

WHY CHRISTIANITY IS OFFENSIVE

(Psalm 81:8-16; Matthew 23:37)

1. **REMEMBERING** Share a story (personal, film, book) of unrequited love, desire, or longing that speaks powerfully to you.
2. **REFLECTING** In this story, what did the primary character want for the other person involved? What were they willing to do and what were they not willing to do to achieve what they desired for the other?
3. **DISCOVERING** Read aloud the two passages and answer the questions that follow for each of them.

Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me! ⁹Let there be no strange god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god. ¹⁰I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it. ¹¹But My people did not listen to My voice, and Israel did not obey Me. ¹²So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices. ¹³O that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! ¹⁴I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their adversaries. ¹⁵Those who hate the LORD would pretend obedience to Him, and their time of punishment would be forever. ¹⁶But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. (Psalm 81:8-16)

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. (Matthew 23:37)

- How does God express his longing for his people?
- What does he want for them?
- How do they respond?
- Why do they respond that way?

4. **CONNECTING** Which of these words might God be speaking to your heart tonight and why?
5. **RESPONDING** Try something as a group. Read silently—then aloud—the poem by 17th century poet and clergyman John Donne below. You could say that Donne is responding to God’s overtures in passages like Psalm 81 and Matthew 23. Discuss the meaning of the poem using the brief dictionary beneath it and the questions below.
 - What is Donne asking God to do for him and why?
 - Do any phrases capture what you ever experience or long for?

BATTER MY HEART (John Donne)

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine and seek to mend.
That I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn and make me new,
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labor to admit you, but, oh to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend;
But is captive and proves weak or untrue.

Yet dearly I love you and would be loved fain;
But am betrothed unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

usurped—seized, taken over; **viceroy**—regent, ruler;
fain—eagerly, willingly; **betrothed**—engaged, committed;
enthrall—captive, charm; **ravish**—seize, carry off

- Write and pray your own prayer/poem this week to express something like this in response to God’s longing for you....