



Guided Journal



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This journal is an accompaniment to the Worship Design Studio worship series, “Do Unto Others,” created in collaboration with Resurrection, a United Methodist Church.

worshipdesignstudio.com/kindness

This journal can also be used independently from the worship series or any church gathering. It can be used privately or shared with a friend or in a small group setting.

May the content in this journal inspire you to share more kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love with the world!

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Introduction

Our world seems to be consumed with division—often typified in the colors red and blue. Rather than stay in our monochromatic silos, the Golden Rule in scripture challenges us to engage in conversation and seek to create whatever common good we can with our relatives, friends, and neighbors who we might consider to be on the “other side” politically and ideologically. As we attempt to come together, the idea is not that we are obliterating either one or trying to change each other, but rather we discover the beauty that can be created when we work together to make the world a better place. The “purple space” is where we cultivate kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love for one another and for the good of all the world, no matter what.

This guided journal is designed to be a source of support and inspiration as you embark on this “Do Unto Others” experience. Whether you are utilizing the journal with others or simply on your own as a devotional practice, I hope you find soft edges to land amid the hard lines of inquiry that can arise when we enter into dialogues from opposite ends of the spectrum. I hope the journaling prompts by my Project Manager, Jenna Duxbury, will help you unpack your own thoughts.

As you engage this journal weekly, I encourage you to keep the “word” for the week (kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love) visible somewhere in your life that will cross your path often. Like a mantra or a lens, let this word filter your experiences for the week and see what happens when you cover your interactions with others with this layer. My artist friend Rita Blitt says “Kindness is contagious. Catch it!” and she actually started a movement around that saying many years ago (<https://ritablitt.com/kindness>). When we approach our lives with these qualities, others may “catch it” and spread it without even being aware of the ripple effects that are happening because you crossed their path in that way.

Many blessings on your journey. I’m thankful for the ways you will “do unto others” that lean toward healing divisions, no matter our differences.

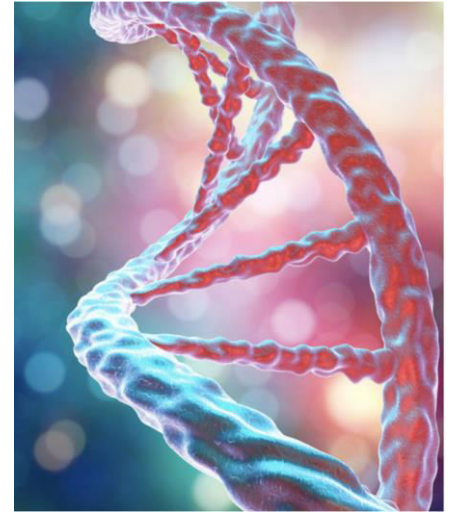
Peace & Passion,
Dr. Marcia McFee



Week One

Red and Blue Make Purple: Kindness

Did you know that 99% of our DNA is the same from one human to another? This surely makes us kin. The word 'kindness' originally developed from a root word that meant "family" or "with the feeling of relatives for each other." We begin this series considering the implications of spending so much of our time feeling estranged from, and resentful toward, those whose <1% moves them in a different direction from us. And we begin to dream of finding a "purple space" in which to exchange goodness.



"Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for [God] is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your [Abba, God,] is merciful.

– Luke 6: 31-36



I glimpse you from afar, and I'm suspicious.
I cannot understand you, and it makes me afraid.
What if we are too different?
What if you don't care about me?
I cannot imagine we have anything to share.
I'm not sure I am willing to open myself to a conversation.

Have you ever avoided forming relationships with people because of your perception of their beliefs? Why do you think our instinct is sometimes to avoid connections with those values are different from us?

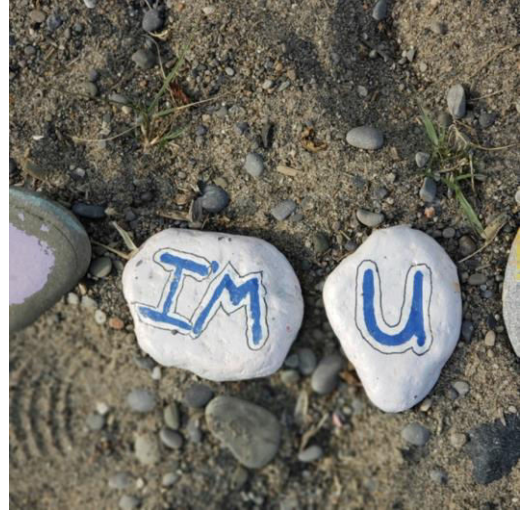
Write down a list of the values that you hold in the highest regard. If possible, pick your top two or three so you can get really specific. Is it possible that someone on the “other side” of the political spectrum holds these same values and expresses them in different ways?

God of Mercy,
we ask you to come mighty close,
for we are a divided world,
and we are not sure of our footing in this moment.
Steady us, and invite us
to “do unto others” in ways that build up
your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.
We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Center That Holds,
and in the power of the Spirit That Transforms. **Amen.**

Week Two

The Polarization Within: Compassion

We sometimes deal with conflict within us in addition to the conflict between us. Research tells us that because we humans are desperate for a sense of cohesion and belonging in these confusing times, we hang onto ideological generalities instead of treating ourselves and each other with the compassion required to alleviate despair. Compassion grows when we are able to know ourselves and one another on a deeper level and act out of understanding.



*The wolf shall live with the lamb;
the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
the calf and the lion will feed together,
and a little child shall lead them.*

*The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. . . .*

– excerpt from Isaiah 11: 6-9

*Two
Voices*

Sometimes I can't make out my own thoughts, much less yours.
Making sense of this life and this time seems unreachable.
What if we never figure it out?
What if we become too estranged?
I cannot imagine your viewpoint.
I'm not sure I am willing to believe that any solution will work.

Have you ever revised your beliefs after learning more about the world or encountering sufficient evidence/arguments that made you change your mind? How did it feel to grapple with the notion that your previous understanding was perhaps incomplete or misinformed?

Sometimes we resist changing our beliefs for good reason: “going along with the crowd” isn’t always the best idea, especially when we sense that the crowd is heading down a dangerous path. Have you ever resisted social pressure to change your deeply held convictions? What helps you discern between wisdom and folly when presented with new information?

Reconciling God,
we ask you to help us open to compassion,
for we are a divided world,
and the conflict is waging even within us in this moment.
Empower us, and invite us
to “do unto ourselves and others” in ways that build up
your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.
We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Center That Holds,
and in the power of the Spirit That Transforms. **Amen.**

Week Three

Listen More, Speak Less: Humility

The root of the word “human” is the same as the word “humility.” It all means literally “on the ground.” From dust we came, and to dust we shall return. When we hear each other’s fears, anxieties, and pain, we can return to the ground of hope... that we are all experiencing the pains of being human. This week, we remember to look first at our neighbor as a person, not a position. Beginning conversations this way may help us to stay human and “on the ground” with one another rather than needing to come out “on top.”



I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and [Parent] of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

– Ephesians 4: 1-6



We are on opposite sides, it seems.

It is hard to even talk about it.

What if we don't see eye to eye?

What if you never see things as I do?

I cannot imagine what will happen to all of us.

I'm not sure I can handle this tension, this pain.

Having humility is not about lacking self-respect. Instead, we can think of it as being confident enough to stay open to the possibility that we don't—and can't!—know everything. Why do you think it's sometimes hard to concede that someone on the "other side" may have a point?

Think about an issue that's important to you, and list some of the counter-arguments on the "other side." Can you see human concerns being expressed? In what ways can you find empathy and acknowledge the fears, hopes, needs, and longings of others whose opinions are in opposition to yours?

Creator God,
we ask you to come close and remind us
of our belovedness as your children,
for we are feeling distant.
Open our eyes to the beauty and pain we all contain,
and invite us to "do unto others" in ways that build up
your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.
We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Center That Holds,
and in the power of the Spirit That Transforms. **Amen.**

Week Four

Living Together on Uncommon Ground: Respect

Sometimes we think having respect means to agree or be the same. But that is not actually the depth of what respect is about. It comes from the Latin *respectus*, which means “the act of looking at one often, to consider, to observe.” We are called to respect by tending to one another—regarding each other, considering each other—early and often. The reality is that common ground is sometimes not possible. As so as we live on uncommon ground, what can we do to keep tending to one another as “kin” worthy of respect, despite our differences?



The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

– excerpt from 1 Corinthians 12: 1-26

Two
Voices

If you are my sibling, then this family is in trouble.

No kidding! What in the world are you thinking?

What if you really hate me?

What if we never find common ground?

I cannot imagine getting beyond this divide.

I’m not sure I am willing to work to repair all of this.

Have you ever tried to change someone’s mind about a certain issue?
Sometimes maybe we can, and perhaps we ourselves allow others to change our minds at times. When you agree to disagree, what does that relationship look like moving forward?

Perhaps instead of trying to change each other, one of the most loving things we can do is to witness one another. Even when we cannot find common ground to stand on, we still have to share a planet. How will you show love to the people in your life despite political differences?

God of All of Us,
we ask you to hover close,
for we are a divided world,
and we are not sure how to regard one another in this moment.
Bind us as your beloveds, and invite us
to “do unto others” in ways that build up
your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.
We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Center That Holds,
and in the power of the Spirit That Transforms. **Amen.**

Week Five

Malice Toward None: Love

Loving our neighbors—including relatives, coworkers, acquaintances, strangers—as ourselves is no simple task. We need God. We need the love of God to show us mercy and strength to love as God loves. We need the story of Jesus—the one who loved across the lines that had been drawn in the society of his day but who also stood up for the least and the lost. We need faith that no matter the strain of differing positions, policies, and politics, we will move forward in love. Disagreeing need not be antithetical to love and grace. And indeed, our world depends on all of us working for a better world filled with more kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love.



When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, an expert in the law, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 'This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"

– Matthew 22: 34-40



It has been an eye-opening experience to be here.
In the end, I'm still not sure I'm capable of moving closer.
What if that never happens?
What if the chasm gets wider?
But I have begun to imagine a way to live together.
I know we both are still afraid, but I wish you no harm.

One of Jesus 'most amazing gifts was his ability to bring together people with all sorts of social statuses and backgrounds and unify them in God's love. Do you think love has the ability to transcend and transform any barrier? Why or why not?

Has this series left you feeling more or less resolved in your openness to others? What will you take away from this journey of exploring empathy and the Golden Rule?

Loving and Hope-filled God,
we ask you to stay close in our lives
as we move into an unknown future.
Wrap us in your love, and invite us
to go and do likewise—to “do unto others” in ways that build up
your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.
We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Center That Holds,
and in the power of the Spirit That Transforms. **Amen.**

