

Jan 24 | Sunday

**Facing Issues That Divide - Read Proverbs 6:16-19  
Responding to Islamic Extremism**



**25 | Mon – Abraham, a blessing to all nations | Read Genesis 16:1-16**

God's original promise to Abraham was that the whole world would be blessed through him. Ishmael - his son through Hagar - became the father of the Arab people and Isaac - his son through Sarah - became the father of the Jewish people. Muhammad, an Arab man, founded Islam 600 years after Jesus, a Jewish man, had founded Christianity. Have you considered the many ways these three religions have blessed the world?

**26 | Tue – Abraham's sons parted but still linked | Read Genesis 21:9-20; 25:7-9**

God's love for Ishmael and his mother Hagar continued after they were exiled and He repeated His promise to make Ishmael a great nation. Although there are no details given, we read that Abraham's "sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him" together. Maybe Abraham was about to reunite them before he died. Could God's attitude toward both men point to a path of greater peace between their descendants who still struggle today?

**27 | Wed – Isaiah's astonishing vision | Read Isaiah 19:19-25**

Today's scripture must have outraged many "patriotic" Israelites. How could Isaiah even hint that God might one day call Egypt "my people" or Assyria "my handiwork"? These words remind us that God loves every human on the planet, regardless of nationality or religion. As His representatives, can we try to see past stereotypes to the real person underneath and show the same kind of love as God does?

**28 | Thu – "Defeat evil with good" | Read Proverbs 25:21-22; Romans 12:14-21**

Paul taught Christians living in Rome how to deal with evil. It was not an abstract evil - Rome hated Christians enough to put them to death - but he believed that God deals with evil in better ways than we ever could. Both passages give us practical ways to live out this truth of overcoming evil with good. What are one or two things you can do today?

**29 | Fri – Living out a godly narrative | Read 1 Peter 2:12-15, 3:9-15**

Islamic extremists seem to live out a different narrative about the world than most Christians, and even most Muslims. Rome also had a negative narrative about Christians, calling them "atheists," because they would not worship Caesar. Peter urged Christian believers not to retaliate but live out lives that make the slanderous narrative obviously untrue. Only God can help you do that. Will you ask Him right now for help?

**30 | Sat – The God who breaks down barriers | Read Ephesians 2:11-19**

Extremists of all kinds believe that higher walls should separate "us" from "them" to preserve our truth. Jesus showed us a better way when he asked God to forgive the soldiers who crucified him. His death tore down the walls separating us from God and each other. What walls against other people or people groups need to come down in your life? When you start reaching out to others, you will be amazed at what God will do!

**January 31 | Sun – Facing Issues That Divide: Poverty and Health Care**



**Hastings United Methodist Church**