeway with its own heat, bath, and kitchen area.

I knew my husband, Lonny, would need to be on board as well, and he’d never been one to have people in our home, for more than a meal. So I began to pray for the seemingly impossible. If this was something we were supposed to do, God would need to put it in Lonny’s heart and mind as well. Several weeks passed, and while having lunch in a local restaurant one afternoon, I broached the idea with my husband. His response was divinely ordained. He thought it was a great idea! So we began the process of preparing this special little place, for those in full-time ministry and opened Fancy Free B & B the following spring.

It was “fancy free,” and offered at no cost to our guests. Over the next five years, not only did God bring some amazing people into our home, but He faithfully provided all that was needed, and even surprised us at times. One of the things we felt called to give each of our guests, was a promise from God; one He’d given us just for them. So each morning, we’d put on their breakfast tray, a word He’d given in Scripture. I remember one morning specifically struggling with the promise that came to me, as it seemed so very odd. But God would give me no other that day. So I reluctantly placed it on the tray, praying it would be “right.” Later that morning, as our guests were leaving, they remarked about the promise and said it was exactly where they were in their spiritual journey and asked how we’d ever found that verse. We assured them it was a gift from God. So often, what we have to share is enough - when God calls for it and blesses it with His presence and resources.

**Jackie White**

Office Manager  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**What do you hear God saying to you through this passage and devotional?**

**What is one thing that might prevent you from follow through in what He is saying to you?**

**If you were to live out what He is saying to you, what might that look like?**

Who is someone who can help you achieve this?

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Abba (Dad)**

**Abba**, I have seen your provision through..

**Dad**, allow me to provide to others by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

James 1:27 (ESV)

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## DISCERNING

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**C**leanliness, purity and a desire for community are concepts that are prominent in our minds. Growing up in a majority world with a tropical climate made this reality even more evident. The heat and humidity coupled with the unsettled dust were a constant threat to a person's ability to engage another adequately. Cleanliness was crucial to interpersonal relationships, because it was a sign of respect to the other to present oneself with ironed clothes and clean shoes. Unfortunately, this often created a situation where a person would locate self-worth within outward appearances. It also created issues where concern for the other – “I am well, if you are well” – is replaced with self-absorption.

Today's Scripture is both a warning against self-absorption and a reminder of what really matters. The word that is translated "religion" here has to do with the activities in which one engages in the context of worship. The passage evokes the rebuke God offered to Israel in Isaiah 58:5-7. It creates a reversal in the status quo and pushes against the tendency to equate holiness with outward activities that are self-serving. It redefines the boundaries around purity and what kinds of relationships matter in God's eyes. Widows and orphans, by virtue of their social position, were often viewed as untouchables. It was thought that their misfortune was a consequence of personal or generational sins. To visit them in their affliction requires that a person cross established social and even spiritual boundaries. To keep oneself spotless from the world is a reminder that the love of the world is where the threat of pollution lies, not in interpersonal relationships with those who are afflicted.

We are reminded today that our pursuit of holiness is, or should be, intrinsically linked to active participation in and engagement with the plight of the marginalized. From God's perspective, true worship occurs when one empathizes with the affliction of another.

**Abson Joseph**

Academic Dean  
Wesley Seminary

**THE WORLD IS  
WHERE THE THREAT  
OF POLLUTION LIES**

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## OBEYING

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**How is God helping you empathize with the affliction of others?**

**What do you need to do to practice empathy towards those in affliction, such as orphans and widows?**

**What would your first step be if you were to practice empathy for those in affliction?**

**Who is someone who could help you discern how to move forward in this area?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name:

**Yahweh Tsidqenu (The Lord Our Righteousness)**

**Yahweh Tsidqenu**, your empathy for me was evident when...

**Righteous Lord**, you are calling me to develop empathy for...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"— but then you don't give that person any food or clothing.*

*What good does that do?*

*So you see, faith by itself isn't enough.*

*Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*

James 2:14-17 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**C**an we know God? If so, then how? Ask the intellect and they'll point you to the creeds and the scriptures, and they are right to do so. For it is through these words that we gain knowledge of the activity and nature of God. Ask the experientialist and they'll lead you to a lively prayer service and a Christian concert with an inspirational speaker. And they are right to do so, for God is experienced in the testimony of his people.

But we cannot mistake knowing about God, or experiencing the presence of God, as truly knowing God. Even the demons believe (intellect) there is one God and they tremble (experience) in terror (James 2:19). But there is one thing that demons don't do—that is, the work of God.

And here lies the secret to truly knowing God. You can put to memory every word ever written about God, you can be in every room in which it seems “the Spirit is moving,” but if you do not do what God does, you cannot know him—not because you are incapable, but because it is a contradiction of terms.

Study the violin, sit in hundreds of concerts. You will only ever learn the instrument by picking it up and playing it. The study is essential, the experiences inspiring, but you are not a violinist until you play the violin. Likewise, you cannot know God until you enact his life—a life of humility, of giving up privilege, of taking the position of a servant (Phil. 2:3-8). You know God when you know the pain of sacrifice, the strenuousness of humility, the endurance of staying, and the joy of meeting the need of another. These are not assignments to earn you everlasting life, they are the defining acts of an everlasting life. There is no way around it; this is the self-giving nature of God. And unless our faith leads us to live a similar life as his, then we will never know him. Or, as James more bluntly put it, unless our faith “produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.”

It seems unfitting to offer a question for you to intellectually or emotionally reflect on following a passage like this. So, instead, can I challenge you to find someone that does not have the same privileges as you. Whether it be relationships, time, money, position, or skill? Could you give them a piece of what you have? Then, after you do that, you can sit down and think and feel about why it might be difficult for you to make participation in God's activity in the world just as prevalent in your faith as intellect and experience.

**Daniel Rife**

Co-Worship Arts Director  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**As you read through the passage and the devotional, what is God telling you to do?**

**What might hold you back from obeying God in this area?**

**If you were to obey God in this area, what would it look like?**

Who might you ask to help you with this and also hold you accountable?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name:

**Jehovah Rohi (the Lord is my Shepherd)**

**Jehovah Rohi**, knowing you looks like...

**Good Shepherd**, you are asking me to extend my good deeds towards...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. “Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless.”*

Exodus 22:21-22 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**I** lived with my family as missionaries in Eastern Europe for fifteen years. The first few years were especially challenging as there was so much to learn. We had to learn a whole new language and way of life as well as establish a new support system.

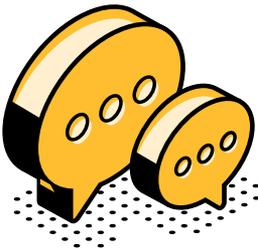
We were humbled and honored by the way we were accepted by local friends. We shared a house with the Bakić family who adopted us as their own. Goran and Helena became like a dear brother and sister. Their children and extended family became surrogate grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews to us and our children. We shared our lives together daily, eating meals around a common table, celebrating each other's joys, and shouldering each other's burdens. When Goran was diagnosed with

cancer, we journeyed that painful road together and mourned his loss together as family.

Helena and I had a regular practice of reading the Bible together over coffee once or twice a week. A few months after Goran passed away, we decided to start a new study. We read every passage in the Bible that mentions widows, foreigners, or the fatherless. Helena was a new widow with three children mourning the loss of their father and I was her foreign sister. Week after week we were reminded of God's tender heart for those in vulnerable situations. We were comforted by His diligence to command His people to protect foreigners, widows, and orphans and be a community of kindness to them.

As we wrapped up our study, Helena summarized just how meaningful it had been to her with these words, "I cannot help but feel so loved and cared for by God. It's almost as if we are His favorites!" We felt so special to Him.

**Nikki Nettleton**  
Marion, Indiana



***"WE WERE REMINDED OF  
GOD'S TENDER HEART FOR  
THOSE IN VULNERABLE  
SITUATIONS."***

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## OBEYING

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**How does it make you feel to picture God advocating for you and taking special care of you when you are vulnerable?**

**Who are those in your community who are foreigners, widows, or fatherless?**

**What would you like to do to demonstrate his tender heart to them?**

Who can help you accomplish this?

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Adonai (Lord, Master)**

**Adonai**, I have seen you advocate for me by...

**Lord**, you are calling me to demonstrate your love to foreigners, widows, and orphans through...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...”*

Philippians 3:20 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**S**ince my employment involves a considerable amount of travel I frequently handle my passport. My U.S. citizenship is viewed differently in various countries – sometimes respectfully, sometimes cynically. When I pass through Customs upon return to the U.S. I’ve been greeted with “welcome home.”

Lately I’ve using my passport as a “prayer prompt” – to pray for my current and temporary place of citizenship (the U.S.), and recognize it is a “waiting room” for my ultimate residence.

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...” – Philippians 3:20

The context of this verse is to distinguish those who live to satisfy earthly desires and have their mind on earthly things (3:19), and the power Jesus has to transform our earthly bodies to be like His glorious body (3:21).

Our citizenship is in heaven. How does this fit with clichés we hear? “Being so heavenly minded we’re no earthly good.” “Home is where the heart is.” “Home sick.” I imagine you can think of others.

Use these 40 days as a time to recall...

...our home. We’re citizens of heaven.

...our horizon. We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Knowing when we’re home and having a horizon that transcends the momentary is essential to living for what matters and lasts.

To “eagerly await” requires focus – it’s not something we do only occasionally or casually. The verses surrounding Philippians 3:20 help us to know where we DON’T focus (3:19) and where you DO focus (3:21).

During these 40 days, meditate on the ultimate example of Jesus “...becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8). He could endure the suffering of the cross because He was clear that heaven was His home and that’s where He’d be returning.

Last fall I attended the Immigrant Connection conference... this movement arose out of The Wesleyan Church to provide welcoming legal services. I was deeply moved by the complexities and pain of citizenship in “earthly kingdoms.” It relates to my experience in reflecting on Christ’s example – so grateful for the clarity the road to heavenly citizenship is, and so humbled by the required suffering my Savior endured.

**Wayne Schmidt**  
General Superintendent  
The Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**How is God reminding you that your citizenship is in heaven?**

**How does the reality of your ultimate citizenship in heaven shape your temporary citizenship now?**

**What are some ways that you can practice your heavenly citizenship with those you currently share temporary citizenship with?**

**Who is God calling you to live out your citizenship in heaven with now?**

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Yeshua (Savior)**

**Yeshua**, you have shown me that my citizenship lies in heaven by...

**Savior**, you call me to live out my citizenship with others by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“Native-born Israelites and foreigners are equal before the Lord and are subject to the same decrees. This is a permanent law for you, to be observed from generation to generation. The same instructions and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigners living among you.”*

Numbers 15:15-16 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**I** pulled into the parking lot of a downtown building that I had never planned on entering. I headed through the metal-detector with my friend Stacy walking beside me. We were actually there because of her...because of her choices, her sin, her addictions that she couldn't quite get free from in the past.

We sat down next to two other women that I had come to know and a man who was unfamiliar to us all. One of the women (we'll call her Melissa) whose appearance was similar to mine, began talking about her week in Block B. She shared about someone inside taking care of her and moving her to Block D. Apparently, this news was funny because the four of them laughed in unison, even the stranger. It dawned on me that Melissa, despite looking

very put together, had been locked up that week. Even though I couldn't understand the jail-talk or the cell-block distinctions, I understood the sin.

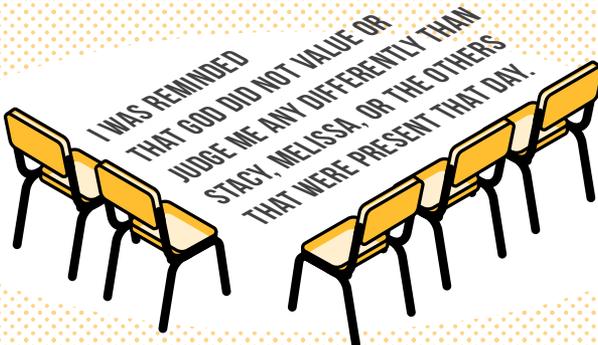
I understood what it meant to have a consequence for my choices. I knew the guilt and shame attached to them. My addiction to pride to protect myself from hurt, wasn't any different than my friend's addiction to drugs to protect her heart from the very same thing. You see, I may look the part. I may go places that a Christian should go, and I may say things that a Christian should say. You may as well, but our sin and shame are still just that.

In that moment, in the probation waiting room, I was reminded that God did not value or judge me any differently than Stacy, Melissa, or the others that were present that day. The Bible tells us that His regulations apply to all of us, those that "fit the part" and those that don't. It also says that He judges the heart and not the outward appearance. I wonder what our churches, cities, and homes would look like if we also looked at the hearts of people and not their sin or their appearances.

Let's be people of the Word. Let's be a generation that presses on together toward the heavenly call of living like Christ.

### Heather Mazellan

Seminary Student  
Wesley Seminary



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OBEYING

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**How is God influencing your perceptions of others?**

**Who, in your life, are you judging based on outward appearances, social status, or cultural differences?**

**How can you observe and live out the Lord's regulations alongside those that are different from you?**

Who has God put in your life that is different (ethnically, socioeconomically, or otherwise) that you could learn from?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Ga'al (Redeemer)**

**Ga'al**, free me from my sin of...

**Redeemer**, you are calling me to see others as...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

Romans 13:10 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**T**he very notion of the word law can mean various things for various people. For some, it is the idea of judgment or restriction that causes guilt, shame, fear or rebellion. For others it attaches to the position of control or prerogative. This causes fallacies, legalism, slavery, and injustices. Yet the intent of the law has a formal/informal conduct that is universal across cultures.

The Bible clearly reveals, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the intent of the Torah- law of God. It reveals teaching, direction, and moral standards given by God to His people for their benefit and spiritual wellbeing, both individually and collectively, while strongly stating a coalition between loving God, keeping the law, and loving others (Exodus 20:1-23; Psalm 19:7-11; Deuteronomy 31:12; Matthew 22:36-40).

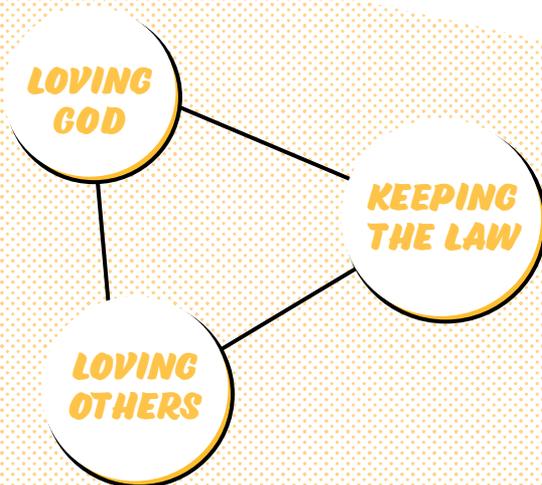
So the question becomes, in light of one of my favorite Tina Turner songs, “What’s love got to do with it?” I believe that love is the hallmark that makes the law fundamentally, by necessity, what it is. Love is the very essence, and without it, the law loses its righteous identity causing deprivation (1 John 2:7-11; 3:16-18).

I heard preacher Tony Evans give an amazing description of, “biblical love.” He stated, “biblical love is the decision to compassionately and righteously seek the well-being of others.” In other words, love does no harm to a neighbor (Rom. 13:10a). I think it’s fair to say that love leaves no room for misinterpretation. It leads the believer into the best understanding of God’s love for humanity through His law, and inevitably, that same love empowers us to fulfill God’s law while simultaneously loving others.

It is here where the rubber meets the road, where keeping God’s law and biblically loving our neighbors are the direct results of our love for God. (1 John 4:13-20).

**Sia M’Bayo**

Christian Ministry Program Representative  
Indiana Wesleyan University



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## OBEYING

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**What positive or negative ideas shape your perception of “the law”?**

**How are these positive or negative ideas impacting the way you view God’s love for you?**

**Does your understanding of God’s love draw people to him?**

To which neighbor might you need to show God's love?

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Elyon (Most High)**

**El Elyon**, I have harmed my relationship with you when I acted unjustly towards...

**Most High**, you are calling me to practice justice with...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*He answered: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ “*

Luke 10:27 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**I** have the privilege of living in a city of 23 million people (Mexico City).

When I think about a number like that, it’s very easy to live in the extremes of depersonalizing everyone to be just a number, or to have a lot of people so physically close to me, that my concept of personal space goes out the window every day when I use the subway.

One normal routine morning as I was heading to the subway, I began to think on God’s grace and His amazing love towards me. I was suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of worship just as the beautiful colors of the sunrise were shining through the mountains. Lost in my thoughts, I then turned the corner and was kicked out of my thoughts by a sea of people trying to get to the subway. As the crowd began to grow and was pressing in to an uncomfortable level, I started to become angry because the large

group of people had broken my 'sacred' moment with God.

So you see, what happened is that I failed miserably at my attempt to separate my relationship with God from my relationships with others. My worship from the way that I treat my neighbor. Somehow, I thought my vertical relationship was unrelated to my horizontal ones. I thought that I'm ok with rejecting my neighbor for whatever reason, while at the same time loving God.

I tend to separate my love for God from my love for people and I begin to insist that I can love Him but not those created in His image.

It was right there in that moment, when my Father reminded me of this very verse: Luke 10:27.

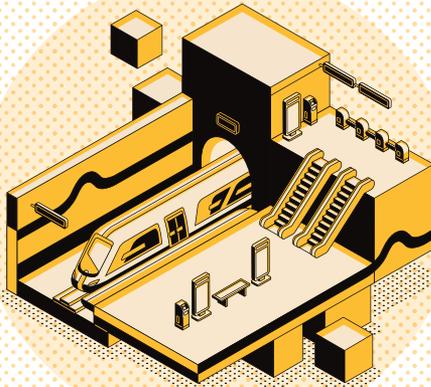
Jesus teaches that our walk with God and the way I treat my neighbor are intimately connected. Our ethics and our theology, our worship and our relationships are one and the same thing.

The most essential aspect of being Christ-like is how I treat others.

So whenever I forget that—every time I try to separate my vertical relationship from my horizontal ones—God squeezes these two principles back together in the subway.

### Alejandro Sicilia

Lead Pastor  
Senda de Vida



“SOMEHOW,  
I THOUGHT  
MY VERTICAL  
RELATIONSHIP WAS  
UNRELATED TO MY  
HORIZONTAL ONES.”

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## OBEYING

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**In what ways you have recently heard God reminding you about loving others as yourself?**

**In what ways do you find ourselves trying to separate these two love relationships in your contexts?**

**How can you allow you love for God to influence your love for others?**

**Name a person you will ask to challenge you to love both God and others better.**

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Yaweh Shammah (the Lord is there)**

**Yaweh Shammah**, you are calling me to step into...

**Lord who is there**, you want me to join you as you love...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”*

Deuteronomy 10:17-19 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**I** think one of the most difficult things about understanding this passage is that many of us do not know what it’s like to be a foreigner. Even though most of us came from other lands many generations ago, the Jews’ plight in Egypt was still quite fresh. But us? Well, we don’t really know why this passage matters to so many people.

When my family and I first stepped out of a van in Bosnia, Eastern Europe, in our minds we were embarking on an ‘Amazing Race’-like journey; ready to learn a new language and culture. But it didn’t take long for reality to overtake our hopes. Being in a new land was hard.

And then we met Ivica and his family. They became crucial characters in our story. Every week we would have meals together in their home while getting to know this foreign language and culture better.

Ivica taught us how to build a fire from scratch in our pot-belly stove, chop and stack wood, pickle cabbage for the winter, and many other necessary skills for living in Bosnia. He also taught us the complicated history of Bosnia. Over time, this new culture became, well, normal.

He certainly didn't have to. It was a lot of work to listen to my dreadful, early attempts at Bosnian language. However, it's become clear that loving the marginalized and vulnerable or even the foreigner is not always easy or convenient, but is certainly important. And it's what God desires.

We find in Deuteronomy, right before the Israelites cross the Jordan River and inherit the promised land, Moses makes sure they understand how important it is to care for the marginalized and vulnerable. Even though their time in Egypt wasn't exactly ideal, they knew what it was like to be a foreigner. In inheriting this new land, they needed to set things up correctly. Caring for the marginalized and vulnerable were important parts that made the list.

Since our family relocated to Dearborn, Michigan, we've learned that many of our friends' stories in coming to America are difficult. But it's amazing what a hot meal in someone's home or a shopping spree to get ready for the long winter ahead can mean to them. It would be easy to say their survival is their problem, but what would it look like if the Church took it on as our problem?

**Adam Jones**  
Dearborn, MI

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## OBEYING

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**What response does God desire of you concerning widows, orphans, and foreigners?**

**How is God wanting you to lean in more with them?**

**What habits will allow the fruit of the Spirit to flourish in your life?**

Who can you identify that could help accomplish what God is calling you to do?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Jehova (The Lord)**

**Jehova**, I have shown ungodly partiality to others when...

**Lord**, you are calling me to care for the marginalized and vulnerable by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the Lord your God.”*

Leviticus 23:22 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**A**re you a maximizer? Frankly, if you happen to be an American, you probably have at least a little of the maximizer in you. I’m talking about the drive to get every last drop of what you deserve because leaving anything on the table is just a bit silly. This is the impulse to get a refill of popcorn at the movie theater even when you don’t really want to eat more. It’s the part of you that gets annoyed when you buy something online and then it goes on sale for a slightly higher discount a week later.

This verse in Leviticus has something to say to us maximizers. Interestingly, I don’t think this passage is telling us not to make the most of our opportunities or not to produce as much as we’re able. The passage doesn’t say to plant fewer crops or farm less land.

Assuming that the fields here translate in the present to something like our work and the benefits of that labor, the instruction is not to work less hard or earn less. Rather, the instruction is to make room within our labor for those at the edges of society, and to make sure that some of what we produce ends up in the hands of the immigrant and the poor.

I got to see my father live out this part of the Law firsthand when he owned a small business. My father used to set aside a couple of jobs at his business specifically for people just released from prison, people who otherwise would have a hard time getting a piece of the harvest. The maximizer in my father would urge him to hire the person most likely to be an efficient, productive, hassle-free employee. But in a heavenly economy, where the marginalized are valued inherently and earthly profits matter only insofar as they allow us to lift up the poor, my father was making the wisest possible use of his resources. Maybe the lesson here is not so much that we should not seek to get the maximum value out of our labor, but that our production must value the right things. If what you're maximizing with your labor is for yourself, then you have not yet joined the economy of heaven. If, on the other hand, you are maximizing the welfare of the poor and the immigrant, then get as much as you can.

**Logan Hoffman**

PhD Candidate in Theology and Religious Studies  
Trinity College Dublin

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OBEYING

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**In what ways do you recognize the maximizer tendency in yourself?**

**Currently, what is keeping you from making space in your labor for the immigrant, widow, or prisoner?**

**How could you make space in your labor and its fruits for the poor, the immigrant, the widow, or the prisoner?**

**Who is someone you could talk to that exemplifies this act of making space?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Artos Zoes (Bread of life)**

**Artos Zoes**, you were a source of sustenance in my life during...

**Bread of life**, you are inviting me to join you as you sustain...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”*

1 John 3:16-18 (NRSV)

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## DISCERNING

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Love creates.

From the beginning of Genesis 1, words created all that inhabits the world.

Words were spoken and formation took place. There were variations of light, spaces to hold water, galaxies and sand, elements that supply an abundance of nutrients, an outlandish number of creatures and human beings who could be fruitful and multiply the earth.

The triune God speaks.

God spoke the world into existence. Jesus talked on earth. The Holy Spirit speaks as an intercessor for humankind.

The actions that come from the words of the Triune God are Truthful and loving.

Welcoming, respecting and laying down preferences for the benefit of another person are actions that bring the Truth of the triune God to life. The triune God's actions and words embody the loudest form of love.

In this season of reflection, we have a chance to ponder the words and actions of Jesus' loving journey here on earth.

Together, let us ponder how we can embody and emulate this love.

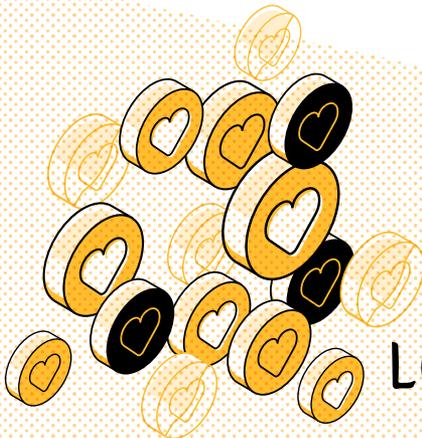
When was the last time you heard this cheeky phrase: "Actions speak louder than words"?

Was the phrase spoken to you as a form of preemptive caution? Was it a time that someone was trying to help illuminate the unintended impact of a decision you had already made? Or was it a time when your integrity was called into question because of the incongruence of words and actions?

When was the last time you spent time considering the impact of your actions rather than the craftiness of your talking points? When is the last time you asked the people who are a part of your regular rhythms how they experience your actions? When is the last time you asked for forgiveness for how your actions hurt someone else?

**Julia Hurlow**

Director of Discipleship  
Taylor University



**LOVE *CREATES***

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OBEYING

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**How has God displayed His love to you over the last few days?**

**What makes it difficult to live out this same love with others?**

**What is a small step that you can take to love others “in truth and action?”**

Who is someone you have previously refused to help that you need to speak with to ask for forgiveness?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Isous Soter (Jesus the Savior)**

**Isous Soter**, you have shown me love when you saved me from...

**Savior**, you are asking me to live out my love for you by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”*

Revelation 7:9-10 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**O**ur pro football team returned from the Super Bowl with huge rings on their fingers and a trophy to hoist in the air. I was in the stadium when we celebrated before the next season’s first game. As they unfurled a flag at the top of the dome, fireworks went off, but I couldn’t hear them because of the cheers. Noise rumbled my eardrums and crashed against my chest like an

ocean. Uncountable fans did “the wave”; whole sections wearing the team color stood up in sequence and raised their arms. You could watch the human wave circle the stadium and join in when it came to yours.

Of course, the uncountable crowd of Revelation 7:9-10 makes my team’s old stadium seem tiny. I know what 60,000 people cheering sounds like, but what does a crowd of billions singing the same song around the throne of God sound like? The team color at the throne is all white—as far as the eye can see. Their pure robes offset by what each believer holds: billions and billions of waving palm branches. The King is welcomed this time into the New Jerusalem for good. He sits not a donkey, but a throne. Every nation on the map, every tribe in humankind’s family tree, every language group and accent, every kind of people group that ever lived will be there. This includes those who have not yet heard today because we haven’t sent someone to reach them yet. Each one of these will be found in that crowd of billions celebrating the champion, the Lamb of God, our Lord.

I might try to get my section to start “the wave.” I hope you’ll join me in your section.

**David Drury**

Chief of Staff  
The Wesleyan Church



**EVERY NATION ON THE  
MAP, EVERY TRIBE IN  
HUMANKIND’S FAMILY  
TREE, EVERY LANGUAGE  
GROUP AND ACCENT,  
EVERY KIND OF PEOPLE  
GROUP THAT EVER LIVED  
WILL BE THERE.**

## OBEYING

**God has invited you to be a part of the multitude mentioned in Revelation 7. What does this show you about God's nature?**

**In reading the passage and devotional, what do you believe God is calling you to do in response?**

**If you were to obey what God is calling you to do, what would that look like?**

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**What are names of people and what kinds of people do you want to stand beside you as you stand before the throne of God?**

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## POSTURING

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Meditate on God's name: **Amnos tou Theou (Lamb of God)**

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**Amnos tou Theou**, I knew you invited me to be counted in the great multitude when...

**Lamb of God**, you want me to imagine the great multitude differently by including...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt.*

Matthew 2:13-14 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**L**ent is a special time of the year, when we seem to hear with greater clarity the invitation to pray and fast. We tend to pay closer attention to the longing in our soul that yearns to know and experience God in more profound ways. We are called during Lent:

“Away, away from the noise  
Alone with You  
Away, away to hear your voice  
And meet with You  
Nothing else matters...”

These lyrics by Israel Houghton create an image of what we surrender during this season. We leave the noise, the busyness, and the distractions, and limit our time with others - including our families - to be alone with God.

I confess, I really treasure time away with the Lord, and I have a deep longing for more, but Matthew 2:13-14 (NIV) leaves me pondering.

Can you imagine the emotions? The fear of being caught? The paralyzing images of what could happen next? What if they were apprehended by Herod while on the way to Egypt?

While the idea of an “escape” may be foreign to some, there are many refugees, immigrants and displaced people throughout the world who read these two verses and they can relate. They know what it’s like to gather their belongings and leave during the night. They’ve escaped poverty and starvation, and fled from violence, oppression, persecution, injustice, and the horrid acts of abuse and human offense. There is no question that Jesus relates to them, and if He does then shouldn’t I do the same?

Lent and other periods of reflection will always be an opportunity to escape the noise and be alone with God. It is about reflecting on the journey to the cross. Because of this, I don’t want to miss that this 40-day period is also an invitation to sacrificially pray, fast, and extend care to those living in the despair of the escape and gripping onto hope for tomorrow, just like Joseph.

The way we relate to refugees, immigrants, and the displaced allows us to more intimately experience God during Lent, or any season of reflection.

**Joanne Solis-Walker**

Educational & Organizational Coach & Consultant  
CaminoRoad

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## OBEYING

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**In thinking of Christ as an immigrant and refugee, what is God saying to you about immigrants and refugees in our country?**

**What are the similarities between Jesus' escape to Egypt and current refugees fleeing to the United States?**

**How is God calling you to respond to what He is revealing to you?**

Who is someone who can help you in this response?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Mashiach (Messiah, Anointed One)**

**Mashiach**, you provided me an escape when...

**Anointed One**, as you provided me an escape into safety, you are calling me provide safety for...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”*

Luke 14:11-14 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**hen we read verses like this, it is easy for us to skip the first half and skim the second half. Then we sum up the verses with a simple life lesson, like *be kind to everyone*. However, there is much more to learn from these verses about how we interact with the people around us.

After researching the meaning behind the original words, we can find deeper meaning behind what Jesus said to the party host. His words actually communicate the following:

When you have a party, do not invite your friends, your family, your kinsman (or people of your race), and your neighbors with

wealth and power. Your only reward is that they will invite you to their parties, which results in spending your life within your exclusive social bubble.

Instead, we throw parties for people who are without power, who were born into unjust situations, who have been hurt by their life experiences, and who are blind to the love of God. Then you will surely reap a heavenly reward. These relationships will not gain you financial or social status. They will feed your soul in ways you can never imagine!

And if that isn't enough... Jesus will repay you Himself!

Jesus also recommended the *how* for inviting guests. When we read “invite” twice in this passage, we don't see that He used two different words. The first time Jesus uses a word that means for us to blow a horn loudly for your friends and family to hear. For us, this would be like posting an invitation to the party on Facebook for all of our social bubble to see.

The second time we read the word *invite*, it means to invite the person by name. This is a more intimate, special invitation. It also means that you most likely need to be in relationship with the person you are inviting.

As you consider this passage, spend some time considering who is in and who is out of your social bubble.

**Matt Miller**

Co-Pastor

Greenville Multicultural

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## OBEYING

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**Write down the types of people that are both in and out of your social bubble.**

**What is preventing you from inviting those outside your bubble in to it?**

**Ask yourself, in the party that is my life, have I invited the people Jesus tells the host to invite?**

**Who might be someone that can assist you as you consider inviting those that God is telling you to begin hosting?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Malek (King)**

**Malek**, I cannot repay you, but you have been generous to me through...

**King Jesus**, you are showing me that I often overlook and fail to extend invitations to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”*

Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**J**eremiah 29:7, on its own, void of historical knowledge and contextual parameter, may lead some to ponder why a loving, faithful God would lead any of his children into exile yet suggest we find peace and/or prosperity in such a place of desolation and separation. This letter, capturing the words of the Lord, sent by Jeremiah to exiled priests and prophets in Babylon, underscores truths believers must hold on to as we “journey” in our faith: the temporal nature of our “home” and seasons therein (we are always on assignment until reunited with Christ); remaining steadfast in living out our divine purpose during our journey, and the power of prayer to influence our journey.

- Human existence suggests at one point or another we will undoubtedly find ourselves in a mental/emotional/physical place that is less than ideal. Whether personal, relational, societal or systemic, these places of hurt, pain, and/or affliction carry the potential of inflicting tremendous burden. The words of Jeremiah here, and context surrounding them, remind us Christians, however, of the temporal nature of these conditions. The mysteries of the Lord become more known as we submit our lives to the journey and experiences He puts us on.
- As Christians, we also know we will probably experience persecution for the sake of Christ! Exile (however we experience it) may feel very similar to being persecuted in various ways. The words of the Lord here challenge us to remain “upright” and to “carry on.” Seeking peace and prosperity in a place of exile may be difficult. When we can understand our entire journey, regardless of its volatility, as part of the larger picture the Lord has in store, it positions us to remain steadfast in our full devotion and commitment to Him. are called to be ambassadors for Christ at all ALL times and in ALL places.
- Believers often forget how powerful prayer is over “large” situations. As Jeremiah instructs here, we must remember to pray for our leaders, the nation and society at-large! It has become too easy to complain and bemoan about situations that affect the many. We have the ability to pray for the health and prosperity of many factors outside our own personal needs!

**Joel Olufowote**

Executive Director of Intercultural Learning and Engagement  
Indiana Wesleyan University

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## OBEYING

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**How is God calling you to be an ambassador for Christ in a foreign place?**

**What barriers do you need to remove in your life in order to do so?**

**What are some tangible ways that, today, you can pray for your country and nation?**

**Who can help you become a better ambassador for Christ in your current context?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Chay (Living God)**

**El Chay**, when I feel like I am living in exile, you remind me that you are present by...

**Living God**, as you have given me peace and prosperity, you are allowing me to share it with...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

Colossians 3:11 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**S**ix years ago, my husband and I moved to downtown Marion. Within the first six months of moving there, we met our neighbors and started caring for their 5-month-old boy. His mom began to call us his godparents. I stayed with him in the hospital, took him to the dentist when he fell down the basement stairs and lost two teeth, took him to doctor appointments, read him books, and sang to him each night that he was with us. It was so easy to love him. At age 2, he started living with us full time. Dad was incarcerated, and Mom was working and having a hard time finding reliable childcare for all her kids.

We began to email Dad in prison and had phone calls and visits with him. I talked with Mom on the phone weekly, and sometimes daily, as she navigated life without her husband. Department

of Child Services became involved in her life for a year, and she worked her treatment plan to get her children back home. Dad came home after being in prison for two years. We have now been connected with Mom and Dad for six years.

We have had Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday meals together. Loving this little boy comes so easily, but it's not so easy loving his first mom. I find myself judging her—how she's living and raising her children. I often choose frustration over empathy. But God keeps teaching me that Mom is His daughter too—that she is my sister. I find it easy to notice the differences between us, especially the ones in which I look good. How quickly I forget that I can be difficult to love as well.

God sees a hurting daughter, His daughter. He grieves with her while I judge her. I pray that I will see that Christ is all and is in all—and that Mom is no exception. I pray that I will see her as He sees her.

**Jody Fry**

Mental Health Coordinator  
Little Giants Preschool



**I PRAY THAT I WILL  
SEE THAT CHRIST IS  
ALL AND IS IN ALL**

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## OBEYING

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**What would it look like for you to see Christ in all instead of focusing on how they are different from you?**

**What might be keeping you from seeing Christ in all people?**

**What can you do today to change the lens through which you see others?**

Who will you choose to have a conversation with to help you process what God is saying to you?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Esh Oklah (Consuming Fire)**

**Esh Oklah**, I still have things in my life that need to be purged from my life. They are . . .

**Consuming Fire**, burn down barriers I have placed around me that keep me from loving...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*

John 13:34-35 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**hat? You want me to love my enemies, do good to those who hate me, bless those who curse me and pray for those who abuse me and call it love? Jesus' commandment to love one another as He loves us is a challenging one. Jesus' love is measured by obedience, not by warm feelings and emotions. In order to obey this commandment found in John 13, we must love indiscriminately, just as Jesus loves. We are to love the people He puts in our family, our neighborhood, our church, our workplace, and our lives.

The first time I felt myself loving someone like this was eight years ago in a hospital room with my mother who was recovering from triple bypass surgery. My mother had not taken good care of her body and abused it with alcohol, prescription drugs, and cigarettes to help her cope with depression. It would be a miracle if

she recovered from this surgery. My brother and sister were unable to stay with her and my dad had left her three years prior, so I was the only one left.

I always loved my mother but I never knew if she really loved me. Becoming pregnant with me at age 19, I felt she blamed me for having to marry a man she didn't really love—a man that would provide her a home, food on the table and clothes to wear but never love her like a man loves his wife. Living with parents who didn't really love each other left me feeling insecure in any kind of love in my home, but as a teenager, my church was a haven where I felt love and acceptance.

Being in this hospital room with my mom was awkward. I had gone away to Bible college, become a teacher, married a wonderful Christian man and now was a mother of teenagers and young adults. I knew my mom needed me and I wanted to be there, but I didn't know how she felt about spending time with me. After leaving home I didn't come home very often because I never felt welcome. My mother never told me she loved me...yet here I was alone with her in this hospital room.

I whispered a prayer and asked God how I could best love her. He replied, "Don't love her with your love but love her with my love and wash her feet." I felt the Holy Spirit come over me in that moment, and I no longer thought about what my mother thought of me from the past but how I could love her with God's love in that moment. During the next 30 days I would serve my mom by helping her to the bathroom, showering her, brushing her teeth, dressing her and keeping her as comfortable as possible. On days when she was feeling up to it, we would do a crossword puzzle or play a game of gin rummy or I would wheel her outside in the fresh air on sunny days. After staying with my mom for almost a month, it was time for me to go home because our son was getting married in two weeks. I said goodbye and told her I would be back after the wedding.

Two days after I arrived home I got the call that my mom had passed away. I will never forget those words that sounded so final. All my hopes of seeing my mom healthy and enjoying a new relationship with her were gone. I'll never forget seeing her body

in the funeral home. I had never seen a more peaceful look on her face in years. It was as if the Lord had said, “You loved her well, and now I’ve taken her home.”

My hope returned in that moment because I had experienced real, unconditional love by simply being obedient to what God asked me to do. It is the same for all believers. We are to love whomever God places in our family, neighborhood, workplace, church or world. Who is Jesus commanding you to love? It’s not an ask, it’s a commandment.

**Vickie Conrad**

FSE Partnership Director  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**How have you seen God’s love in your life over the last week?**

**As you think about his love for you, how is he challenging you to increase your love for others?**

**What is one minor change you could make in your life that would allow you to love others better?**

**Who could you ask to keep you accountable with this minor change?**

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POSTURING

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Meditate on God's name: **Rhabbi (Teacher)**

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**Rhabbi**, the greatest thing you have taught me about love is...

**Teacher**, I can display what I have learned about your love by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

1 Peter 4:8-10 (NRSV)

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## DISCERNING

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**L**ove can be defined many ways. My favorite definitions come from Dallas Willard. “We love others by willing their good.” “Love is an inclination to promote the good of others, to desire what’s best for them.” I’m drawn to these definitions because they link love to habits and actions that further the good of others. I love God by doing what’s good for God. I love my wife, kids, friends, and students by doing what’s best for them. Ditto for my enemies and people with whom I disagree. The same questions apply: How can I promote their good? How can I bless them? I don’t raise these questions to determine an answer. I ask these questions to become part of God’s answer.

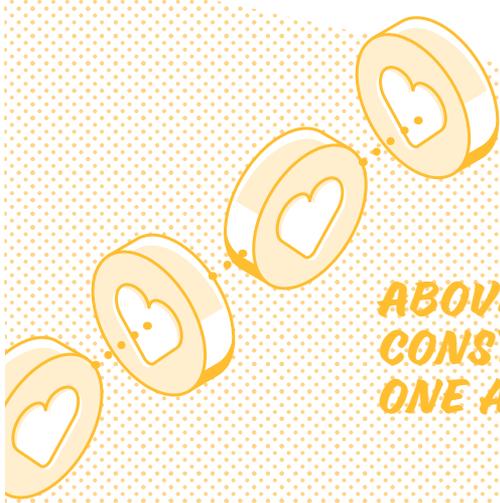
Richard Rohr says that “God loves things by becoming them” and that “God loves things by uniting with them, not by excluding them.” Of course, we don’t become things the way God does. But we do become part of His unbounded love when we unite with others and actively promote their good, or as Peter puts it, when we “maintain constant love for one another.”

Maintaining constant love. That’s been tough for me lately. I’ve let politics shape how I see Christian brothers and sisters. I’ve let philosophical disagreements at work sculpt my posture toward colleagues. And I’ve let differences with friends turn into retreats instead of reunions. I confess my complicity. I’ve allowed hurt and disappointment to set my jaw and heart. But if I had loved instead, it would have covered all these sins, or at least a multitude of them.

Instead, I let things break. I didn’t maintain constant love with friends or enemies. I directed my love to people who agreed with me. And even tax collectors and tightfisted teachers do that. What good is that?

**Brian Fry**

Professor of Sociology  
Indiana Wesleyan University



***ABOVE ALL, MAINTAIN  
CONSTANT LOVE FOR  
ONE ANOTHER...***

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## OBEYING

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**How can God help you maintain constant love with all your neighbors?**

**Currently, what do you know about your neighbors? Are you invested in their lives?**

**How can you actively promote the good of people you disagree with? What is a first step?**

Who can help you come up with a plan to better love your neighbors?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Sar Shalom (Prince of Peace)**

**Sar Shalom**, I have seen your peace on display through...

**Prince of Peace**, you are calling me to live hospitably and peacefully with...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“Never take advantage of poor and destitute laborers, whether they are fellow Israelites or foreigners living in your towns.”*

Deuteronomy 24:14 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**S**andra was brought to the United States as a young child. She is now a middle-aged, single mother of nine children. She is undocumented and has no legal pathways forward at this time. She is working to support her family, at best, for minimum wage and paying taxes for services she’s ineligible to receive.

Omar came to the United States to earn more than triple the hourly wage he received in Mexico. He works in harsh and dangerous environments and is provided poor living conditions in order to support the family he left behind. He is working for less than minimum wage.

Generally speaking, we Christians like qualifiers. When we sense God is telling us to do something that makes us uncomfortable or does not align with another set of ideals we hold tightly, we have a tendency to create reasons why God’s mandate does

not apply. However, here there are no qualifiers in our mandate. We are simply never to take advantage of the poor and destitute. Furthermore, it explicitly states that foreigners are included and ensures that citizenship is not a requirement to the mandate.

Continuing in the chapter, this particular verse does not stand alone. On two more occasions, the treatment of foreigners is addressed. In each instance, immigrants are mentioned in combination with orphans and widows. Verse 17 instructs us that “True justice must be given to foreigners living among [us]...” Verses 19-21 stress three times that any excess harvest should be left for the foreigners, orphans and widows. Both times, the treatment of foreigners is emphasized by reminding the Israelites that they were once slaves in Egypt and therefore are commanded to do this. When they were the foreigners in Egypt, God redeemed them from their slavery.

Our command to treat immigrants fairly is not dependent on their physical appearance, the alignment of their cultures and customs to ours, their socioeconomic status nor their immigration status. We are not commanded to look after only those foreigners who are wealthy, have advanced degrees, speak English or have successfully navigated our immigration system. As Christians, we are told to not take advantage of the poor, regardless of their birthplace. We are commanded to share with them from our excess and to remove the barriers separating people from needs.

**Josh Needler**

DOJ Accredited Representative  
Immigrant Connection at  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**What is God saying to you as you read the passage and the devotional?**

**As he is speaking, how is He calling you to respond?**

**What is a tangible first step in order to respond?**

Who can help you move towards this first step?

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Gibbor (Mighty God)**

**El Gibbor**, I have let you down when I took advantage of...

**Mighty God**, you are wanting me to begin advocating for...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*No stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler.*

Job 31:32 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**H**ospitality encapsulates so many things; it makes claims on our time, our values, and in Job's case and often in ours, our living rooms. If we open our home at all, most of us welcome in people we already know, partly because they're the ones we think to invite over, and partly because giving up our space for those we don't yet know can be awkward, challenging, and uncomfortable. What if they don't like our food? What if they stay too late? What if there's an awkward silence and I'm unsure how to fill it?

Our habits reflect this, as we usually align our routines with things that “work” for us—things that make us comfortable, prevent too much awkwardness, and allow things to run smoothly. It's no surprise, then, that part of our discomfort with strangers comes from the habits that nudge us toward familiarity. We drive home and put our cars right into the garage, never going outside

to know our neighbors; we put on headphones in the grocery line so we can avoid conversations with people in line with us.

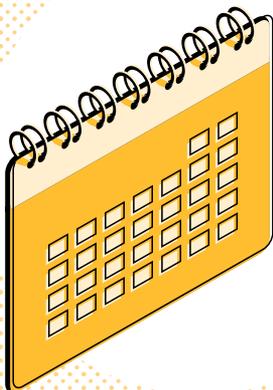
We don't welcome strangers, then, because we're not sure where we'd meet one. Unlike Job, we don't have habits that help us even see a stranger. In fact, most of us don't think this has much to do with our "spiritual lives." Our scorecard for discipleship usually focuses on two things: prayer and Scripture. Both are good things, but Job seems to have a bigger scorecard in mind.

This passage comes as part of a long list of things that Job is describing as God-honoring practices: among them are kindness with words, purity in focus, sexual fidelity, fair treatment of employees, and love for enemies; in other words, Job's vision of discipleship includes things we often overlook. And specifically in this verse, Job indicates that faithfulness to God has something to do with how we use our physical space, and how open our lives are to "strangers."

As you evaluate your calendar this week, mark out time to make your life more open to those who you often overlook. One hour volunteering alongside those at the homeless shelter, food pantry, elementary school, or hospital may open your life to people God has called you to love with your time, your energy, and yes, maybe even your space.

**Ethan Linder**

College and Young Adult Pastor  
College Wesleyan Church



*As you evaluate your calendar this week,  
**MARK OUT TIME TO MAKE  
YOUR LIFE MORE OPEN TO  
THOSE WHO YOU OFTEN  
OVERLOOK.***

---

OBEYING

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**What's on your "scorecard" when it comes to discipleship?**

**How does your way of approaching your neighbors reflect that?**

**What's one small (*daily or weekly*) habit you'd need to change in order to better reflect hospitality to the stranger? What's the first step?**

Who will help you?

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Machseh (My Refuge)**

**Machseh**, you have been my refuge many times. I have seen it recently through...

**My Refuge**, you are asking me to provide safety and protection for...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*“If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm....”*

Jeremiah 7:5-6 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**I**n Jeremiah we are confronted with a message for those coming to the temple to worship YHWH. These verses in Jeremiah 7:5-6 are in the midst of a passage calling the worshipers to reform their ways, to change their actions that matter to YHWH. They are reminded of their covenant relationship and responsibility to live lives of worship.

As I pulled in the drive, my neighbor across the street flagged me down. He was locked out of his house with something on the stove and no way back in. I hurried over with a ladder and screwdriver. He knew which window he could get in, and he did. He was grateful, and I was glad to help! That’s what neighbors are for, right? Except for those neighbors who aren’t cared for as neigh-

bors, oftentimes simply because of cultural background or skin tone. One of our youth was locked out when he arrived home after school. He knew the window he could get in, and he did. Someone called the police. The door was kicked in, officers flooded his home, tackled him, and drew weapons as they pinned him to the ground. While a gun was against his head he called out, “This is my house! This is where I live!” But the officers would not relent. He feared for his life and called out, “Look at the picture on the wall! It’s me!” An officer recognized what he said was true. They left with no apology. Our brother was fortunate that his story did not end on the floor of his living room that day. How differently these similar scenarios played out for each neighbor.

How we live with each other in community matters to YHWH today just as much as it did back then. In Jeremiah, dealing justly with one another is revealed to include the way we treat the immigrant, the foster child, the single parent, the elderly. We are to uphold the sanctity of life for every neighbor, our brothers and sisters of humanity, and to not follow other gods to our own demise. Back then, the temple was not a safe zone free from responsibility. The covenant relationship depended on the faithful obedience of the people of God to not just show up for worship at the temple but to live lives of worship. In the same way, how we live matters deeply to YHWH, our LORD. Do we live lives of worship as He desires? Or are we, too, going through the motions of “safe” check-ins at the temple? What pattern of society is YHWH calling you to engage in His kingdom love and power? Take a moment to prayerfully reflect how YHWH is calling you to a life of worship.

**Lexa Ennis**

Co-Lead Pastor

Broadview Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**What is God telling you that needs to be included in a “Life of Worship?”**

**What do you need to change in order to live out a “Life of Worship?”**

**What practice could you begin today to live a “Life of Worship?”**

**Who is someone who could help you respond to the vulnerable in your community in the way God desires of you?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Shaddai (God Almighty)**

**El Shaddai**, I have inadvertently oppressed others when...

**Mighty God**, you are asking me to come alongside you as you advocate for...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*No, this is the kind of fasting I want:  
Free those who are wrongly imprisoned;  
lighten the burden of those who work for you.  
Let the oppressed go free,  
and remove the chains that bind people.  
Share your food with the hungry,  
and give shelter to the homeless.  
Give clothes to those who need them,  
and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

Isaiah 58:6-7 (MSG)

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## DISCERNING

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**S**ome of the values I saw modeled frequently not only by my immigrant parents but by those in the Latinx immigrant community in Chicago, were those of reliance on one another. Being present with each other in the difficult times and celebrating with others in their times of good as scripture calls us to. This reliance, or interdependence, on one another for emotional, personal and spiritual maintenance and growth was a central component to interaction within the community.

As a child of immigrants, I have many stories of how those in our community relied on one another. But, if I'm going to be honest, the stories that stand out the most are about those that formed relationships with us that were not inherently a part of our community but became a part of the community by demonstrating this interdependence when it did not benefit them.

Growing up, my best friend's house was always a home away from home. They shared meals with me and my family, took me places I normally would not have known to go, shared their lives with me, and in doing so, shared the love of Christ. Looking back on it now, I know it was not easy for two public school teachers to essentially add a fifth member of the family but they did. For that, I am immensely grateful and their example allows me to demonstrate this interdependence.

My second family exemplified for me so well what we are being called to in this passage. They did not have to extend themselves to a level of financial and relational vulnerability. In doing so, they provided for my family in ways that continue to be mutually beneficial for both our families to this day with shared meals and relationship whenever I make it back to Chicago.

The difficulty is we can have a hard time getting to a place of being vulnerable enough that allows us to settle in this holy interdependence. This can be especially true when it feels inconvenient, uncomfortable, or may seem unnecessary. I encourage you to examine how you can demonstrate this form of vulnerability/holy interdependence.

**Josh Ruiz**

Immigrant Connection Director  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**What is God telling you about your relationships with vulnerable people?**

**What makes having vulnerable relationships difficult?**

**What would it look like for you to create a space to allow for vulnerable relationships in your life?**

Who can you talk to who can help you create space for new relationships?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Pnuema Hagion (Holy Spirit)**

**Pnuema Hagion**, through you I have seen my burdens lighted and chains set free as you...

**Holy Spirit**, you are challenging me to have new, and possibly uncomfortable, relationships with...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*This is what the Lord Almighty says, “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other”.*

Zechariah 7:9-10 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**Z**echariah 7:11 goes on to describe the people of God who turn their backs, cover their ears, and refuse to listen. What is it that they could not hear?

Be honest. When you read this scripture, were you as surprised as I was that God calls us to care for foreigners in the same way as widows, orphans, and the poor? A simple search uncovers that scripture often calls us to treat foreigners like we do widows and orphans. And why? Like widows and orphans, immigrants are often marginalized, mistreated and oppressed, hence the call to not oppress them.

In Willies James Jennings's commentary of Acts 1, he asks, "Should disciples of Jesus love their nation, the one they claim and are claimed by? This is the wrong question. The question we are compelled to ask and answer by our lives is, How might we show the love of God for all peoples? A love that cannot be contained by any nation? A love that slices through borders and boundaries and reaches into every people group, every clan, every tribe and every family?"

God, where our hearts are hard and our ears are closed, would you help us to hear and grant us mercy and compassion for the oppressed.

**Dan Walker**

Partner and Strategist  
CaminoRoad

**WELCOME!**  
DO NOT OPPRESS THE WIDOW OR  
THE FATHERLESS, THE FOREIGNER OR  
THE POOR.

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## OBEYING

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**What “borders and boundaries” have you placed in your life that God is telling you to remove?**

**How might you show the love of God to all peoples, a love that slices through borders and boundaries?**

**What do you need to do to be able to show the love of God to all peoples?**

**Who is someone that can help you take down the borders and barriers that you have built that keep you from showing the love of God to all peoples?**

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Miqweh Yisrael (Hope of Israel)**

**Miqweh Yisrael**, when everything around me seemed to be failing, you provided me with hope by...

**God of Hope**, you are showing me that I can provide hope to the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the immigrant by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*

Leviticus 19:33 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**T**hese words are so relevant to the immigration issues that our world is facing. Today millions of people are on the move. War, extreme poverty, religious preference, and oppression due to race or ethnic association are strong enough reasons to seek relocation for a better life. The United Nations recorded over 270 million migrants this year.<sup>1</sup> However, the question for those receiving countries is, which ones are to be accepted and which one should be rejected?

The Old Testament Hebrew word “ger” that is translated here as “foreigner” occurs 83 times,<sup>2</sup> and refers to a foreigner that has taken temporary or permanent residence in the land of Israel. It is different from “Nekar,” “nokri” and “zar,” which refer to a foreigner to Israel. Therefore these verses do not pertain to one who is accepted or rejected at the border point-of-entry but are intended

to refer to an attitude toward foreigners who have made a commitment to be part of the nation on a temporary or permanent basis. In our local context, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) considers a Foreign Resident to be someone who lives and works at least six months of the year within the states.

So, these verses primarily address two of our human tendencies regarding foreign residents:

1. Mistrusting and mistreating them.
2. Feeling superior to them while forgetting from where the Lord has rescued us.

“Not forgetting where we came from” is the medicine needed for our hallucination that makes us feel that we are better than those who have recently arrived. Israel’s greatest leaders were immigrants like these foreigners also. Abraham, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Moses, experienced the struggles of being a foreign resident. They experienced in their own bodies the travails of being overworked and underpaid by the native-born residents.

Israel failed to correct herself and the prophets addressed this issue again and again (Jeremiah 7:5-7; 22:2-5; Malachi 3:5).

“...do not mistreat them.”  
 “Love them as yourself...”

The person who signs this law is not another man but it is God the Lord Almighty, who watches everything you do, all the time, everywhere you go.

**Neftali Lopez**

Chaplain  
 Indiana Wesleyan University

<sup>1</sup> United Nations. International migrant stock 2019. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

<sup>2</sup> “Leviticus 19:33 Parallel: And If A Stranger Sojourn With Thee In Your Land, Ye Shall Not Vex Him.” *Biblehub.Com*, 2019, <https://biblehub.com/parallel/leviticus/19-33.htm>.

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## OBEYING

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**How is God informing your views on immigrants?**

**What attitudes toward immigrants do you observe within your network of friends? Do they feel superior based on place of birth or citizenship?**

**Are you intentionally proclaiming like a prophet to stop the two wrongdoings which the Lord stands against?**

**Who is someone who could assist you to better understand the realities of immigration in our country?**

POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Ego Eimi (I Am)**

**Ego Eimi**, the greatest thing you have taught me about love is...

**The Great I Am**, you are asking me to care for immigrants in my community by...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*I served as eyes for the blind and feet for the lame. I was a father to the poor and assisted strangers who needed help.*

Job 29:15-16 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**H**ow do we walk with the poor, the helpless? How do we respond to those in our community who are victims of injustice? How do we discharge the neighbor-trust that unequivocally states that we love neighbor as self? In the 29th chapter of Job, we are given a foreshadow hint of new kingdom principles in Job's recitation of the discharge of duty and care for community born out of the abundance with which he had been blessed. He is not listing this as a defense of his works as proof of faith but as a report of the care for community born out of a place of faith.

In response to the woman pouring expensive perfume over his feet, Jesus said, “The poor you will always have with you” (Matt. 26:11 NIV), not as an excuse for the perpetuity or acceptance of poverty or helplessness but instead as a directive for community responsibility: the poor are part of your community, so you need to sort out how to make that work well together in new covenant kingdom principles.

Leaders don't whine about injustice; leaders proactively seek ways, born out of a place of faith, to discharge the sacred trust given them in community space. How will we discharge the sacred trust of community we have been given?

**Sandy Emmet**  
Wellness Synergist  
Global Partners

**I WAS A FATHER  
TO THE POOR AND  
ASSISTED STRANGERS  
WHO NEEDED HELP.**



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## OBEYING

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**Read through Job 29 in its entirety. What do you believe God wants you to hear from it?**

**What must you change in your life in order for you to better care for the poor and helpless?**

**How will you discharge the sacred trust of community you have been given?**

What friend or family member can you ask to help you as you strive to better care for the victims of injustice in your community?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **Yahweh Rophe (The Lord who Heals)**

**Yahweh Rophe**, I am broken. You can heal me by...

**Healer**, use me to provide healing to the blind, the lame, the poor, and the stranger by allowing me to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Divide the land within these boundaries among the tribes of Israel. Distribute the land as an allotment for yourselves and for the foreigners who have joined you and are raising their families among you. They will be like native-born Israelites to you and will receive an allotment among the tribes. These foreigners are to be given land within the territory of the tribe with whom they now live. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!*

Ezekiel 47:21-23 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**L**ast night, I attended our city council meeting and there was a request for the city to rezone a parcel of land that a local business owner would like to purchase and develop, so he can relocate and expand his wildly successful business. The owner was requesting permission to split the approximately 17 acre parcel by having the eastern 8.5 acre parcel rezoned as M-2 with the remaining 8.5 acre parcel rezoned as C-3, because the city's master plan calls for the entire parcel to be zoned accordingly.

The business currently employs over 250 employees locally, as well as hundreds of employees in the surrounding states. The employer contributes to the local economy by maintaining the

company headquarters in our community, which leads to more than 1,700 hotel nights per year; a significant investment in our local economy.

It was interesting to watch the council members in action. Some of the members were insisting that they stick to their guns, even though the parcel of land is less than an ideal property for C-3 development. The property is along a frontage road and a train runs between the frontage road and the interstate. Have I mentioned that no one has presented a plan to develop this site in the 20 plus years since the city targeted this parcel for commercial development?

That experience got me thinking about the distribution and allocation of land in the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites possess the promised land, only to have God repossess the land when they turned away from Him. In Ezekiel 47:13-20, God articulates the boundaries of the land that the Israelites will inherit in keeping with His promise to Abraham. Then in Ezekiel 47:21-23, God lays out a process for the Israelites to follow in the distribution and allocation of the land.

Can you imagine the anticipation that they must have felt in hearing those words? They were anticipating being able to build their dream home on the land that had been given to them by God. At first glance, I'm sure the people were excited by the announcement. They were longing to reside, once again, in the promised land - a land flowing with milk and honey.

But then the reality began to set in. As they toured the land, they began to realize that when it comes to real estate, it's all about location, location, location. So they scoured the land to make their claims for the prime real estate—that plot with a picturesque view of Mount Nebo off in the distance, or how about the coveted piece of waterfront property nestled along the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, or the Sea of Galilee?

And then they begin looking at the fine print of God's zoning requirements and they see these words:

"...and for the foreigners who have joined you and are raising their families among you. They will be like native-born Israelites to

you and will receive an allotment among the tribes. These foreigners are to be given land within the territory of the tribe with whom they now live.”

What must they have felt when the initial excitement began to wear off and they saw the fine print? I assume they experienced a wide array of emotions. Some were probably disappointed with their allotment as they compared their land to their neighbor's property, or as they passed by that prime piece of real estate that someone else owned. And I am certain that there were even some in their midst who were upset, because they had to share the promise with foreigners.

Isn't that the problem with God's grace? Those who don't deserve it (which is everyone) get to share in it! That is both the beauty and the tension of the Gospel. If we are not careful, we can feel like we are entitled to God's grace, while feeling like that person who is outside our circle should not be entitled to the same grace. Let's just be grateful that we get to share in Abraham's promise, and let's continue to invite others to share in that same promise. Why? Because “I, the sovereign Lord, have spoken!”

**James Wood**

Lead Pastor  
Olathe Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**List some of the ways God has blessed you beyond what you deserved.**

**Out of those blessings, what does he desire that you share with others?**

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**Who are the others he is calling you to share with?**

**Who is someone who can help you let go of what God is calling you to share?**

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POSTURING

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Meditate on God's name: **Kyrios (Lord)**

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**Kyrios**, you have blessed me abundantly. This includes...

**Lord**, out of that abundance, you are calling me to share...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*

Acts 10:34-38 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**hen I first moved to my neighborhood to start a church in the inner city, a neighbor asked me, “Did you move here to convert all of us sinners?” God helped me and I said, “No, I’m here to be converted.”

The danger for Christians, always and especially today, is that we have only one conversion experience. The initial act of binding to Jesus in discipleship is never enough. In fact, it may not be the most dramatic of our many conversions to come. Peter’s

Spirit-led conversion to the “other” (Acts 10) certainly rivals his initial conversion to Jesus (Luke 5). In a role reversal, Peter hears the testimony of the Gentile, Cornelius, and responds with a new confession of faith—one that includes what God is doing in the ethnic-other.

Peter now realizes, in a personal and experiential way, that people of every nationality are being accepted by God. They know the same gospel that Peter knows.

We expect this to be the moment that the church expands from the Jews to the Gentiles and on to the ends of the earth. But here, the pre-Christian ethnic-other evangelizes the evangelist. The church will expand explosively into the Gentile world, but first the church itself needs another conversion experience. This revival starts in the home of Cornelius, and then spreads back through Peter to church headquarters in Jerusalem.

**Adam Lipscomb**

Co-Pastor  
City Life Church



**THE DANGER FOR  
CHRISTIANS, ALWAYS AND  
ESPECIALLY TODAY, IS  
THAT WE HAVE ONLY ONE  
CONVERSION EXPERIENCE.**

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OBEYING

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**What new conversion is the Spirit leading you into?**

**How is God using the ethnic-other to challenge and deepen your faith?**

**What step can you take to allow more ethnic-others into your life?**

Who is someone who can help you with this?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name:

**To Phos tou Kosmou (Light of the World)**

**To Phos tou Kosmou**, through your light, you have brought out of the darkness...

**Light of the World**, you are calling me to carry your light to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:14-16 (NIV)

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## DISCERNING

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**W**here are more displaced people in the world today than ever previously recorded. No doubt, immigration and refugee resettlement are some of the most divisive conversations, and there is a well-intentioned tendency to stay away from difficult topics. As long as we are not actively adding to the hostility circling the immigration debate, we are okay, right?

Unfortunately, the peace we settle for is a one-dimensional version of the real thing. Sometimes we overemphasize the personal relevance of the cross to bring us a reconciled relationship with God and to an internal peace in a way that neglects the corporate implications of peace. We proclaim peace with God and ourselves, but we fail to mention peace among people.

This one-dimensional peace threatened the church in Ephesus, too. After first showing that the death of Jesus leads to our personal salvation (Ephesians 2:4-10), Paul goes on to unpack the corporate implications of the cross, focusing on the chasm that lay between Jews and Gentiles.

For the first time in human history, Jews and Gentiles were expected to do a radical thing: worship together. The Jewish temple had a physical partition which divided Jew and Gentile. This half-wall was the literal division between the clean and the unclean; the privileged and the unprivileged before God. Paul was subtly referencing this literal wall to point to the figurative division between the Jews and the Gentiles that had been destroyed by the cross. God destroyed all the sin that sets itself up in our lives in the form of dividing walls, making his presence not only accessible, but our very dwelling place (v. 21) as new people (v. 15).

The peace Paul points to is not biting our tongues or keeping our heads down for the sake of amicability. Ephesians-2-type-peace destroys the hostility that keeps us from living peacefully together. Paul says that hostility is “put to death” by the cross (v. 16). This peace impacts Jew and Gentile; immigrant and native-born. It impacts a much broader set of human relationships than we could have dreamed.

Our dividing wall today may not look the same as the differences between Jews and Gentiles. But the hostility, itself, is probably expressed quite similarly. Where do we find building resentment, opposition, and lack of empathy in our culture, our churches and our own hearts? This is the very location where God wants to build his dwelling place. In verse 21, Paul describes how God builds His home where the dividing wall used to be. He sug-

gests that the place of peace is situated in the very location where enmity between two groups once was. “He Himself is our peace,” (v. 14) and perhaps the peace-making work of destroying barriers and building dwelling places is our greatest witness to the world.

**Andrea Summers**

Assistant Professor of Religion  
Southern Wesleyan University

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## OBEYING

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**What is God showing you concerning the ways you live out peace with those from other cultures and countries?**

**In your own views, where do you see resentment, opposition, or a lack of empathy building around the current immigration conversation?**

**Where is there a wall in your life, and who is on the other side of that wall? What can you do today to tap into the barrier-destroying power of the cross, and begin replacing that wall with God's dwelling place?**

**Who is someone who can help remove unhealthy walls that you have built that need to be torn down?**

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## POSTURING

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Meditate on God's name: **Abir (Mighty One)**

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**Abir**, you have removed hostility and provided peace in me through...

**Mighty One**, you are calling me to join you in providing peace to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love. Be ready with a meal or a bed when it's needed. Why, some have extended hospitality to angels without ever knowing it!*

Hebrews 13:1-2 (MSG)

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## DISCERNING

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**S**am was strange. Also, he was no angel, literally or figuratively. He constantly tested my patience with his bad pun jokes, his critiques of all my decisions, and his insistence that the King James translation of the Bible was the only correct translation of the Bible (Yeah, I chose The Message paraphrase for this devotional on purpose). In addition to all of that, to be real, Sam stank. He had chosen to live as a homeless individual in the streets of Austin, TX. Showering wasn't a regular practice of his, and he refused to wear deodorant out of fear that it would give him cancer. All the same, he was a part of the church I was pastoring. I couldn't just ignore him, and as hard as it was, I had to choose to love him.

Holidays are rough on individuals experiencing homelessness. While there is no shortage of generosity of clothing and food during that time of the year, it is a season which those living on the streets are reminded of what they have lost. Mainly, family. Because of this, during holidays, my family and I would invite some

of our homeless friends and church attenders over to our house to spend time with us. Most of the time we really enjoyed this, and then one Christmas we invited Sam to come along. Huge mistake!

We smelled Sam come through the front door even before we saw him come through it. He complained about the secular Christmas music that was playing in the background. He complained about the others we had invited over as well. He told my wife that the ham she spent hours cooking was dry. He told me that the mashed potatoes that I had cooked were bland. He got angry that we had apple pie for dessert instead of pecan pie. He even questioned my faith in Christ because we had a few Santa ornaments on display. Just as I was about to kick Sam out of my house, my five year old daughter, Cambria, walked up to Sam and ask him to play a board game with her.

They sat and played Chutes and Ladders, Candy Land, and Uno for the rest of the evening. Sam threw a fit when he got beat, and he even went as far as to accuse Cambria of cheating. She didn't seem to mind his attitude or even his smell. She liked Sam, and she even thought his jokes were funny.

The night wrapped up, and I agreed to drive the folks who had joined us back to their camps, shelters, or resting spots. Sam was the last to be dropped off, and as he was getting out of the car he said, "Thanks for having me over for Christmas dinner. I haven't shared a home cooked meal with a family in over 15 years." Sam was at all of our holiday meals following that Christmas, and he continued to complain about the food.

The relationship Sam and I shared was challenging, but I was constantly reminded of God's love for me as I struggled to love Sam. In the presence of God, my imperfection lingers on me and smells rancid. I find myself quite often complaining to God about something he has or has not done. I am quick to tell him what he could improve on. I imagine that while God is love, I might be hard to love sometimes. Yet, he continues to love me, and he keeps inviting me to his table.

**Beau Hamner**  
Outreach Pastor  
College Wesleyan Church

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## OBEYING

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**How has God shown you hospitality, even when you were difficult to deal with or love?**

**As you reflect on Hebrew 13:1-2, what is God calling you to do?**

**What would be a good first step in obeying him in this area?**

Who is someone that is different or difficult to deal with that you should invite to your house to share time and a meal with?

## POSTURING

Meditate on God's name: **El Rachum (God of Compassion)**

**El Rachum**, you didn't abandoned me and you showed me compassion when...

**Compassionate God**, you are calling me to offer hospitality to difficult people. You are even calling me to extend hospitality to...



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## SCRIPTURING

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*When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.*

Romans 12:13 (NLT)

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## DISCERNING

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**I** love being around people. I find nothing more energizing than a room full of people. I'm the one who hosts the Christmas meal and the Super Bowl party; the one who always has a guest staying in our spare bedroom. In church settings, people hear these traits and quickly label me with the "gift of hospitality."

While it's admirable to have your friends over for a party and while it's sometimes challenging to allow your in-laws to stay in your spare bedroom, what it's not is Biblical hospitality. Biblical hospitality is φιλόξενος ("philoxenos") – literally loving (philo) immigrants/foreigners (xenos).

While many cultures, both past and present, have called their people to love the poor, the orphan, and the widow, it's a uniquely Biblical idea to love and welcome immigrants. In fact, one of the reasons I believe philoxenos is on every Biblical list of characteris-

tics that leaders should possess is because it's one of the most radical traits that directly points others to a life transformed by Jesus.

We, as followers of Jesus, must do better at living this witness in our communities. The reality is that the vast majority of immigrants have never been invited into the home of a native-born US citizen. And it's not for a lack of immigrants, as we currently live in a time where there are more foreign-born individuals living in our country (1 in 7 US residents is foreign born) than at any other time in the past 100+ years.

I firmly believe that one of the most powerful change agents is your table. Sitting at the table together, sharing a meal together, sharing our stories and our lives together – these are the actions that create transformation. Biblical hospitality, loving and welcoming immigrants, is a powerful witness to our community. Even more, practicing philoxenos will change you as an individual. I have found that we love the Maria or Mohammed we know, but remain terrified of the Maria or Mohammed we don't know. It's through philoxenos that bridges are built, and authentic relationships are formed. In has been in the company of immigrants, and in the practice of Biblical hospitality, that I have learned more about God's heart, more about grace, hope, justice, and love.

So don't lower the bar of hospitality to simply hosting the next holiday party, but with God's help, invite an immigrant to your table and see the transformation that will occur.

**Zach Szmara**

Pastor

The Bridge Community Church

National Director

Immigrant Connection (TWC)

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## OBEYING

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**What is God revealing to you concerning your understanding of hospitality?**

**What has prevented you from practicing hospitality in the past?**

**Of the last 5 people you've invited to your table, were any immigrants?**

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**Who is someone you will invite to your table to begin practicing philoxenos?**

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## POSTURING

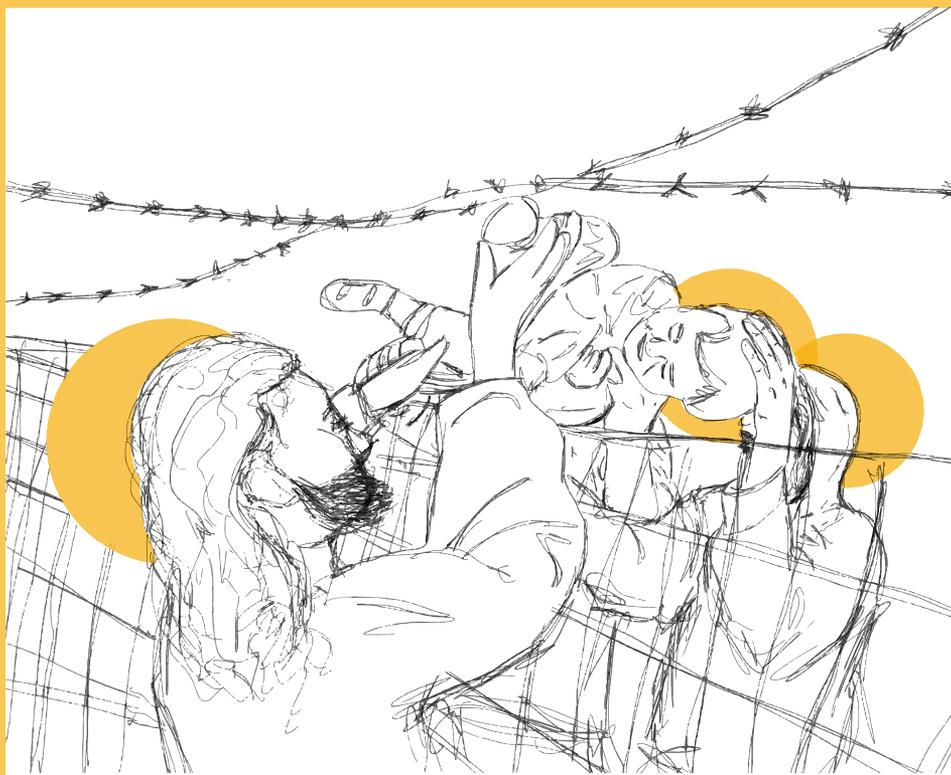
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Meditate on God's name: **Kadosh (Holy One)**

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**Kadosh**, you are holy, and we are made in your image. You have reminded me that I am made in your image by...

**Holy One**, you are reminding me that all others are made in your image too. I need this to begin impacting the way I see...



### **“Escape to Egypt” by Zoë Case**

*After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”*

*That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.” When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:*

*“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”*

Matthew 2:13-18 (NIV)

# CONCLUSION

The image to the left is titled “Escape to Egypt.” It was illustrated by Zoë Case, a talented artist who was able to remind us of the similarities between the life of Jesus and the lives of current refugees fleeing persecution around the world. It was originally displayed in College Wesleyan Church’s (CWC) liturgical art gallery, but it now resides on the walls of the Immigrant Connection office at CWC. In the early stages of working on this listening guide, we planned to use it as the cover illustration. Though, over time, we realized that it might be too powerful of an image.

Zoë’s image is powerful for many reasons. It forces us to see Christ as a refugee himself, something we often overlook as we study the life of Christ. It reminds us of the struggles immigrants and refugees experience as they seek safety here in the United States. For others, the image might be seen as political image, as immigration has become one of the dividing points in our political landscape here in the U.S.

As you view it, you might have a mental or emotional response to it. If so, sit with that feeling. Take some time and process what you are feeling. Perhaps ask yourself why you feel the way you do. But don’t overlook that this image communicates to us a truth about our Savior: he was a refugee.

In Matthew 2, we read that Joseph and Mary made the difficult decision to take their son, Jesus, and leave all they knew, because an angel came to Joseph and warned him of Herod’s intent to kill Jesus. Under the cover of night, Joseph took his wife and child and fled to Egypt to protect the welfare of his son. They only returned when the fear of that threat was no longer.

Like Joseph and Mary, many parents from various countries around the world are seeking refuge and asylum here in the U.S. because of the threat of violence that their children are facing. In our Immigrant Connection office here at CWC, we have heard these stories—families held at gunpoint because of their political

affiliations, parents who are seeking to avoid violence inflicted upon their children from cartels and gangs, and parents who fear for the welfare of their children because of their religious views.

Take a look at the illustration one more time, but this time focus on Joseph and Mary. Imagine what they felt. What do you think was going through their minds as they ventured out to make their way to Egypt?

The picture to the left hangs in our office to remind us that our savior, Jesus Christ, and his family struggled like many of our clients.

At the end of these 40 days, you might not have different views of immigrants or immigration here in the U.S. than when you started this listening guide. That's okay! That was never the intent of this guide. Though we hope you have had the opportunity to hear from God, and can at least see Jesus in a different way than you did when you first opened this guide on Day 1.

**– Josh Ruiz and Beau Hamner** |

# NAMES OF GOD REFERENCE CHART

NAME	VERSE
Alpha Kai Omega	Rev. 22:13
Jehovah Jireh	Genesis: 22:14
Jehovah M'Kaddesh	Leviticus: 20:7-8
Immanuel	Matthew 1:22-23
Elohim	Genesis: 1:1
Shophet	Psalms 94:15
El Olam	Genesis 21:32-33
Yahweh Shalom	Judges 6:24
El Roi	Genesis 16:13-14
El Elyon	Daniel 4:34
Abba	Luke 15:20
Yaweh Tsidqenu	Jeremiah 23:5
Jehovah Rohi	Psalms 23
Adonai	Psalms 16:2
Yeshua	Isaiah 43:3
Ga'al	Mark 10:45
Logos	John 1:14
Yaweh Shammah	Ezekiel 48:35
Jehova	Genesis 2:4
Artos Zoes	John 6:48-51
Iesous Soter	Matthew 1:20-21
Amnos tou Theou	John 1:29
Mashiach	Acts 2:36
Malek	Psalms 72:1-3
El Chay	2 Kings 19:15-16
Esh Oklah	Exodus 34:14
Rhabbi	Matthew 23:8
Sar Shalom	Isaiah 9:6
El Gibbor	Isaiah 9:6
Machseh	Psalms 91:1-2
El Shaddai	Genesis 17:1-2
Pnuema	Genesis 17:1-2
Miqweh Yisreal	Jeremiah 17:7-8
Ego Eimi	Exodus 3:13-14
Yahweh Rophe	Exodus 15:26
Kyrios	Philippians 2:9-11
To Phos tou Kosmou	John 8:12
Abir	Genesis 49:24
El Rachum	Deuteronomy 4:31
Kadosh	Psalms 71:22

