



# Social Teachings of The Church



## **THE SILENT MOMENT**

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# The Silent Moment

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

— Genesis 4:9



March-May 2026  
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## Social Teachings of the Church

The three months in this series of devotions focus on obligations—obligations to our neighbors, to family and community, and to God and society. I don’t know about you, but I don’t like feeling *obligated*. It sounds too much like a job, a punishment, a chore. Obligations don’t sound interesting. They don’t sound easy. And they don’t sound fun. They sound so *responsible!* Do we really have to be concerned about every other person and their problems? Aren’t our own enough to deal with?

The bad news and the good news is that yes, we are to a certain extent responsible for each other—and we have been since the days of Adam and Eve. We are indeed the keepers of our brothers and sisters, both in and outside of Christ. From the Old Testament laws designed to help the poor, widowed, or orphaned to the “greatest commandment” recorded in the New Testament, God’s Word leaves no room for doubt. We were made to be in community, and with the benefits of that community come responsibilities. *Obligations*, if you will. But rather than looking at our duties to look after one another as something we *have to do*, what if we change our mindset to see them as something we *get to do*?

Sharing our income and material blessings is something we get to do because we are gifted with more than we need. Shouldering the burdens of our friends and neighbors is something we get to do because we are fortunate enough to have people to do life with. Obeying God’s Word when it goes against every natural human instinct is something we get to do as we are immeasurably blessed to know His guidance and presence through the Holy Spirit. You get the idea.

May these devotions challenge you to look not only at your actions but your motives. May they inspire you to examine your heart and your expectations. May they comfort you with the knowledge that others are sharing your struggles and walking this journey alongside you. But above all, may they shift your eyes to see the beautiful privilege we've been given to care for one another. For in doing so, we best reflect the heart and spirit of Jesus to a hurting world who needs Him desperately.

What a joy and an honor it is to be the “keepers” of those God puts in our lives—for each of them is someone made in His image, someone He loves enough to die for. Let's keep each other well.

Peace and blessings,  
**Karen**

### ***Approach Each Day with a Heavenly Perspective***

Using these devotions, you'll read the recommended text of the Bible, consider how its message applies to your life, then use the brief prayer to begin a conversation with God.

If you follow the ISSL Series, you'll likely notice that these devotions align with the ISSL Home Daily Bible Readings. Every day you pick up this devotional, countless people around the world are reading and studying the same verses as you. Opening the Bible each day invites us to a deeper fellowship with Christ as we apply God's Word to our lives.

March 1

## Who Poisoned the “Apple”?

“The second [commandment] is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31)

**Scripture:** Mark 12:28–34

**Song:** “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love”

My laptop had been shutting down for no apparent reason. When the Apple technician on the other end of the line didn’t seem to know any more than I did, I got extremely frustrated. And out of that frustration I spoke angry, hurtful words. After the call ended, regret came over me like a tidal wave. So in answer to the question, “Who poisoned the ‘Apple’?” I did.

This conviction came because I’d forgotten that all-important command to love my neighbor as myself. If I had been spoken to the way I spoke to her, I would have crumbled. I knew I needed to call this associate back and apologize, though it was the last thing I wanted to do.

But God was persistent. And it was wholly His doing that I was able to even reach that technician again. When I apologized for my unkind words, she was touched . . . and grateful . . . and gracious. She even tried to console *me* by saying, “Don’t worry about it. I’ve experienced far worse.” But frustration is not an excuse to forget to love and respect another person. As the song says, “They’ll know we are Christians by our love”—*not* by our arrogance.

**Father**, please help me remember to treat others with the same love You’ve shown me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## People Are Watching

**From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward.**  
(Proverbs 12:14)

**Scripture:** Proverbs 12:1–2, 10–14

**Song:** “Take My Life and Let It Be”

When I was in college in the mid-1990s, I had a part-time job in a mall. Because the job wasn't very difficult, was just part-time, and was simply a way for me to make some extra money, I didn't feel any stress or anxiety about the work I was doing. I genuinely enjoyed the people I worked with, and I tried to have a good attitude about the opportunity that I had been given.

One day, another mall employee asked me why I was always in such a good mood. He had noticed that while other mall employees were often negative and frequently complained, there was something different about me. I was surprised he had noticed. I couldn't imagine that my few interactions with this man had made any sort of impact whatsoever.

We never know how our actions may affect the people around us. Things as simple as a good attitude, a few encouraging words, and a good work ethic may open a door for a rewarding conversation about the love of Jesus Christ.

**Father**, help me to accomplish the difficult task of remaining positive and encouraging in such a negative culture so that others may know You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

March 3

## Unclean

**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)**

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 6:12–20

**Song:** “Give Us Clean Hands”

In June of 2024, the National Park Service announced that the prairie dogs in Badlands National Park were infected with “plague.” Prairie dogs live in densely populated colonies. So the disease, often transmitted through the bites of infected fleas, can spread quickly throughout a large number of the population of prairie dogs. Plague can then be spread to other susceptible animals—and even to humans! One little flea bite can unleash a deadly epidemic.

When we sin, we often think that our small acts of immorality are not that big of a deal. We may convince ourselves that our private sins aren’t really hurting anyone. We fail to recognize that as members of the body of Christ, our sins affect more than just ourselves. In fact, our immorality will likely be far-reaching, eventually affecting others in spiritually, emotionally, and physically damaging ways.

Paul encourages us to “honor God with [our] bodies.” We can avoid spreading an epidemic of immorality by remembering that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We can honor our Lord and Savior by what we do with our bodies and what we put in our minds.

**Father**, when I am tempted to dishonor You, remind me that as a member of the body of Christ, Your Spirit lives in me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Ready, Set, Go!

**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.** (1 Corinthians 9:24)

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:19–27

**Song:** “Victory in Jesus”

In my stance at the starting line, I envisioned what was soon to be my moment of glory. Surely, as an eighth grader, I would be able to beat the three sixth-graders I was racing against in the 100-yard dash. I hadn't been given any other opportunities to compete throughout the season, so I knew this was my one chance to prove to everyone that they had made a mistake by underestimating my speed. When the starting pistol was fired, I took off, only to find myself instantly in last place, and I stayed in last place for the duration of the short sprint.

Looking back, I know what at least a part of the problem was. I was lazy. I never practiced. I thought I could win without putting in any work. But if someone is running in such a way as to get the prize, they have undoubtedly been in strict training.

As Christians, our lives are like a race, and waiting for us at the finish line is “a crown that will last forever” (1 Corinthians 9:25). So as we run this race, we can strive to run it well by participating in the training that comes through studying the Bible, serving others, and worshiping God.

**Father**, for the sake of sharing the gospel, train me to run this race well. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

March 5

## Ups and Downs

**If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.** (Psalm 139:8)

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:1–12

**Song:** “Praise to the Holiest in the Height”

In April of 1970, the astronauts on board the *Apollo 13* space-craft reached an altitude of 248,573 miles. In May of 2019, Victor Vescovo reached a depth of over 7.5 miles when he descended to the bottom of the Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean aboard a submersible craft. At the time of this writing, these are the highest heights and the deepest depths ever reached by humans.

I imagine these records will be broken. As technology advances, humans will continue to be able to go higher into the heavens and deeper into the depths. But while we may be able to go to places where no humans have ever gone before, we will never reach a height nor a depth where God hasn’t been, isn’t currently, and won’t always be present.

There are times in our lives when we may forget this truth. For one reason or another, we may not feel like God is close. It is in those moments that it is important to recall the words of the psalmist in Psalm 139, reminding us that no matter where we are or what is happening in the world around us, God’s hands are guiding us and holding us fast (v. 10).

**Father**, when I feel alone or abandoned, remind me that You are always near. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## It's a Girl!

**For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.** (Psalm 139:13–14)

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:13–24

**Song:** “Ancient Words”

I sat nervously by my wife’s side. This ultrasound was going to be the first view of our first child. Having never experienced anything like this before, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I was anxious about the baby’s development, my wife’s health, and whether or not I was prepared to be a father. When the video appeared on the monitor, we heard the doctor say something very unexpected, yet very familiar. As his eyes remained focused on the screen he said, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

The words the doctor said at that moment were exactly what we needed to hear. Hearing those words from Psalm 139 was more important than hearing about the gender of our baby, the health of our baby, or any other interesting fact that the doctor could have pointed out. In that moment, it was good to be reminded that no matter what, God was in control.

Whether we find ourselves in a season of lament, a season of praise, or another season of life, the Psalms are a great place to find the words we need to hear. The ancient words of the psalmists are even relevant in a modern doctor’s office exam room!

**Father**, no matter what I am facing in this life, guide me to the truth found in Your Word. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Unmatched Beauty

**Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)**

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 4:7–12

**Song:** “For the Beauty of the Earth”

One summer, my family went on a vacation to Yellowstone National Park. We saw geysers, waterfalls, and hot springs. We rode on a stagecoach, went whitewater rafting, and hiked on trails. We spotted bison, bears, and elk roaming in their natural habitat. The beauty of Yellowstone was indescribable, and every day was a new experience.

But the highlight of the trip happened when my niece was baptized by her mother in the Yellowstone River, which ran through the backyard of the vacation home we had rented for the week. As we all took turns praying for her on that riverbank in southern Montana, I realized that out of everything we had experienced on that wonderful vacation, nothing came close to the beauty of a young person committing her life to Jesus Christ.

Just as Paul encouraged young Timothy in his walk with the Lord, we too should be an encouragement to those younger than us who are on their faith journeys. It could be through our support and encouragement that they learn what it means to set an example in their speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

**Father**, I know that You are doing a beautiful work in the next generation of believers. Show me how I can be an encouragement to them. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Are You Smarter Than a Babylonian?

**To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.**  
(Daniel 1:17)

**Scripture:** Daniel 1:8–17

**Song:** “Be Thou My Vision”

In fifth grade, my daughter was a member of an academic quiz team at her elementary school. At each competition, a moderator would read a question, and the first student to hit their buzzer would get a chance to answer the question and win points for their team. I remember watching the competitions and wondering how fifth graders knew so much about math, geography, and literature!

Students today have access to unlimited knowledge. It's at their fingertips. Within seconds they can find the answer to nearly any question. But what is impressive about Daniel's story is that he received his knowledge and understanding from God, not the internet. Because of Daniel's resolve and faithfulness to God, he was blessed with wisdom and understanding that surpassed that of anyone else in the entire Babylonian kingdom.

I don't know that my faithfulness to God will result in exceptional intelligence, as it did for Daniel. But I do believe that Daniel's story shows us we can trust God to give us exactly what we need for whatever life situation in which we find ourselves.

**Father**, like Daniel, I want to remain faithful to You in a culture that denies Your power, love, and existence. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

March 9

## Hook, Line, and Sinker

**Help, LORD. . . . Everyone lies to their neighbor; they flatter with their lips but harbor deception in their hearts.**  
(Psalm 12:1–2)

**Scripture:** Psalm 12

**Song:** “Rescue”

On a recent podcast, I learned about “catfishing,” a scam targeting vulnerable people through social media platforms and dating apps. A perpetrator cunningly builds trust, then once a victim is emotionally hooked, asks for money and personal information to access the victim’s bank accounts and acquire property.

King David heard about such people, those who, as Paul also wrote, “by smooth talk and flattery, . . . deceive the minds of naïve people” (Romans 16:18). David was outraged and cried out to God for help, and God responded by promising to rescue those who were innocent victims.

Just as in biblical times, we must be aware that scammers will try to lure susceptible people like the lonely and elderly. People lie boldly to further their own cause or to avoid potential consequences. It’s an uphill battle; but may our example of honesty point others to the One whose love reaches to the heavens and whose faithfulness reaches to the skies (Psalm 57:10).

**Father**, help me protect others against those who would intentionally hurt them and to live a life of love and truth. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## A Worthwhile Investment

[Jesus said,] “Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail.”  
(Luke 12:33)

**Scripture:** Luke 12:13–21, 33–34

**Song:** “I’d Rather Have Jesus”

One morning, an appeal popped up in my inbox. A missionary to Ukraine needed \$10,000 to purchase a reliable, fuel-efficient vehicle to transport children to medical appointments in nearby cities. “Would you consider making a gift today?” I looked at our budget and was thrilled to see a positive balance in our “discretionary giving” column.

Though we give a percentage of our income to the church on a regular basis, sometimes there’s nothing left for spontaneous giving. In this passage, Jesus teaches about priorities by telling a man that every dollar he spent on material possessions or hoarded for himself would be wasted, but investing in the lives of people would be eternal.

A few weeks after my contribution, the response from the missionary inspired me. “Because of your generosity, we not only bought the car but extra food and winter clothing. One 11-year-old girl whose father was killed in the war and whose mother succumbed to alcoholism was fed, bathed, clothed, and treated for fleas and worms. The transformation restored light and hope to her young life.” Giving not only made a difference in her life but contributed to my spiritual growth. Learning to spend less in order to give more is a continuing and intentional process.

**Father**, help me be content to spend less on myself so I can invest more in Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Abide by the Rules

**“Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.”**  
(Leviticus 19:11)

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:11–18

**Song:** “This Is My Commandment”

As a child, I enjoyed swimming on hot summer days. My sister and I pedaled our bikes to the park, locked them up, and then dashed inside the locker room to change and shower. Before we plunged into the water, a staff member asked us to read the pool rules posted on the wall: *No diving! No running! No food!* These regulations were directives issued for our protection to ensure our safety and well-being.

Staff members didn’t need to tell swimmers, “Have fun!” or “Cool off!” Those were the natural benefits of the swimming experience. In the same way, when the Israelites entered the promised land, Moses didn’t need to remind them to “Enjoy your abundance!” or “Relish your freedom!” But God knew His people were prone to self-centered living and would need safeguards to guide them toward right living and ensure that they would live without harm and in honor of God.

Some people view Christianity as a collection of rules and think God is a killjoy, but the rules He gives us aren’t meant to squelch our fun. Far from being restrictive, they guide us toward a life of love and respect for Him and our fellow human beings.

**Father**, help me live in obedience to You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Do Unto Others

**If you really keep the royal law, . . . “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.**  
(James 2:8–9)

**Scripture:** James 2:8–13

**Song:** “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

Once when I was shopping at Walmart, a woman tugged at my elbow. Cradling a jar of mayonnaise between her arm and her body and juggling her phone, she typed “milk” into a translation app and pointed to the jar. I shook my head. The woman was Chinese, and the labels and packaging on the food were a mystery to her. After guiding her to the dairy section, I picked up a carton of milk and pointed to her phone. Then she typed “yogurt,” and we spent the next few minutes searching for what she was looking for. Our interaction deeply blessed my heart, as well as hers.

Having lived overseas, I understand her struggle. Although most people were helpful and friendly, I occasionally received words of reprimand from natives who were not pleased that I wasn’t fluent in their language even though I was learning. Not everyone welcomes a stranger. However, in this passage, James reminds us that the way of Jesus has no room for discrimination.

When we read the Bible, we are reminded of God’s perspective of all people in the world and how they should be treated. There is no hierarchy, and when we consider ourselves superior to any, it breaks God’s ultimate command to love others.

**Father**, help me remember that every person is precious in Your sight. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## But for the Grace of God

**“When he saw him, he took pity on him. . . . ‘Go and do likewise.’”** (Luke 10:33, 37)

**Scripture:** Luke 10:25–37

**Song:** “Give Me Your Eyes”

Orphaned at 14, my Grandpa Henry worked in the sugar beet fields in Eastern Montana. After settling on a farm, he met and married my grandma and raised a family. Sometimes men from a homeless encampment near the railroad track wandered across the field and into their yard. Instead of chasing them away, grandpa asked grandma to make sandwiches and brew coffee. Then he gave the men tasks that were equal to their physical abilities. If a bunkhouse was vacant, grandpa let the men stay and work for as long as they wanted.

When grandpa met one of these men, he didn’t see skin color, addiction, or class—only a person in need. Having been on the road as a teen, grandpa thought, “There, but for the grace of God, go I,” and he answered God’s command to extend selfless, sacrificial love in response to the kindness and mercy Jesus has shown him.

When we encounter struggling people, we should remember that every person we meet has been made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27). Behind every face, there’s a story and a need for empathy. Our willingness to stop what we’re doing and offer practical sympathy, as my grandpa did, is a testament to our dedication to Jesus and His heart of compassion.

**Father**, help me stop and help those in my path who need a touch from You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Open Handed

**If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites. . . . be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need.**  
(Deuteronomy 15:7–8)

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 15:4–11

**Song:** “Make Me a Blessing”

A friend told me about the benevolence ministry at her church, which benefits members in need. It reminded me of the financial support I received from a church 40 years ago. Despite the seemingly stable situation of my first husband being enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, which provided free housing and medical care, our young family struggled to make ends meet. Ashamed but desperate, I met with the base chaplain, and his one-time gift of \$100 lifted a burden from my shoulders.

As Moses shared God’s Word with the Israelites, he reminded them that although they were entering a land of abundant blessing, they would encounter fellow Israelites in need. The people were to remember the blessings of God and how they too had once been in need. They were to extend kindness and goodwill to anyone who asked for it. There was no room for judgment or stipulations, only a command to practice generosity in the same way God had been generous to them.

In the New Testament, Jesus reminds His disciples that there are poor among them (John 12:8), and the same is true today. There are under-resourced people in our community of believers, and our collective efforts can make a significant difference. There’s no reason for us to be stingy.

**Father**, help me be intentional in using my resources and bringing hope to those in need. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Lending a Helping Hand

**“Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?” (Matthew 25:44)**

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:41–45

**Song:** “Do Something”

For years, I taught home management skills to young moms because I’d once been overwhelmed with this role. Lately, my attention has turned to seniors who face the daunting task of moving from their family homes to assisted living. As we struggle together to decide what possessions they should keep and what to let go of, compassion wells up in my heart when tears well up in their eyes. How will they manage alone?

According to Jesus, they shouldn’t have to. In the future judgment of the nations, Jesus will divide people into two groups. The “sheep” will inherit eternal life because they cared for hurting people, but “goats” are doomed for separation because they ignored people in need, and thus ignored Jesus Himself.

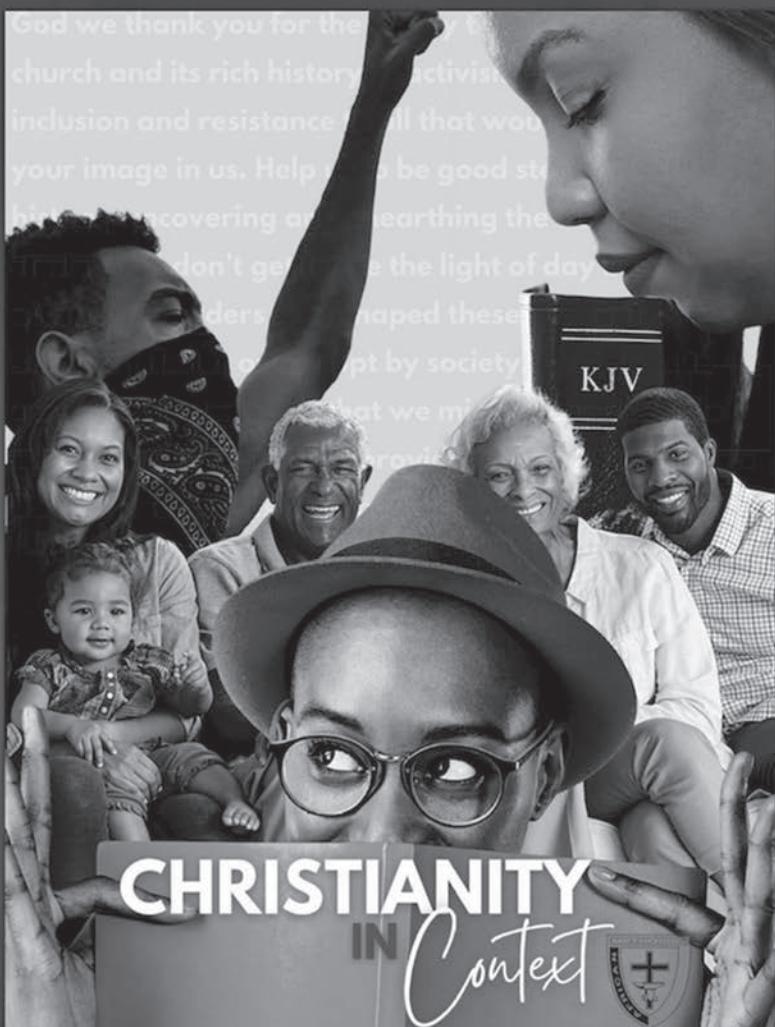
Older people need us to come alongside them during times of transition. Hungry people need us to help provide their basic physical needs. Lonely, outcast people need us to show them grace and hope. It’s up to us to respond to “the least of these” with emotional and practical support—not as a means to our salvation, but as evidence of our loving relationship with God.

**Father**, give me a heart like Yours to come alongside those in need. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

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