

Dear Class Member,

A deadly shooting in Atlanta, which caused eight deaths, has left the Asian American community on edge. Because a white man is the suspect in this killing of six Asian American women in several massage parlors, discrimination and demonization will be the topics of our next class.

The in-person and Zoom *Wired Word* classes are *cancelled*. We continue to have Tuesday morning Zoom Bible studies. The Sunday evening *Making Sense of the Bible* five week series has concluded; we plan to start another six week Sunday evening study series in April. We look forward to resuming in-person *The Present Word* classes Sundays at 9:00am on May 2, 9, 16, & 23. In the meantime, you can continue to use *The Wired Word* discussion sheets in your homes, with your friends/family/co-workers or fellow Abide Group members.



## Atlanta Killings Occur During Time of Rising Violence Against Asian Americans

*The Wired Word* for the Week of March 28, 2021

### In the News

A 21-year-old white man has been charged with killing eight people, including six Asian women, at three Atlanta-area massage parlors. The suspect faces eight counts of murder. The motive behind the shootings is unclear, but the attacks happened in a time of rising violence against Asian Americans. *The Wired Word* does not identify hate-crime suspects by name so as not to increase their notoriety.

"The bigger picture is that we've had a huge rise in violent acts, discriminatory acts, against Asian Americans," said Georgia state senator Dr. Michelle Au to *The World*. "And in this milieu, having this incident happen in our communities really shakes people to their core and people are scared."

The suspect told police that he performed the shootings to protect himself from sexual temptation. He said that he was a pornography addict and that he planned to attack additional massage parlors in Florida, in an attempt to control his addiction. Keisha Lance Bottoms, mayor of Atlanta, said it was "very likely there would have been more victims" had the police not apprehended the suspect.

Captain Jay Baker of the sheriff's department said that the shooter takes "responsibility for the shootings" while claiming that they were "not racially motivated." The suspect made comments that indicated that the massage parlors were a factor in his sex addiction, and that they were temptations he wanted to eliminate through violence.

Although all three spas are listed on an erotic review site, there has been no official confirmation, as of this writing, that any of the women killed were actually sex workers. One of the victims, Delaina Ashley Yaun, was a customer on a date with her husband. The four Korean American women killed were Hyun Jung Grant, 51; Soon Chung Park, 74; Suncha Kim, 69; and Yong Ae Yue, 63. Yue was a licensed massage therapist. The Chinese Americans who died were Xiaojie Tan, 49, and Daoyou Feng, 44. Tan's family and customers have stated that her two spas provided nothing more than massages. Also killed was Paul Andre Michels, 54.

The shooter was a member of Crabapple First Baptist Church in Milton, Georgia, at the time of the attack. In a statement, the church said that it would continue to grieve, mourn and pray for the families of the victims, and that it deeply regrets "the fear and pain Asian-Americans are experiencing as a result of [his] inexcusable actions." The statement went on to say that "no blame can be placed on the victims."

The shooter's statement that the murders were not racially motivated is being met with skepticism, given the fact that six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent. Au said that since the coronavirus pandemic hit the U.S., hate crimes against Asian Americans have been on the rise. "What I would like to do just to start is to raise awareness of it regionally so that we can increase safety for our communities and make it so that people in the community feel safer reporting these incidents," she said. "I think that the incidents we have seen are a small fraction of the types of crimes and discriminatory behavior against Asian Americans that are taking place."

Counter-terror police in New York responded by deploying officers to guard Asian communities throughout the city. President Joe Biden said, "The Asian American community is feeling enormous pain tonight. The recent attacks against the community are un-American. They must stop." Vice President Kamala Harris added, "I do want to say to our Asian American community that we stand with you and understand how this has frightened and shocked and outraged all people." U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in South Korea for official meetings, said, "We are horrified by this violence which has no place in America or anywhere." He noted that four of the women were believed to be of Korean descent.

In several major cities, police have seen an increase in Asian-targeted hate crimes between 2019 and 2020. New York City saw a jump from three incidents to 27, Los Angeles went from seven to 15, and Denver had three incidents in 2020, after five years with no such hate crimes. Almost 3,800 incidents have been reported since March 2020 to Stop AAPI Hate, a reporting center for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Women reported more than two times the number of hate incidents, compared with men.

Sadly, anti-Asian racism has a long history in the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was designed to prevent Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. Asian Americans were falsely blamed for public-health problems such as the San Francisco smallpox outbreak in the 1870s. Suspicions of Japanese Americans during World War II prompted the Franklin Roosevelt administration to send many to detention camps. And in 1982, a Chinese American named Vincent Chin was attacked and killed by two autoworkers in Detroit. They mistook him for Japanese, and beat him to death because Detroit was losing jobs to the growing Japanese auto industry.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Asian American Community on Edge After Deadly Shooting in Atlanta.](#) *The World*

[US Mass Shooter Said He Killed Massage Parlour Workers to 'Eliminate Temptation.'](#) *Premier Christian News*  
[Atlanta Spa Shootings Suspect Charged With Murder; Too Soon to Tell If Killings Were Racially Motivated,](#) Police Say. *USA Today*

[The Identities of the Women Killed in Atlanta Have Begun to Belie the Suspect's Stated Motive.](#) *NBC News*

[Georgia Church Disowns Suspect, Says He Betrayed Faith.](#) *Associated Press*

[EXPLAINER: Why Georgia Attack Spurs Fears in Asian Americans.](#) *Associated Press*

### **Applying the News Story**

The murders of eight Atlanta-area residents in massage parlors, including six Asian American women, lead us to examine our own attitudes toward people of other racial and ethnic groups, as well as our tendency to demonize those whom we blame for our personal problems.

### **The Big Questions**

1. What factors have contributed to discrimination against Asians in the past, and where do you see such discrimination today? How is it addressed in your church, if at all?
2. How are Asian Americans involved in your church or community, and how are they perceived by the majority group? Where, if anywhere, do you see evidence of suspicion, resentment or even hate? Where, if anywhere, do you see evidence of appreciation, acceptance and love?

3. When has an immigrant group been fully accepted in your community? What factors led to that inclusion? When has a group been excluded, and what caused that exclusion?
4. When have you judged an individual harshly for a negative feeling that he or she evoked in you? How did you address your inner struggle, if at all, without demonizing the other?
5. What is the role of the Christian community in addressing issues of discrimination and demonization in society today? Where can you play a role as an individual?

### **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

#### **Deuteronomy 7:1-2**

*When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you -- the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you -- and when the LORD your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them.* (For context, read 7:1-6.)

When the people of Israel were preparing to enter the Promised Land, Moses told them that God would give the people of the land to them, and they "must utterly destroy them." Moses warned against intermarriage with the people of the land, and ordered the Israelites to break the altars and burn the idols they found in the land. His concern was that the Israelites would become corrupted by these foreigners, and they would no longer be "a people holy to the LORD" (v. 6).

**Questions:** How does such fear of corruption by foreigners continue to influence our views of people today? Where do you see evidence that people want to "destroy" other ethnic groups, as the Israelites were ordered to do? How should Christians respond?

#### **Ruth 4:13-14**

*So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel!"* (For context, read 4:13-21.)

A Moabite woman named Ruth married a man of Bethlehem, who died. Ruth showed great love and loyalty toward her mother-in-law, Naomi, and followed her to Bethlehem with the words "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (1:16). In Bethlehem, Ruth met and married a man named Boaz, and had a son named Obed, who became the grandfather of King David. The suspicion of foreigners felt by many residents of Bethlehem was overcome, in part, by the marriage of Ruth and Boaz.

**Questions:** When have you witnessed, or been part of, a marriage between people of two cultural identities? What were the challenges? What were the benefits? What did you learn?

#### **Luke 10:36-37**

*[Jesus said to a lawyer:] "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."* (For context, read 10:25-37.)

In the parable of the good Samaritan, a Jewish man is attacked by robbers, who strip him and beat him. A Jewish priest sees him and passes by on the other side. Then a Levite spots the beaten man and walks around him. But then a Samaritan comes across this Jewish man, and he is moved with pity -- even though the bloody man is not a member of his faith or nationality. The Samaritan bandages the man's wounds, brings him to an inn, cares for him and then pays the

innkeeper to continue his care. When the Jewish leaders around Jesus admitted that the Samaritan was a true neighbor and helper, one who crossed boundaries to save and rescue others, Jesus gave them a simple command: "Go and do likewise."

**Questions:** When has a person of another faith or cultural identity been a true neighbor to you? When have you had an opportunity to cross an ethnic barrier and be a "good Samaritan" to someone else? How did this affect you?

### **1 Corinthians 5:11**

*But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one. (For context, read 5:9-13.)*

The apostle Paul was deeply concerned about the effect of sexual immorality on the health of the church. In an earlier letter, he had written that the Corinthians should not "associate with sexually immoral persons" (v. 9), but then he amended that stance by saying that their work in the world would require them to associate with "the immoral of this world" (v. 10). Rather, Paul now urges them not to associate with anyone in the *church* who is sexually immoral or greedy. He concludes by commanding them, "Drive out the wicked person from among you" (v. 13).

**Questions:** What kind of actions and attitudes should we show toward people outside the church, even those Paul described as "the immoral of this world"? How should we discipline ourselves and others within the Christian community?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. The Crabapple First Baptist Church in Milton, Georgia, has released a statement saying that the shooter [has been removed from their congregation](#) because his alleged crimes are in contradiction to their biblical beliefs and church bylaws. The statement said he could no longer be considered a member "since we can no longer affirm that he is truly a regenerate believer in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5)." Do you consider removal from membership to be the best response? If not, what would you recommend?
2. What steps can congregations take to reduce violence and discrimination against the Asian American community? What actions could you take as an individual?
3. Temptation is a struggle, and even the apostle Paul admitted, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15). How can the Christian community do a better job of supporting people who want to recover from sexual addiction or some other destructive behavior?
4. The social justice protests of 2020 have focused attention on the issue of racism. What kind of conversations have you been having around this issue? Where do you want this conversation to go, in your church and in your community? What groups should be involved?

### **Responding to the News**

Reach out to an Asian American member of your church or community, find out how they are doing, and offer your friendship and support.

### **Prayer**

God of every race and cultural identity, help us to see your image in each of our neighbors, and to extend to them the grace, love and peace of Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.

