REFLECTION GUIDE
7.30.23

INTRO

Is it possible to make sense of the violence depicted in the Bible without justifying it? Jesus revealed God's true nature to the world, and when in doubt, we keep Christ central.

THOUGHTS

PRAYER

God of love, thank you for the picture of you that I can see clearly in the life of Jesus. Help ease my doubts when I struggle with conflicting portrayals of your character in scripture. Remind me to keep my eyes fixed on Christ as I learn more about your ways each day. Amen.

DIGGING DEEPER

- Have you ever read something in the Bible that you were surprised by, given your beliefs about God's character? How did you make sense of it?

- When a particular passage of scripture is at odds with the way Jesus portrayed God's character while on earth, we must consider many factors to make sense of the text.
  - When you consider a writer's background and culture, how might these factors influence what is written?
  - In what ways would keeping a writer's perspective in mind change your understanding of the meaning of the text?
  - Why do you think God allowed difficult-to-understand passages to be included in scripture?

- Read Hebrews 1:1-3.
  - The writer of Hebrews asserts that God has now been revealed differently to humanity in the life of Jesus. How did Jesus bring clarity to who God is?
  - In Adam Hamilton's *Making Sense of the Bible,* he makes the point that in the absence of an explanation, ancient writers would attribute things to God that may not have been God's doing. How do you feel about that statement? How might the example of Christ have influenced their thoughts about what God does or doesn't do?

- In Matthew 5:38-39 Jesus teaches, "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also." [NLT] How does this passage influence your thoughts about world leaders who have justified war in the name of God?

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