



# Module 3, Unit 3, Lesson 1:

## The Beloved Community

### Directions:

Read the Lesson Content Overview.

Then, working in small groups, answer the following questions:

1. Name one principle that guides the *Beloved Community*.
2. What is the *Beloved Community*?
3. In your opinion what are two current social conditions or concerns that the Beloved Community would address?
4. What can you do to help create the Beloved Community?
5. Do you believe your generation will see the fulfillment of the Beloved Community? Why or why not?
6. Dr. King said, "Group unity necessarily involves group trust and reconciliation." Why is unity essential to the *Beloved Community*? Why is reconciliation?

## Lesson Content Overview:

First coined by Josiah Royce, the concept of "The Beloved Community" is a global vision of world peace put into practice by embracing the philosophy of nonviolence and reconciliation developed, practiced, and taught by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There are several essential principles that guide this community.

- a. All can share in the wealth of the earth
- b. International standards of human decency will protect against poverty, hunger, and homelessness
- c. An all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood will replace all forms of racism, discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice
- d. International disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation between adversaries, instead of military power
- e. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred
- f. Peace and justice will prevail over war and military conflict

One of the key components of "The Beloved Community" is the "spirit of friendship and goodwill" that is guided by reconciliation. No matter who the adversary happens to be parents, teachers, friends, bullies, and strangers- the result *always* is reconciliation. King once said:

The end is reconciliation ; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.

Addressing the newfound liberation of Ghana under the dynamic leadership of Kwame Nkrumah in 1957, Dr. King elaborated even further on his philosophy of nonviolence in relation to the Black freedom struggle in America. "The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the "Beloved Community." The aftermath of nonviolence is redemption. The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation." Several years later, Dr. King commented that, "The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, so that when the battle's over, a new relationship comes into being between the oppressed and the oppressor."<sup>1</sup>

### The Power of Love

Understanding that "good will" alone was not enough to sustain the vision of the "Beloved Community." Dr. King addressed the importance of agape- "unconditional love." What is agape love? According to Dr. King, agape love is "understanding, redeeming goodwill for all, an overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative, the love of God operating in the human heart ... It begins by loving others for their sakes and makes no distinction between a friend and enemy; it is directed toward both ... Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community."

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. "Nonviolence and Racial Justice." Chicago, IL. February 6, 1957. The Martin Luther King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/nonviolence-and-racial-justice>

This call for a world-wide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men. This often misunderstood and misinterpreted concept has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love, I am speaking of that force which all the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is the key that unlocks the door which leads to the ultimate reality.

Unfortunately, Dr. King's vision of the "Beloved Community" has not been realized as both America and the world continue to ignore the powerful spirit of love as an alternative to violence, conflict resolution, abuse, and war. As Dr. King concluded at the end of *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*:

We must utilize the community action groups and training centers now proliferating in some slum areas to create not merely an electorate , but a conscious , alert and informed people who know their direction and whose collective wisdom and vitality commands respect. Among the moral imperatives of our time, we are challenged to work all over the world with unshakable determination to wipe out the last vestiges of racism.