

Encounter 1

This is NOT a light book. We do not read many books that carry a “warning” label. So before we even begin to look at the travesty of human beings for sale, we need to take a look at the issue of “suffering avoidance.” Our typical reaction to suffering is a paradox: wanting to gawk at suffering when it is at a distance yet avoid it when it comes a little closer or when we begin to dig a little deeper into what it’s about and how we can help. (Ever noticed how we are all drawn to stare as we pass an accident on a road but rarely stop to offer assistance?)

How can we possibly look at human indignities without falling into a dark hole of despair? How can we cling to hope in the midst of the darkness that comes up when we look at painful events? What is the motivation for doing this?

For many of us who feel compelled to be involved in justice, Isaiah 61 is a motivating passage. Verse 4 describes a vision of a future we would love to see: “Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins...they will repair the ruined cities.” (NASB)

As we long to rebuild and repair the devastated places, we must start with ourselves right here and now. It will be a hard journey that requires courage to take a deep look into our own souls. May you be blessed with real depth and connection with the Spirit as you journey together!

Begin the journey by delving into both the Bible and our reader, Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It. Read the Introduction of the book, pages 1-18.

Focus on the Biblical Text

Psalms 73

1 Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.... 12 This is what the wicked are like— always care-free, they increase in wealth. 13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.... 16 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.... 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.... 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds. (NIV)

Thoughts into Action

Entering the Sanctuary

This passage from Psalms provides a remedy for a heart that is overwhelmed and distressed when considering the “success” of the wicked. We are taught here by the psalmist to enter into “the sanctuary,” to gain God’s perspective on all things.

As you come face to face with the acts of the wicked as described in Not For Sale, you will need to continually hand your anxieties and distress over to God and allow God’s peace to rule your heart and mind. Remember, we do not have control over other people; we only have control over ourselves – how we respond, how we love others and ourselves. When we try to control others (their emotions, their actions, or their thoughts), our lives become chaotic and God loses God’s rightful place in the center of our hearts. Let us rejoice that we have and can know a peaceful and loving God who will deal with us all in mercy, compassion, and justice!

Activity: Write a personal psalm that expresses your frustration over human trafficking, then lay it at the feet of the One who sits on the throne of the universe.

Prayer of Response

Today, Lord, I just want to sit at Your feet and gaze into Your face. But You also invite me, from the safety and security of Your throne of grace, to turn my eyes back onto this earth You created. The people You love. Those You suffered for. Let me be a humble servant unto You, doing my part, seeking freedom in my own life as well as in the lives of others. I long to see Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.