

A Responsive Reading

Lord, why is it that so often when we feel threatened – times when we need to turn to You the most; we call upon Your name, but forget what You taught.

Lord, forgive us!

Oh, we cry out for Your help and protection. We claim Your presence and support as our own – but we forget Your message.

Lord, forgive us!

You taught us to depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. (Psalm 34:14)

You taught us to do to others what we would have them do to us. (Matthew 7:12)

You taught us: not to resist an evildoer – to love our enemies; do good to those who hate us; bless those who curse us; pray for those who abuse us. (Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:27-28)

You taught us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength, and our neighbor as our self. (Deuteronomy 6:5; Luke 10:27)

But we forget the power of Your love and face a threat with actions we chose; and then ask You to bless our actions.

Lord, forgive us!

Instead of heeding Your word, we yield to the temptation to respond in kind – violence for violence, hurt for hurt, as if might makes right and what we want is what God wants.

Lord, forgive us!

Forgive us! Transform our selfishness that makes us think our ways are best, and our desires more important than any others. Remind us we are not better than the rest of Your children and that we are called to love and care for each other, especially “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40).

Help us heed Your will. Whenever we can, let us choose to live in peace. Help us to reject vengeance and leave room for your judgment, for we are called to feed a hungry enemy not kill them; and quench their thirst with good water not try to wipe them off the earth. We are called to speak out when we see injustice and work for change. We are called not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good.

Lord, be with us and open our hearts to Your leading. Amen

This week, remember in prayer:

- **The Chibok Girls still missing.** More than 100 of the 276 girls from the school in Chibok Nigeria, abducted in 2014, are still missing 7 years later. Brethren congregations were each given the name of one of them to hold up in prayer. Are you still praying for them? Even those who have escaped still need prayer support as do all the families effected!
- **People dealing with COVID-19.** Remember all whose lives have been touched by COVID, here & around the world; especially places like India where the healthcare system is being overwhelmed.
- **Refugees & those displaced by violence** –especially the children. Remember that people do not flee their homes unless forced or because conditions where they live, are far worse than those, they know they will face when fleeing. The pandemic has made the refugee situation much more difficult.
- **People who live with the ugliness of racism,** bigotry, or prejudice. That we have not learned the lessons Jesus taught about how to treat each other, or the lessons from our past about the dehumanizing nature of fear & the all-consuming & destructive power of hate, is demonstrated every day. The viciousness of hate crimes is part of this deplorable ugliness.



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