

Not for Sale – Bible Study & Journal Companion

Week Four

First Encounter: Day 1 Reflections

Many readers of *Not For Sale* call this chapter the hardest one to take. It's as if the evil jumps off of the pages at you and grips your heart. -The description of the atrocities is shocking, almost unimaginable. -You may wish your imagination could be disconnected as you read. -As the words unfold this tragedy, the picture painted is too clear. Uganda's child soldiers carry the heaviest burden, one that no child on the planet should ever be required to bear.

There is rescue, there is hope, there is light ... but at first glance it seems so dim! The stories of rescue are powerful, as are the stories of suffering. Come before Jesus in silence and focus your hearts on the suffering and God's redemptive desires for Uganda.

Begin by reading Chapter 3 in *Not For Sale*, pages ??-??.

Idea: watch the movie (or segments of) *Blood Diamond* as a group.

Comment [ITS1]: Can we really say this? I think different individuals may have a tougher time with different chapters.

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Day 1: Focus on the Biblical Text: Psalm 44: 1, 9-12, 25-26

We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago... But now you have rejected and humbled us; you no longer go out with our armies. You made us retreat before the enemy, and our adversaries have plundered us. You gave us up to be devoured like sheep and have scattered us among the nations. You sold your people for a pittance, gaining nothing from their sale... We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. Rise up and help us; redeem us because of your unfailing love. [NIV]

Community Exchange: Day 1: Thoughts into Action

-How Small Is Your Faith?

Do you remember the first time you heard of the child soldiers of Uganda? - Once we've been informed, been exposed to this stark reality, our lives are changed. -Once made aware, we cannot again claim ignorance. -Sometimes we may long for the day before we found out, when we were a little more innocent (or naive). Just knowing that hundreds thousands of innocent children live through this hell every day brings us to a crossroad. Which direction will you go?

Path 1: Try to forget. ☹️

Path 2: Enter into a flurry of activity, busy work to make us feel better. ☹️ or

Comment [ITS2]: John/Wex: I completely disagree with this suggestion. I would encourage individuals who want to know more about northern Uganda to view one of two resources: (1) Watch [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/video/watch-full-episodes/lords-children-video-full-episode/2188/] Lord's Children, a video on the Public Broadcasting System web site about child soldiers forced into the service of the LRA. (2) The 35-minute version of the Invisible Children "Rough Cut" documentary. Both explain the actual situation in N. Uganda, not a fictional version in another African country.

Also, how does this "idea" fit into an individual Bible study? Not everyone is going to rush out and rent a movie during his/her quiet study time!

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Path 3: Cry out to God on their behalf; and then seek him for wisdom for what to do next.

Perhaps there are other options as well, but, clearly, the path that would lead to peace and transformation is the third path.

What is on your mind, on your heart, right now? Is your mind flooded with distracting thoughts? The “weeds” of the “worries of this life” that Jesus referred to in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:22) can be a diversion. We can say to ourselves, “There is already so much on my plate; this can’t be something I am concerned about.”

Or is there a voice saying to you, “Why bother, it is too big of a problem; there is nothing I can do.” -Can you identify that voice? -Does that sound like something Jesus would say to you? -What will you say back?

Try to identify honestly what your heart, soul, and mind is filled with as you ponder the very true ~~to life~~ tragedy of children being forced to kill and so much more. -Present this reaction to God who will compassionately receive you where you are at.

Activity: How do you reconcile those two words “child” and “soldier”? What images come to mind when you think of “child soldiers”? Take a moment to write your impressions.

Digging Deeper

The Psalmist says, “...~~Fedem-Redem~~ us because of your unfailing love.” What does redemption mean to you? - How is the Lord inviting you to experience his redemption now? Write down your reflections.

We must be able to understand and recognize how we have been redeemed if we are going to believe it is possible for God to break through and bring redemption for others.

Ask Jesus what redemption looks like....

- For the children?
- For the families?
- For the leaders of the Lord’s Resistance Army?

Day 1: Prayer of Response

Lord, ~~we-I~~ know the stories of old; ~~Iwe~~ know how ~~Yyou~~ parted the Red Sea and led ~~Yyour~~ people to freedom and how ~~Yyour~~ people ate the manna from heaven. Help ~~meus~~ to live ~~myour~~ own story~~ies~~ now. You don’t force redemption on any of us but invite us to taste and see how ~~Yyou~~ are good! ~~IWe~~ pray for the people of Uganda and ask that ~~Yyou~~ bring redemption to them. Amen.

Second Encounter: Day 2 Reflections

The LRA: Lord's Resistance Army. This is the name of the army that goes into villages, kidnaps children, kills their families, then trains the children to kill. The commanders introduce the children to drugs as a means of control and a way to numb them from the reality of what they are participating in, making them more willing "servants." -These acts have got to be one of the greatest atrocities of our time. -And all this is done ~~with~~ using the name of the Lord!

This army is using the name of the Lord to justify their cause, to coerce and stir up fear in the heart of these children as a means to control them! ~~-That's the~~ The exact opposite of what Jesus came to do! - Jesus came to set us free, ~~yet~~ and His name is being used to enslave! -It makes us want to roar with anger, to cry out and declare: "This is NOT Jesus! Come wounded child; let me introduce you to the One who came to set you free!" -In Jesus' name, may these children be introduced to the REAL You, Lord!

Day 2: Focus on the Biblical Text: I Kings 18:16-39 (excerpts):

"...Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." ...Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." ...Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord. The God who answers in fire – he is God." ...The fire of the Lord fell... When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord – he is God! The Lord – he is God!" [NIV]

Community Exchange: Day 2: Thoughts into Action

Seeking God's Justice

Elijah participated in a dramatic power encounter, where the prophets of a false ~~God-god~~ were exposed so clearly for what they were. May we gain confidence and hope as we recognize that ~~this very same~~ Elijah's God is the One we serve, ~~t~~ The One we cry out to today.

Activity: Once again we turn to the Psalms to help give words to the cries in our hearts. Let us cry out on behalf of these children. Read the following Psalm slowly, maybe even aloud. Then read it a second time. During the second reading, if there is a word or phrase that captures your attention, circle it, then spend some time allowing the Spirit of God to lead you in prayer. -The words of the Psalmist are like a launching point for your own words.

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Psalm 94

- 1 O LORD, the God who avenges,
O God who avenges, shine forth.
- 2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth;
pay back to the proud what they deserve.
- 3 How long will the wicked, O LORD,
how long will the wicked be jubilant?
- 4 They pour out arrogant words;
all the evildoers are full of boasting.
- 5 They crush your people, O LORD;
they oppress your inheritance.
- 6 They slay the widow and the alien;
they murder the fatherless.
- 7 They say, "The LORD does not see;
the God of Jacob pays no heed."
- 8 Take heed, you senseless ones among the people;
you fools, when will you become wise?
- 9 Does he who implanted the ear not hear?
Does he who formed the eye not see?
- 10 Does he who disciplines nations not punish?
Does he who teaches man lack knowledge?
- 11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man;
he knows that they are futile.
- 12 Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD,
the man you teach from your law;
- 13 you grant him relief from days of trouble,
till a pit is dug for the wicked.
- 14 For the LORD will not reject his people;
he will never forsake his inheritance.
- 15 Judgment will again be founded on righteousness,
and all the upright in heart will follow it.

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16 Who will rise up for me against the wicked?
Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?

17 Unless the LORD had given me help,
I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.

18 When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your love, O LORD, supported me.

19 When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought joy to my soul.

20 Can a corrupt throne be allied with you—
one that brings on misery by its decrees?

21 They band together against the righteous
and condemn the innocent to death.

22 But the LORD has become my fortress,
and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.

23 He will repay them for their sins
and destroy them for their wickedness;
the LORD our God will destroy them.

Day 2: Digging Deeper

How does your life represent the Lord's name? What characteristic of the Lord does your life most demonstrate to those around you?

How does your daily life reflect your trust in the Lord to be your support, your fortress, and your refuge?

Where does self-sufficiency come into your life and keep you from trusting the Lord like this?

What is the Lord saying to you right now?

And before we go further, we need to be reminded that this spiritual battle is not our battle; but God's. -Do you know what happened to Elijah after that power encounter we read earlier? -If you read on in 1 Kings 19, Jezebel threatened him, and he ran away in fear. Did God rebuke him? -He nurtured him, sent an angel to care for him. -He needed rest; he needed sustenance; and he needed to know that God also spoke in a "gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12).

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Day 2: Prayer of Response

O, Lord, that ~~we-I~~ would be supported by ~~your-Your~~ love! You declare that ~~you-You~~ are ~~our-my~~ fortress and ~~myour~~ rock in whom ~~Iwe amfe~~ to take refuge. Lead ~~meus~~, Lord, into these places of safety under ~~Yy~~our wings. Give ~~meus~~ your strength in the face of evil. ~~IWe~~ cry out against the injustices of the LRA and pray for ~~its/their~~ dissolution. ~~or maybe even that they be transformed completely and become freedom fighters themselves! IWe~~ praise ~~you-You~~ that ~~Yy~~ou have crushed Satan under ~~Yy~~our heel when ~~Yy~~ou defeated the power of death. ~~IWe~~ pray that the ~~child~~ soldiers and slaves would find their refuge in ~~Yy~~ou. For the sake of ~~Yy~~our name, that they would truly know who ~~Yy~~ou are, ~~Iwe~~ pray these things; in the matchless, holy, precious, sweet name of Jesus.- Amen.

Comment [ITS3]: John, you can override me here, but I cannot condone praying for Joseph Kony to become a “freedom fighter.” Maybe that’s just more agape love than I possess, but Kony and his inner circle are EVIL INCARNATE. They need to be incarcerated for their crimes, not transformed into anything that gains respect from caring human beings.

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Third Encounter: Day 3 Reflections

We read of these atrocities in northern Uganda and say to ourselves, “This is too hard!” And all we are doing is reading it! -We are not LIVING it! -Knowing what is happening to so many innocent children makes our blood boil. How can we presume to empathize with the mother, the father whose child has been abducted? -We can barely bring myself to imagine what it would be like for one of our own children to be among the captured, the tortured, and the enslaved. O, Lord, have mercy upon us! How could we survive these atrocities?

Florence Lacor is a mother for whom this was a reality. She has been given the grace to survive. -She shares, “...When your child dies, at least you can mourn. But when she is abducted, you always wonder what is happening. You can never forget...I frantically wanted to do something, anything to rescue my daughter, but every action I could think of seemed futile.” (p. ??).

How does a mother continue to live and breathe with that kind of stress? -The miracle is that they can! -There is a sustaining grace for them that those of us who have not had to suffer in this way can’t even imagine.

Day 3: Focus on the Biblical Text: ~~Two~~ Gospel Readings John 10:14-15 and Luke 15:11-32 (excerpts)

The Good Shepherd (John 10:14-15)

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. [NIV]

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

...But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” So they began to celebrate.... [NIV]

Community Exchange: Day 3: Thoughts into Action **Lost Sons and Daughters**

We find the description of Jesus as being a good shepherd soothing, and we enjoy the story of the prodigal son, but it all takes on a different tone when read with a child soldier in mind.

Is there a piece of your soul that wants to protest? If you were Florence, and you read of Jesus being a “good shepherd,” one who takes care of His sheep, what would you want to say to Him?

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What about the parable of the prodigal son? -What sort of questions or anguish might this parable stir up?

We recognize the great joy in the heart of the prodigal's father and his desire to celebrate the return of his lost son. In what way would the Spirit of God be able to bring peace to Florence through this parable?

We rejoice for the return of those once lost to the LRA; we mourn in anguish for those still lost.

Digging Deeper

Activity: Before the following assignment, it is important to remember -- and be continually reminded -- that when another has a heavy burden to carry, it is not enough for us to just pick up that burden and carry it ourselves. -All this produces is more "burdened" ones. -Our job as a follower of Jesus on this journey is to "bear one another's burdens" and take them to the One whose shoulders are big enough to bear it. Take this burden to Jesus. -If you feel overwhelmed by this burden, don't be surprised. It is too heavy for anyone to carry. -When you feel the weight of it returning, again, take it to Jesus.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.*

Take a map of Uganda and pray over it now. Pray for the release, for the restoration, and the reunification of children and their families. Let your hearts groan for the pain of the mothers and fathers who wait in timid hope for their children to come home.

Journal, draw, scribble, paint what comes to you during this time of prayer.

Day 3: Digging Deeper

Re- read Mary's story from pp. 150-151:

Mary, a Ugandan woman who had her nose, lips and ears sliced off, a signature torture of the LRA...the commanders told the boys to spare the life of "the pregnant one."...Several months later, when Mary came to a World Vision center for medical aid, she was horrified to find the young commander who had ordered her torture...He, too, now received World Vision's help. Mary wanted justice and complained to Idan: "No help should go to this criminal!"

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Imagine this is your story. What would your response be? How does Christ seek to love that part of you?

Comment [ITS4]: John, can we add something Biblical here about conciliation for torturers, their parents, and the tortured?

Day 3: Prayer of Response

Lord, it is too much to bear. It is too heavy for my soul. Your precious little children are taken and consumed by this evil. You do invite ~~Y~~our people to carry each other's burdens. -And, yes, this includes this heavy burden of my sister, Florence, and other mothers like her. -In this invitation, ~~I~~we ~~am~~re not required to carry it alone, but to carry this burden with her to ~~Y~~our "Sanctuary" and leave that burden there with You! -At the throne of grace ~~I~~we ~~am~~re reminded of ~~Y~~our work on the cross. -~~I~~We ~~am~~re reminded that ~~Y~~you were wounded for these wounds, for these sins ~~Y~~you died.

-~~We~~I know ~~Y~~you see them, and ~~I~~we know ~~A~~Yyou hear their cries. Hear ~~my~~our cries now and send the ~~children~~ ~~am~~ ~~Y~~our strength. Be near to their parents in their grief, leave their hearts open to receiving back their children with great celebration, just as the prodigal's father did. Lord, there are no words to describe ~~my~~our fears and grief, yet ~~Y~~you know ~~my~~our hearts. Amen.

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Fourth Encounter: Day 4 Reflections

We are a society uncomfortable with vulnerability. ~~We~~ we place very high value on things like self-sufficiency and self-reliance. It is hard to imagine being so vulnerable as the people described in ~~Batstone's~~ this chapter on child soldiers.

“...Joseph Kony claims that he will create a society based on the Ten Commandments. Ironically, he and his troops seem hell-bent on violating every one of them. Kony, a former Catholic altar boy, stirs verses from the Old Testament and Koran together with traditional tribal rituals to mix a bizarre religious cocktail.” (pg. 113).

Day 4: Focus on the Biblical Text: Meditation Matthew 25:31

~~Read the following verse...it is only one verse. Meditate on it.~~ Try to picture this scene. It is a picture of a future filled with hope.

Matthew 25:31

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.” [NIV]

Now take a look at the context this description of Jesus as the King of the Universe proceeds. And now we'll consider what God designed children for, what are they purposed to do:

Psalm 8:2

“From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” [NIV]

Community Exchange: Day 4: Thoughts into Action

Invite the Little Children

It is time to come up for air. -Ponder this exercise a holy purpose that is God's intention for children. -As we are reminded of what God's intention for each child is, may that be what leads us in our response to ones who seem to be 'robbed' from God's intention.

Pray over God's intention for “the little children” who are invited to come into the arms of Jesus.

Day 4: Digging Deeper

Joseph Kony and his army are abusing not only the Lord's name and each other but everything they touch, including innocent children (and men and women). It is hard to look at that and see Joseph Kony as human who himself was once a child whose purpose was to praise his Creator. There was a descent into evil that required ~~Joseph Kony~~ to

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Comment [ITS5]: John, what does this mean? Any idea?

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Comment [ITS6]: John, this seems particularly weak. Would it be possible for you to actually write a brief discussion about children in the Bible and then design an appropriate activity?

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harden his heart and pursue power, ~~and~~ self-righteousness, and evil instead of living for God.

We must rise up against such evil as individuals and as a community. We must also keep ourselves from descending so deeply into the darkness we can't see past it. -As we continue to keep our eyes on Jesus, we can maintain a holy, redemptive focus from the depths of our hearts moving outward.

Where does evil exist in your community and how can you rise up against it?

How do you keep yourself from descending into that evil? How do you maintain a holy, redemptive focus in the face of such evil?

Focus your heart now. Let go of what you're holding onto, the evil that angers you and just let yourself feel whatever you're feeling. Give it to God.

Read the ensuing Psalm first from your own perspective:

Psalm 13 (excerpts)

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, O LORD
My God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will
Sleep in death;
My enemy will say, "I have
Overcome him",
And my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love;
My heart rejoices in your
Salvation.

I will sing to the LORD,
For he has been good to me. [NIV]

Now read the Psalm again from the perspective of a child soldier.

Comment [ITS7]: Should this be capped?

Day 4: Prayer of Response

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Lord, there are times when it seems that You have forgotten, that ~~your~~Your face is hidden. ~~-There~~ are times when my thoughts torment me and my sorrow is too much. ~~-I~~We cry out to Yyou to answer ~~my~~our grief, to truly see. ~~-I~~We long for the enemies to be silenced. I~~We~~ know Yyou have conquered the world and overcome evil. Give ~~me~~us Yyour courage, ~~my~~our God, to stand with Yyou and fight, to cry out for ~~my~~our suffering brothers and sisters, and to honor Yyou with ~~our~~livesmy life. I~~We~~ give ~~ourselves~~myself to Yyour service. Amen.

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Fifth Encounter: Day 5 Reflections

Slavery takes many forms. A slave believes he or she cannot make individual choices, ~~for oneself~~. A slave believes ~~one~~ he or she has no power or influence. A slave believes ~~that~~ he or she cannot determine ~~one's~~ his or her future.

Slavery creeps into our lives, sometimes covertly under cover of darkness and cloud, a slow yet devious altering of our perspective on reality. Other times it attacks and rips us from our lives in one fell swoop, drastically altering our reality in a matter of minutes. Either way we are not free.

It would be easy for us to recognize the abductor who takes us from our home, the law that forbids us from leaving our houses if we are a certain race or religion. It's hard, however, to recognize the child who grows up believing others are going to hurt them and, therefore, cannot trust the world.

Comment [ITS8]: Okay, maybe I'm being picky, but an overwhelming majority of us will never see slavery creep or attack. I have a problem using the corporate "we" when most of us are not strong enough to endure what these children must endure. Slavery creeps into their lives and attacks them because WE – the big majority – ignore the war in Uganda.

Comment [ITS9]: Not sure the point of this paragraph either.

Day 5: Focus on the Biblical Text: Verses of Freedom

Freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then; and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. [NIV]

Psalms 129:1-4

They have greatly oppressed me from my youth – let Israel say – they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me. Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long. But the Lord is righteous; the Lord has cut me free from the cords of the wicked. [NIV]

Community Exchange: Day 5: Thoughts into Action **Explore Freedom**

Consider some of the ways freedom is defined that would not honor God.
~~What~~ Conversely, what is freedom in its purest form?

Is it possible for someone who is enslaved to experience freedom in his or her soul?

Activity: Explore the freedom you have been given in Christ. Create a physical representation of this – painting, drawing, word-picture, poetry, whatever strikes you.

What are your reactions to the following in ~~Batstone's book~~ Not For Sale:-

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“‘Slave mentality’ is an inability to think outside of the box into which an individual has been forcibly packed...[T]his is] also apparent when the discussion turn[s] to [the former soldiers’] experiences with the LRA...[I]f given the chance, many admitted that they

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would return to the LRA. At least they felt they belonged in the rebel world. Now they felt like a lost piece of a puzzle. They fit nowhere.” (pp. 142-143).

Day 5: Digging Deeper

Why is freedom so important? Does real freedom depend upon the culture within which you find yourself?

Research the Stockholm Syndrome and how it ~~effects~~ affects a slave. In *Not For Sale*, Batstone writes:

“After their capture and release to a World Vision camp, the LRA officers usually attempt to reestablish a chain of command and order younger boys and girls to perform chores for them. Likewise, when they meet women at the camp who had once served as their concubines, the ex-commanders expect the relationship to continue.” (pg 141).

How is slave mentality represented in this situation? -Examine the perspective from the boys and girls and women who are constantly under orders as well as the perspective of the former officers. How do both exemplify a slave mentality? What would freedom look like for them? What response would that elicit in them?

What about in your own life? Where do you find slave mentality in yourself or others in your close circle of relationships? How are you playing a role in that?

Why is it so hard to break free from oppression of any scale?

Day 5: Prayer of Response

Lord, ~~we~~ I pray for the survivors of the LRA – for the former soldiers, concubines, and slaves. ~~We~~ I also pray for the officers. ~~We~~ I ask for You to bring Your outrageous freedom into their souls! ~~I~~ We know this may require Your sword, that You did not come to the world to just “make nice.” ~~I~~ We know that to conquer evil there must be pain. Give them all hearts of forgiveness and compassion. Renew them to places in their hearts that once were rich in kindness, love, and generosity. Restore them, Lord, in Your everlasting mercy. Amen.

Comment [ITS10]: John, shouldn't there be a little more Bible here in this section of a Bible study? I love reading Dave's words, but it seems like a Biblical discussion of freedom would be more helpful.

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Sixth Encounter: Day 6 Reflections

Florence Lacor appropriately uses fire as a symbolic cleansing ceremony. Survivors come to the World Vision camp covered in the ashes of death and hell. This ritual of fire reduces their sins to a tangible pile of ashes that no longer has power over them. They are clean, trading their shackles for freedom, their ashes for a crown of beauty. It is a beautiful picture of how the Lord refines and cleanses us from the ashes we carry. For these former child soldiers, what a heavy load of ashes!

Day 6: Focus on the Biblical Text: Malachi 2: 17-3:3

You have wearied the Lord with your words... by saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them...” “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify [them] and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.... [\[NIV\]](#)

Community Exchange: Day 6: Thoughts into Action

Passing Through Hell

The song *Rise* by Third Day is a potential “~~“anthem”~~” for this encounter. Listen to it ~~as a group~~ and be moved! “...The Lord will have men [and women] who will bring offerings in righteousness....”

God ~~at~~ times cleanses us with fire. Florence Lacor took her daughter’s abduction and created a path of redemption for herself and for other children within her area of influence. She allowed her anger, bitterness, and grief to be burned away. Just imagine her bringing the Lord an offering of righteousness, God’s loving gaze enveloping her.

Imagine yourself as one of the child soldiers, walking into the World Vision camp in bewilderment of the life you have just escaped, unsure and distrustful of the life you are entering after the lies you had been told by your captors. Imagine yourself before that fire, watching your belongings burn away and recognizing that your former life is no more. What is next? What do you ~~do~~, now?

What needs to be burned away in your life? What in your life will remain after the Lord refines you? Imagine that person you would be and the feelings that go with ~~it~~.

Comment [ITS11]: No activity in this section.

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Day 6: Digging Deeper

What is the offering of righteousness that the Lord is asking you to bring? What opportunities is ~~H~~he placing before you that would bring about freedom in your sphere of influence?

Do you need to make amends somewhere? Do you need to wait on the Lord? Are you stuck somewhere, or, do you have all the ~~answers~~?

Day 6: Prayer of Response

Lord, ~~we~~I ask that ~~Y~~you give ~~me~~us ~~Y~~your courage to rise up in ~~my~~our communities to bring about freedom in this world! Burn away the impurities in ~~my~~our lives, replacing them with ~~Y~~your crown of beauty and strength. ~~I~~We give thanks for ~~Y~~your servant, Florence, and the work that she is doing with ~~A~~Yyour sweet children. ~~I~~We pray for her and ask ~~A~~Yyou to provide for her richly as she does ~~Y~~your work. Strengthen her heart, give her ~~Y~~your courage and insight, and protect them ~~all~~ from evil. Amen.

Comment [ITS12]: Another weak “Digging Deeper” section. John, can we take stuff from the Seventh Encounter or do you want to add your own content?

Seventh Encounter

Comment [ITS13]: WEX: Do you want to take some of this content for Day 7? I did not edit any of it yet.

“...It is only love that will set you free.” (pg. 149) – Florence Lacor

Evil will never set us free. Neither will its offspring – pride, avarice, gluttony, wrath, sloth, lust and envy. When we use any of these in the deluded hope of experiencing freedom we are setting ourselves up for more oppression. Unless freedom is sought for through love we are not seeking true freedom. Florence knows this and passionately holds to it in the face of great evil. It can be tempting to fall away from love and seek redemption through other means. Only through the Spirit will we remain fixed on the love through which true freedom springs.

Focus on the Biblical Text: Jonah 1:1-2

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Community Exchange: The Bitter Cup of Forgiveness

Ninevah was a town in Assyria, home to some of the most disgusting human practices. It is said that after conquering a city, the Assyrian army would kill every living being – dropping babies from towers to be smashed upon the rocks below. Exodus 23 describes how they would cut the noses and ears off of their enemies. It is this people group to whom Jonah was sent. No wonder he ran away! What would you think if the Lord told you to go and preach to them, to love them and rescue them? We might rather sit in the belly of a whale than seek to reconcile with a city full of such evil!

Mataput: drinking a bitter root from the same cup. Florence uses this tribal ritual to achieve a very powerful reconciliation between foes. Its bitterness is hard to swallow but it is good for the soul.

Have you ever had to participate in *mataput*? What was that like for you? How did you feel before, during, after?

How would you feel if you were Idan – encouraging people to engage in *mataput* and not seek restitution of any sort? Does that resonate with your life currently? How could you encourage reconciliation in your life?

Digging Deeper

~~Re-read Mary's story from pp. 150-151:~~

~~Mary, a Ugandan woman who had her nose, lips and ears sliced off, a signature torture of the LRA...the commanders told the boys to spare the life of "the pregnant~~

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~~one.” ...Several months later, when Mary came to a World Vision center for medical aid, she was horrified to find the young commander who had ordered her torture...He, too, now received World Vision’s help. Mary wanted justice and complained to Idan: “No help should go to this criminal!”~~

~~Imagine this is your story. What would your response be? How does Christ seek to love that part of you?~~

Prayer of Response

Lord, let us be your agents of reconciliation even in the darkest of moments. Be our light and our source of love. Strip our hearts of hatred and all things that are not of you. We are angry at such atrocities and we are burdened by our desires for justice. Give us your heart for justice, your light, your hope, your love. We lay our hearts before you and ask you to rescue us from fear, hatred and evil. Send us out, Lord, as your agents of justice, your ministers of reconciliation, your vessels of hope and love. As your son laid down his life for our freedom, use our lives to bring freedom; In Christ’s name, Amen.

Celebrate Your Completion of Series 4:

Hold your own “burning ritual” as a group, bringing things in your life that represent ways you have been trapped or enslaved. Then find something that represents the evil of the LRA to you and bring it to be burned as well.

Share your thoughts on what both items mean to you with the group.

Celebrate as you watch the flames consume these things and give thanks to the God who is the Consuming Fire.