

The last month, we've talked about how we have been troubled
We feel it in our bodies—whether sick or things just feel off
We recognized that while it presents as political, it is actually spiritual
And that evil has been given a new permission to make chaos in our world
While we know that Light overcomes the darkness—we recognize that we need “flashlights”
Tools that help us navigate in the darkness

- Tell the truth
- We are enough
- Fear Not!
- Wear the protection of God
- Say a Holy No! to that which is unholy
- Pray the fullness and power of the Spirit into the situation
- Pay attention to the God movement
- Follow the nudges
- Practice goodness—overcome evil with good
- Declare the truth of the God/Jesus that we know—God of love

But really our goal is not just to find a flashlight, but to transform the darkness into Light

I'm drawn to a recent article by David Brooks in the New York Times, “How to Engage a Fanatic”¹
He talks about negative encounters with people that passionately held different views
He was tempted to say there was nothing one could do—it was impossible to change minds
But after thinking about it, he says,

*The only way to confront fanaticism is with love... Ask the fanatics genuine questions.
Paraphrase what they say so they know they've been heard. Show some ultimate care
for their destiny and soul even if you detest the words that come out of their mouths.*

First he says we do this for ourselves—so we do not allow anger against them to consume us

So we do not become what we hate and what we fight against

Rather, we greet fanaticism with compassionate listening

For the sake of our country and world—we do better to greet fanaticism with Love

We live in a common world—I can shut people I disagree with out of my immediate life

But I cannot shut them out of the larger life, so we must find way to live together

He says civility is the sum of many sacrifices we make to do this larger life of living together

It is reminiscent of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,

“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.”

And it is reminiscent of the words of Jesus in Luke 6:27 (and Matthew 5:44)

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”

Also, Paul in his letter to the Romans—Romans 12:20-21

*... “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for
by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil, but
overcome evil with good.*

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/23/opinion/engaging-fanatics.html>

When it seems like too much to love someone who perpetuates the darkness,
Remember that God loves them and piggy back on God's love for them
It is a love that is not based on merit, but on grace

Again, it is reminiscent of the Quaker phrase, recorded in the Journal of George Fox
"walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one"

The second tool in transforming the darkness is praise—seemingly as odd as loving your enemies
Yet we are less familiar with this, although we know about a "sacrifice of praise"
On a personal level I know to praise God in hard times, but this is bigger than that
Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Philippians 4:6-7 The Message Bible

Walter Wink is blunt in his writings, *"Praise is the cure for the apostasy of the Powers."*²

Wink helps us understand that institutions, governments, powers, authorities, etc.³
Have an outer presence—the outer is what we see, the physical manifestation
It is the body, the building, the organization, the structure that is visible
But they also have an inner aspect—that we don't see, an inner spiritual ethos

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13:1

We've often misunderstood this as meaning the authorities are good
That because they're from God, we must follow what they tell us to do
It's true that God has given us these authorities for humanizing purposes
—to accomplish good
However, the inner aspect can be corrupted—given over to unholy spirits

It is to this inner, spiritual aspect of the institutions that we must speak
The church, more than any other place in society, is best equipped to do this work
We are given the ability to recognize spirit—to see the spiritual truth of the inner aspect
God has given us spiritual gifts with which to see what God is doing
Through discernment and prophecy, we can know if the Spirit aligns with God
We can recognize the truth and see when the inner aspect of an institution has lost its way
We are best equipped to expose the idolatrous spirituality of human systems
But how?
First by using our spiritual gifts of discernment and prophecy

This is where Wink says we must call the inner spirituality of these institutions to recognize God
We call them to recognize their Creator and the One who gave them existence
What exposes and confounds them is being called upon to recognize and praise God

² Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, page 167

³ Walter Wink's books, *Engaging the Powers* and *The Powers That Be*, talk about this in much greater detail.

The unholy spirits know God, just as the New Testament says about the demons
In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." Luke 4:33-34

We, the church, must call them to praise their Creator as we sing praises to our Creator

We begin by praising God—singing praises and declaring the praise of God
We send out sound waves of praise—reverberating around the world

Wink says praise is the homeostatic principle of the universe
Creating balance and equilibrium in the internal environment
It preserves the harmony of the whole by preventing parts from usurping the whole
Praise is the ecological principle of divinity whereby every creature is subordinated to its
organic relationship with the Creator
Praise is the cure for the apostasy of the Powers

We proclaim to the spirits of the unholy Powers—those that have gone to the darkness
That they do not exist as ends unto themselves
They exist for the humanizing purposes of God as revealed in Jesus
We don't have to introduce them to God—they know God
By virtue of their creation—the unholy Powers know their Creator

Governments and institutions know that goodness and kindness are right
They work hard to convince of us that fact even while given over to the unholy
We must call them back to their God-given purposes
This is all important Spirit work

Praise, laugh, love and sing
In so doing, we break the grip of the powers and confuse them
It is not what they expect

Acts 16:16-40 Paul and Silas are thrown in jail, praying and singing hymns to God
There is an earthquake and their chains fell off and the doors opened
The jailer panics and is ready to kill himself, when Paul says they are all there—no one escaped
Singing praises transformed the whole situation