

# **“Love is the Way”**

## **Session 3**

### **Chapter Summaries:**

#### **Chapter 5 – Love’s Call – And Love’s Calling**

Bishop Curry focuses on how self-love, and being true to your own heart, can open the door of another’s heart. Bishop Curry reflects on how becoming our true selves and deeply loving ourselves (seeing ourselves as made in the image of a loving God) is discovered in the process of making hard life choices. John Coltrane’s decision to heal from a life of drug addiction, Bishop Harris’s choice to radically be her true self in the face of rejection and oppression, and ultimately Bishop Curry’s decision to be fully himself as priest, presiding bishop, and preacher at the royal wedding are all examples of people making the decision to live into their true selves, freeing them to truly love others.

#### **Chapter 6 – It’s Not Easy**

Bishop Curry discusses that the work of love and the nature of progress is a struggle. Accepting that progress of loving and building the kingdom of God is a struggle, can be difficult. Bishop Curry reflects on how the struggle of systemic racism in Lincoln Heights, OH and his work there changed the way he understood progress and loving action. Collective action must be grounded in love, and community capacity building can increase our strength and resolve to do our part in the struggle. Hope, he says, comes from surprising places. We cannot do everything, but we can do our part and do it with our whole hearts.

#### **Chapter 7 – Leave No One Behind**

Bishop Curry introduces Martin Buber’s principle of I-Thou, seeing every person as a sacred individual. When we see others in this way, acknowledging them fully, we can better become a church that exists primarily for those who are outside it.

### **Story 1:**

In Chapter 5, Bishop Curry tells the story of the night at college when he took a friend with a bad drug reaction to the infirmary.

“By the next morning, my friend was clearly going to be OK, but something had changed for me. A night that began with me dancing on my feet at a party ended with me on my knees talking to God. . . . That night with my friend in the infirmary, my world was shaken by something I didn’t see coming. I was cracked open, if you will. Vulnerable. . . . On my knees, I felt God, who the Bible says is love.

*Questions:*

1. Loving yourself, Bishop Curry says, is a required balance in the commandment to love God, Neighbor and Self. (p.96) How do we know when we have struck the balance of self-love? What are ways you find love for yourself? How does your body feel, when you are in balance with love of God, Neighbor and Self.
2. Bishop Curry says when faced with difficult decisions, he realized, “if he felt the presence of God, it was more like a computer program running in the background. It's there and it has an effect, but it doesn't require your immediate attention.” With so much requiring attention these days, how do you pay attention to God in your daily life? Does God require your immediate attention?

**Story 2:**

In Chapter 6, Bishop Curry recounts his time as rector of St. Simon’s in Lincoln Heights, Ohio, a poor Black suburb of Cincinnati with a host of urban problems. In concert with (White) clergy colleagues in surrounding suburbs, Bishop Curry had his first taste of collaboration with others:

“That kicked off my first real experience of being part of the leadership team seeking to organize a community. As the African saying goes, ‘Move fast alone, go far together.’ We did not move fast. Getting the four religious communities and the Lincoln Heights community together was hard work. No one alone had solutions. Everyone had ideas and hopes. But to discover the needs that we together were being called to address took time—to listen, learn, share, and pray.”

*Questions:*

1. Bishop Curry says “the journey is always a struggle.” When you hear this, how do you feel? What is your relationship to comfort, and how does accepting that the journey is always a struggle challenge the level of comfort in your life now?
2. Bishop Curry says, our job is to do our job..we cannot take on every part of the struggle but we must do our part. When you consider systemic racism, and our call to build the kingdom of God, The Beloved Community, what is your part? Do you feel equipped to do your job?

**Story 3:**

In Chapter 7, Bishop Curry describes his college experience of reading Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*.

“In college I read a book called *I and Thou* by the Jewish rabbi and existentialist Martin Buber. . .He wrote that there are two possible ways we can relate to the world around us: *I-It* and *I-Thou*. Relate to other people as *Its* and you make yourself the Supreme being. . . *I-Thou* is different. *Thou* recognizes the other as an active subject—a human spirit whose truth can be understood only through a relationship. You can’t own a *Thou*. You can’t stereotype a *Thou*. You can’t ignore a *Thou*. You can’t throw a *Thou* away. ‘All real living is meeting,’ wrote Buber.”

*Questions:*

1. Bishop Curry introduces the teaching of Martin Buber of I-It and I-Thou. It is easy for us to see others as “it,” a caricature or object, but we are called to see other people as “Thou,” with all dignity and holiness. Have you ever had the experience of considering someone as “I-It”, and having that relationship transformed to “I-Thou”? What happened to help you see them differently?
2. How does your faith community live out William Temple’s vision of an organization that exists for the sake of those outside it?