



OFFERING FOR
GLOBAL MISSIONS

EXTEND
HOPE &
HOSPITALITY

Bible Study
for Adults

2020-2021

LOOSENING THE CHAINS
OF INJUSTICE

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MINISTRY FOCUS:

Mira and Sasha Zivanov, CBF Field Personnel in St. Louis, Missouri

SCRIPTURE:

Hebrews 13:2; Isaiah 58:6-12

SETTING THE STAGE:

Have you ever had to untangle a long extension cord that's all wrapped up in knots? Maybe you've had a necklace chain that has been knotted while traveling. What a pain!

It can be infuriating, but getting upset won't remedy the situation. Frustration usually makes things worse, right?

You might have a technique, tool or "life hack" to keep these "messes" from happening. Sometimes, something outside your control causes the mess, and you're left to clean it up and make sense of the problem.

Untangling a knot or tangle can be a frustrating activity; but, with a little bit of patience and a focus on the problem, the cord, rope or necklace can be as good as new.

BIBLICAL CONNECTION:

The Bible does not use the example of a tangled necklace or extension cord, but it does talk about the yoke or harness that pairs oxen and cattle to work together.

Have a volunteer read Hebrews 13:2 and Isaiah 58:6-12.

The prophet offers a harsh critique of those who are satisfying the requirements of ritual fasting, who aren't living into the ethic of their spiritual exercises. The people are fasting and praying; they're mourning with sackcloth and ashes; but they're also exploiting their laborers. The wealthy are hoarding their own goods while their neighbors go hungry and lack sufficient clothing. God is indeed pleased more by acts of justice than by self-seeking attempts for spiritual holiness.

Indeed, our praise and worship are directed to God; but these acts of worship should inspire us to seek out those who are in need to offer them the physical and spiritual nourishment needed for life.



The writer of Hebrews reminds us that our hospitality should extend to strangers, refugees, and immigrants. We should treat people in need in the same way we would treat them if they were angels. If we knew that visitors from heaven were in our city or town, how would we treat them? Wouldn't we welcome them and invite them over to our homes? Wouldn't we make sure their fridge was stocked and their closets full of clothing?

How is your church helping to seek justice and help those in need locally?

Have you ever had the experience of correcting an injustice towards an individual or group of people? How did that feel for you and others involved?

Similar to untangling a knotted-up necklace or cord, our acts of justice can seek to focus on correcting the problem or issue.

Correcting systemic issues of injustice seems like a huge action. Think of some small steps that you and your class could take this week that would be pleasing to God and put your worship into action by assisting those around you who are in need.

MISSIONAL CONNECTION:

Mira and Sasha Zivanov are CBF Field Personnel who work with refugees and immigrants in St. Louis, Missouri. Most of these refugees are from former Yugoslavia and the current countries of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. The Zivanovs are originally from Yugoslavia as well. They work with Kirkwood Baptist Church and other congregations in St. Louis to help women, men and children that are seeking safety. The Zivanovs offer their ministry at the International Fellowship Center through the means of pastoral presence, a tutoring ministry, and a weekly food pantry.

The Zivanovs can relate to the experience of these refugees and immigrants, because that is their story too. Sasha recalls how the Yugoslavia Wars caused him and his family to have to leave their home never to return. "They re-drew the map and, with that, I became a refugee. I couldn't go back."

Mira recounts the experience of a woman coming in to the International Fellowship Center, seeking assistance with immigration paperwork. When the woman asked how much they would charge her for the assistance, Mira and Sasha told her that this was their ministry, and they wouldn't charge anything for their help. Their guest started to cry and said, "Since I came here to the United States, I've always been charged for whatever I was doing."



CALL TO ACTION:

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's mission contexts assist in:

- Global Poverty
- Global Migration
- Global Church

CBF Field Personnel live and serve in settings ranging from North Africa to New York City. In a world where poverty, human trafficking, and lack of access to clean water are a daily reality, Cooperative Baptists seek sustainable responses and commission field personnel to serve locally in contexts across the globe.

As warfare, civil unrest and famine cause innocent families to flee their homes, people made in the image of God are suffering and in need of compassion in their new places of residence. Many of these resettled persons have lost nearly everything—their houses, occupations, friends, extended family, and connection with all things familiar.

The Offering for Global Missions seeks to bear witness to Jesus Christ through the efforts of field personnel like Mira and Sasha Zivanov. Offer prayers for Mira and Sasha and those with whom they work. Pray that their ministry will continue to offer compassion to the least of these, and pray that they can make helpful connections with volunteers and other leaders that can help immigrants with employment, resources and Christian community.

Encourage your group to review ways to adapt existing ministries at your church to assist the least of these. Hear the stories and learn the names of those that your congregation is serving. Consider giving to CBF's Offering for Global Missions and sponsoring areas of ministry for field personnel. For \$100, your group can purchase a month's worth of educational supplies for a tutoring ministry.

