



WHAT IS... BELOVED COMMUNITY



DEFINITION:

PHILOSOPHER-THEOLOGIAN JOSIAH ROYCE first conceived the Beloved Community concept; later, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr popularized it during the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King envisioned that the Beloved Community to be a global movement where the agape love of God would be the driving force to redemption and reconciliation and a place where all people can share in the abundance of wealth in the world. In the Beloved Community, all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and dehumanization are eradicated and countered by a more inclusive, interdependent existence of people who live in non-violent harmony with one another.



BIBLICAL/SPIRITUAL/THEOLOGICAL FRAMING OR REFERENCES:

ACCORDING TO DR. KING, the foundation of a beloved community is God's agape love. He explains that agape is the "overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative...It is the love of God operating in the human heart."¹ King's challenge to personify agape love looks like living into Jesus' countercultural sermon on the plain in Luke 6:20-38, where he directs us to love our enemies, do good, and show compassion. It is also an invitation to acknowledge the humanity of all people, including those who would cause harm and perpetuate the oppressive evil forces of isms that divide us. Not to excuse this behavior or even accept it but to actively work towards not becoming what we are fighting against.



EXAMPLE(S):

EXAMPLES OF BELOVED COMMUNITY INCLUDE:

Many organizations embody the principles of Beloved Community and try to live into its concept and bring about its reality in our world. From interfaith to grassroots organizations, people work together to counter the oppressive systems that place groups of people on the margins of our society. Some movements work towards manifesting a liberating existence where their work centers on the sanctity of life for all people.

One example is the Baltimore Peace Challenge (formerly, The Baltimore Ceasefire). The Baltimore Peace Challenge is a movement in Baltimore city that challenges the city to cease violence and murder specific weekends throughout the year. During these times, communities and organizations provide events and resources that counter the city's narrative and reality of violence. They create sacred spaces that honor the lives lost throughout the city and challenge the community to embrace and live in the real possibilities of thriving together in peace (baltimoreceasefire.com).

¹ *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches*. HarperOne, 1991.



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REFLECTION:

QUESTION #1

What does it look like to be the beloved community and reduce the harm it can cause to people facing ongoing oppression and marginalization?

1

QUESTION #2

Dr. King was a part of a collective that fought for inclusivity and integration with non-violent tactics; how have we expanded our understanding of Beloved Community and the need for racial and ethnic affinity spaces to prevent burnout?

2

QUESTION #3

What does beloved community look like now in the era of our current uprisings and the Black Lives Matter Movement?

3

QUESTION #4

How do we embody the beloved community and acknowledge the complicit nature of many of our religious institutions regarding racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism?

4



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

HOW BALTIMORE CALLED A CEASEFIRE
(TED TALK BY ERRICKA BRIDGEFORD)

[youtube.com/
watch?v=phu4Z6QEXJE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=phu4Z6QEXJE)

MY GRANDMOTHER'S HANDS (BOOK BY
RESMAA MENAKEM)

THE SECRET TO CREATING THE BELOVED
COMMUNITY (TED X ATLANTA TALK BY
DOUG SHIPMAN)

[youtube.com/
watch?v=cP5PAul3H4E](https://youtube.com/watch?v=cP5PAul3H4E)

BELOVED COMMUNITY: RADICAL BLACK
FEMINISM AS A FRAMEWORK FOR THE
FUTURE (BY MALIK THOMPSON)

[gandhiinstitute.org/2015/01/20/
beloved-community-radical-
black-feminism-as-a-framework-
for-the-future/](https://gandhiinstitute.org/2015/01/20/beloved-community-radical-black-feminism-as-a-framework-for-the-future/)